

Chapter 10

War and violent conflict

War, war is still the cry,—“war even to the knife”, Lord Byron¹.

Whatever happens we have got/ the Maxim gun and they have not= Hilaire Belloc².

Learning to Question, Questioning to Learn

- What are war and violent conflict, and how does they relate to peace?
- How has violent conflict changed over time and why?
- What are the causes and drivers of violent conflict?
- What is terrorism and what implications does it have in our globalizing world?
- What are the effects of war and violent conflict?

Introduction

Imagine yourself, walking down the street, delighted and proud of the fabulous new cell phone you just bought, or admiring a brilliant new diamond engagement ring you received. Someone, a passerby, screams at you, ‘Murderer! You have blood on your hands because of your consumer habits.’ Shocked, maybe you recoil in flushed shame but you wonder what on earth the person was going on about. After a little research on the internet, or in a library, you discover an abundance of sources which argue that affluent consumers, perhaps like yourself, are –often unknowingly- connected to fueling violent conflicts in various ‘hot zones’ around the world. From the Sierra Leone, to the Congo, to the Niger Delta, critics have been pointing to the ways

in which profits from basic resources such as diamonds, Coltan (or Columbite-Tantalite, a metallic ore found in the Congo region of Africa a mineral used in batteries for cell/mobile phones and other electronic components) and oil have been used to fuel and perpetuate violent civil conflict. Increasingly, this is the global trend in geo-political competitiveness; extant conflicts being perpetuated with funds from resources or previously peaceful political differences escalating into violent conflict as two sides vie to gain access to essential or lucrative luxury resources thus, in turn, fueling further violence.³

In many instances, the enormous profits generated from these resources come from market demand in affluent, developed countries, thousands of miles from the conflict zones, where many people are unaware of or uninterested in the region of origin of these resources. Yet, there is clearly a link between consumer demand and profits used to acquire weapons (often produced by some of the same countries with heightened consumer demand) which are used to further destabilize weak states, and which have a devastating human impact. As this chapter shows, the global dimensions of our drive toward and capacity-building for such violent conflicts have been long in the making, and they have taken on different forms. Still, there has been a consistent trend in which we have expanded our potential to affect through conflict ever larger numbers of people both directly and indirectly.

Background

War and violent armed conflict have been with us since the inception of human communities. They lie at the heart of the other end of the spectrum from peaceful, cooperative human relations where each person feels secure or at **>peace=** (see chapter on peace). Wars have certainly always

had profound effects on society, but these effects have escalated qualitatively and quantitatively over time to the extent that, in many ways, our globalizing world is more unstable and more violent than ever before. Indeed, violence has become so pervasive in the world today that the World Health Organization (WHO) has declared it a leading worldwide public health problem of pandemic proportions.⁴ For our purposes, war and violent conflict can be broadly defined as all overt acts of organized violence and armed conflict whether between or among formal states or within states. This includes civil conflicts where a state government may be perpetrating acts of violence against an identifiable group, and cases where non-state actors engage in violent acts such as rebellion and terrorism, although the primary focus will be on conventional wars and civil conflicts.

The terms war and violent conflict (as opposed to conflicts which can be resolved through diplomacy and other political means, see chapter on peace) cover a broad spectrum. Since the beginning of the Twentieth century violence among humans has ranged from massive world wars to localized, low-intensity regional and intra-community conflicts. In this chapter, we will focus on the causes and impact of war and violent conflict rather than the broader problems of suffering which people experience as a function of economic inequities and structural violence. To be sure, more people suffer each day from the violence of poverty, and associated diseases (see chapter on infectious diseases) social and economic inequity, sexism, racism, political oppression and racial and ethnic oppression than do from open, violent conflict. Specifically related to these conditions of structural violence are the massive problems of ill-health and disease which have afflicted far more people than does war (see chapter on health). Yet war and violent conflict are both products of and contributors to the pervasive problems of structural

violence experienced in varying degrees at different times by the majority of the world's population. They, moreover, have the ability to escalate to levels which have the potential to destroy our world -many times over. We have become particularly adept at developing our ability to prosecute wars and visit violence upon on another.

It may appear to some to be axiomatic that if you wish peace, prepare for war, yet the historical record has shown that those who are prepared for war inevitably engage in war. This is not to suggest that under certain circumstances -the allied response to German and the Axis powers aggression during the outbreak of World War II for example- a measured response of force is deemed by many around the world as necessary and appropriate responses to belligerence and the escalation of violent conflict or terrorism. Certainly defensive measures and peacekeeping initiatives often require the use of force to contain the spread of violence. It would be a facile and indeed dangerous course of action for a country or community which faces the threat of aggression to be unprepared to defend itself. Yet, these are precisely the sorts of dynamics which have led to the proliferation of conflict and war.

The key themes in this chapter are that progress in the development of human communities into civilizations had as its corollary the increased incidence of violent conflict; that technological innovations were developed as much to engage in war as to increase productivity and that the increased availability of weapons necessarily led to their increased use. There is, however, a definite economic cost to making weapons and providing for a fighting force that is otherwise not immediately engaged in producing a food or other material surpluses. Thus, a significant feature of the human escalation of war has been its overall economic impact. In some ways wars

have been good for economic development, because they stimulate the expansion of industry and technology. In other ways, however, they have a huge negative impact on economies since they divert resources away from other productive economic activities and they lead to the destruction of resources and people. A classic economic theory postulates this dichotomy between state expenditure on war versus expenditure on social needs as the case of >guns vs. butter=. As we shall see, many societies, particularly our own here in the U.S.A., have opted for a greater expenditure of resources and human activity on war than on many other government services and activities. It is no coincidence that increased availability of weapons has led to an increased use of them.

Even during the period of the **Cold War** (following World War II, this was a period of rising geo-political tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union which led to a global military buildup and numerous armed conflicts -see below) when the proliferation of nuclear weapons was thought to be a deterrent to open conflict, large numbers of wars using conventional weapons erupted.⁵ The overall trend for our world since the emergence of human communities and until recently, has been that increasing interconnections among regions and civilizations has led to a qualitative and quantitative increase in violent conflicts and that increasing numbers of people, both combatants and non-combatants have been drawn into and suffered the effects of violent conflict. Indeed, many of the forces and trends of globalization such as pressures for deregulation and privatization, open markets and global trade have contributed to increased levels of insecurity and violent conflict.⁶

Major themes in the history of war and violent conflict.

Wars and violent conflict emerged and escalated right alongside the development of human communities as they settled into states, civilizations and empires. Violent conflicts between early human communities were probably quite rare because of the relatively small numbers of humans in the world. These conflicts may have developed because of competition over hunting grounds. They probably employed skills learned from hunting wild animals and likely created few casualties. As population groups expanded with the availability of stable food surpluses derived from the agricultural revolution, competition and conflict increased in frequency and intensity. More organized efforts at using violence to satisfy material needs led to war.

Early wars were driven primarily by economic desires: the need to acquire or protect resources needed for the expansion of a civilization and to support the growth of early state bureaucracies or governments by taking surplus produce from people in the form of tax and tribute. This included organizing formal armies, initially comprised largely of foot soldiers with rudimentary weapons such as spears and swords, which would move to conquer and capture agricultural land, water sources and a settled population that produced a taxable surplus. In ancient Sumeria, for example, King Sargon of Akkad mustered a considerable force to raid and conquer the valley plain between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Although his efforts resulted in what would later become a classic folly of military strategy -spreading your forces too thin without adequate supplies- Sargon nevertheless established one of the earliest military governments, a kingship. His purpose in war had been to control the water resources of the rivers for the expansion of agriculture, and to take the surplus resources of the region to support his rule. Although Sargon was unsuccessful at establishing a lasting state, his actions represented an important precedent in the advancement of civilization; that warfare could (and thereafter would be used with increasing

intensity and frequency) be used to attempt to secure control over resources, even if this control was short-lived⁷.

Advances in metallurgy were as important for innovations on the battlefield as they were in farming. The advent of bronze, and especially iron led to a dramatic increase in the availability of weapons, and there was a concomitant increase in the numbers of people engaged in war. In short, more cheap weapons meant more people could fight. This entailed a sort of >democratization of war= in which there was a growing trend to shift away from wars fought first by elites who owned the tools of war such as the Persian charioteers to common soldiers - that is people trained specifically to fight, and whose main occupation was to fight a war -many of whom were nevertheless conscripted or otherwise compelled by their low status or poverty. This shift progressed slowly over time to be sure, and wealthy elites continued to dominate battles through to the modern era because of their ownership and control of the often expensive tools of war. Two examples of this are the European medieval knight on his expensive mount and the Japanese samurai with his finely crafted swords. Common people, however provided these elite warriors with instrumental, direct and indirect support in the form of both tax revenue (in kind at first, and later in forms of cash) and as foot soldiers that carried weapons and supplies and squared off against their opposite number.

The tools of war have long been at the cutting edge of our technological advances and a driving force of economies. We seem to have placed an enormous amount of stock in the development of weapons and war to the extent that we have vastly improved our means of killing while not as many resources have been allocated to social, environmental and human needs. This was true of

ancient Sparta which devoted much of its human and resource capital to developing a war machine. In ancient Sparta, a leading Greek city state of the Seventh century B.C.E. male citizens, or >equals= were expected to devote much of their adult life to training and service in the military. Spartan society was so geared toward supporting its military, it had to rely upon peasants, enslaved from among their defeated neighboring enemies, to undertake the production of agricultural surplus required to sustain the society. These >helot= peasants then had to be watched over by Spartan soldiers to ensure there was no rebellion. This in turn created a true war society where the very perpetuation of the community relied upon its ability to maintain its fighting edge.⁸

Athens, Sparta=s neighbor in the Greek peninsula also relied upon war to sustain its economy. The innovation of the Athenian navy, (probably influenced by the earlier Phoenician development of a navy -a fleet of ships used for both war and trade) developed initially to fend off invasion by the Persian empire, required the marshaling of considerable resources to pay for the ships and the men to row them. Significantly, the Athenian navy also helped support the expansion of democratic participation for typically the rowers (often drawn from the ranks of the poor who previously were not granted citizenship) were given the right to vote in return for their military service. Not surprisingly, the rower class often voted to continue to prosecute war in order to safeguard their political standing. Clearly democracy was not incompatible with a militarized state from an early age.

Foreshadowing later developments in the American political economy of war where the burden of costs for the wars in Iraq were shared out among allies, funds for the Athenian navy came

from tax and tribute drawn from Athens and its allies. Perhaps auguring future developments in the contemporary world, the Athenians continued to press their reluctant allies into providing funds for the navy even after the Persian invaders had been driven from the region and it was no longer needed for defense. It seemed Athens could not wean itself away from the significant economic stimulus that a war economy provided. It was Athens' insistence on maintaining its war economy which, among other factors, led it into the Peloponnesian war with its neighboring Greek states. This ferocious conflict is credited with the first recorded uses of forms of chemical weapons as the combatants burned sulphur and pitch to create toxic clouds in the hopes of subduing their enemies.

War has historically also been about state building and often its extension into empire building. From ancient Persia to Rome to Han China, powerful, militarized early states used warfare to take new territories and the resources they contained as well as to incorporate these territories, either directly or indirectly, into the larger state. This process typically involved subordinating those conquered to positions of lower status within the larger empires, and in many cases forcing the vanquished to either join the ranks of the ever-growing imperial armies, or be killed. Empire building was never a pleasant business, and it inevitably created inequities which often led to a brutal cycle of resistance, rebellion and counter-repression. It was in these cases that warfare crept beyond the merely practical actions of conducting a battle and started to include features of ideological and psychological activities intended to enhance the effects of war. This entailed impressing upon citizens, soldiers and would-be opponents a sense of the ideological imperative of the state -that war was about state unity and patriotism. It also meant the use of violence to do more than beat an opponent. It meant employing ways to intimidate or terrify opponents into

submission, often through atrocities. Such was case of the brutal ancient Assyrian empire in which, for example, King Ashurnasirpal quashed a revolt within the empire by flaying the skins off the rebel leaders and hanging them over the city walls for all to see.⁹

As states and empires became ever more sophisticated, so too did the rhetoric employed to both justify war and to spur people on in battle. While there were clear economic and political imperatives driving wars, war and violent conflict became increasingly bound up with ideologies based on nationalist, ethnic and religious beliefs. Imperial Rome conquered, for example, in the name of the greater good of its empire and citizenry. Han China extended its hold over new lands and peoples based upon an imperial vision of Confucian patriarchal traditions and a sense of China as the >Middle Kingdom=; a special place for an elite people situated between heaven and the rest of the world. Similarly, major world religions which had emerged in the context of larger states and empires also provided political elites with justification for prosecuting war. In some cases, war was visited upon those who resisted embracing a particular faith, and thereby conforming to the demands of the state for a unified culture. Such was the case when Rome first persecuted Christians, and then a few centuries later, after having made Christianity the official state religion, persecuted non-Christians in an effort to force them to convert. Islam too was used as an ideological justification for the expansive empire-building efforts of Arabic leaders from the 7th century. Islamic caliphs (successors to the leadership of the prophet Muhammad) were remarkably successful at combining political leadership with military strategies and spiritual or religious determination -an effort which has been referred to as >Jihad=, but which can also be interpreted to mean a non-violent form of personal religious striving- to capture new territories under the aegis of Islam.

In both the case of Christianity and Islam, there appeared to be a significant appeal for adherents to join in battles which not only furthered their economic and political interests, but also had an apparently divine sanction. It is also likely that the unique sense of a select identity which is associated with extremists in a religious or ideological group may well have generated the earliest forms of terrorism (see below). The Sicarii (from the Greek term for the concealed daggers they used to kill opponents) sect of the Jewish Zealots who opposed the Roman rule of Palestine, for example, murdered Roman sympathizers and common citizens at public gatherings in order to scare their opponents. Similarly, the 11th-century Islamic Order of the Assassins stealthily killed Muslim and Christian leaders as a means of striking terror into their opponents. As we shall see, the religious dimension has remained an important rallying point for those who seek to justify a given group engaging in war and violent conflict.

Through the middle ages, or medieval period, advances in weapons and tactics as well as ever more vicious acts of violence brought qualitative changes to the nature of warfare as various power brokers such as kings and lords sought to assert sovereign power over their territories. Strides in defensive fortifications such as castles and moats were matched by the art of siege craft where armies learned to scale castle walls, sappers dug beneath them and defenders were starved out. There are, moreover, apocryphal tales of possibly the earliest forms of biological warfare whereby attackers of medieval castles catapulted corpses infected with bubonic plague over walls hoping to infect the defenders. In fact, (as we shall see below) it was more likely the case that armies which used such biological agents did so in secret, rather than as a show of terror. Another terrible by-product of war that grew exponentially and which at times became

the driving force for war, was slavery. In its initial phases, wars could generate prisoners of the conflict. In cases where captives could be used to support economic activity, the victor could enslave prisoners. In some even earlier cases, such as in ancient Greece, Rome and West Africa, new wars were waged, in part to generate more captive slaves for labor.

During the pre-modern and modern periods, long distance trade became a major stimulus for war. Following the Roman and Byzantine struggle to control trade routes through the Middle East, the major Christian trading states of the Mediterranean and Northwestern Europe sought to assert their power over Palestine and beyond through the Crusades. These were a set of wars fought ostensibly to wrest the Christian holy lands from Islamic control, but which were funded by major merchant houses in order to cut out Islamic middlemen and re-open these lands to western commercial control. This suggests an early clear link between the interests of private capital and the state in prosecuting war when there are mutual commercial interests at stake, especially in the Middle East. This trend took on global proportions in the early modern period during the European conquest and expansion.

War supported and was supported by the expansive forces of early globalization during the age of European overseas conquest and expansion. Trade with China and Asia had allowed Europeans to develop awesome new weapons based on the far eastern inventions of gunpowder and cast cannons. During the 15th and 16th-centuries, the burgeoning states of northwestern Europe then embarked on a program of exploration and conquest which enabled them to forcibly implant their political economies in other parts of the world, a process referred to as imperialism. Much of this was accomplished by the combined effects of European advances in technology

that were applied to conquest, and the horrendous impact of epidemic diseases on indigenous populations (see also chapters on health and disease and indigenous peoples).

By the later 1400s and beginning with Portuguese mariners, Europeans started to bring their technological advantages to bear on their forays along the coasts of Africa, Asia and the Americas. This included the development of larger, faster and stronger ships which could accommodate both sufficient provisions for long voyages and cannons, guns, horses and soldiers. It was the ability of Europeans to develop and then bring these weapons with them to other parts of the world that enabled them to dominate the indigenous inhabitants of these lands. While Europeans provided a range of justifications to support these conquests, from divine sanction to >uplift= the >heathen= to the extension of their nation state, most motives revolved around gaining control of resources and the labor needed to make them profitable. Thus, the quest for new trade routes to the riches of Asia, and the subsequent accidental discovery of resources in the new lands had led to Europeans using their advanced weapons to conquer.

What was not accomplished by the many wars of pacification which were the hallmarks of European imperialism between the early 1500s and the early 1900s was earlier brought about by the unintended yet widespread impact of European diseases such as small pox which decimated entire indigenous societies that had prior experience with these diseases (see chapter on health and disease). In the case of the Americas, this phenomena amounted to >genocide=, -the extermination of a particular ethnic, national or religious group-, although in the case of the Americas this was not intentional, as it later was for Jewish people with Hitler=s Holocaust, since the Spanish had hoped to retain Indian labor, and many perished unintentionally from the effects of disease.

The early age of conquest and European imperialism was a prelude to a later age of rising industrialization and more intense imperial intervention in Southeast Asia and Africa. This was a period which witnessed the greatest advances in the technology of war, and the concomitant slaughter of ever larger numbers of human beings. In this age too, Europeans dominated the world with their command of technologically sophisticated weapons. It also heralded the increased role of private concerns -businesses bent on making profits even if it required military intervention- in places such as Africa and Asia (a trend which has re-emerged today -see below)

Innovations in steel, steam power and mechanized transport contributed to phenomenal improvements in the killing effect of guns, cannon, war ships and armies all of which had greater power and could now be moved to theaters of war faster than ever before. Among some of the most impressive additions to the human arsenal were dynamite bombs, rifled guns which could shoot farther and straighter than earlier muskets, and above all, the new Gatling or Maxim (named after the inventors) machine gun. Indeed, machine guns were used with terrifying effect in various wars between invading colonizers and indigenous people, whether in American-Indian wars or in Africa. As the British poet Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953) summed up well the new imbalance of power between Europeans and indigenous people when he wrote, `whatever happens we have got/ the Maxim gun and they have not=¹⁰. Despite this imbalance, an unintended consequence of the proliferation of new weapons on the battlefield was the acquisition of arms by local populations, even if they could only secure a few, or outdated ones. The overall effect was for increasing numbers of combatants on both sides to be armed with modern weapons, and to therefore for everyone to become more effective at killing. These advances, however, were a but a prelude to the new global dimensions of war fare about to

unfold in the 20th-century

By the early 20th-century war and violent conflict took on disturbing new trends with global implications. More people were killed in wars and armed conflict -over 100 million- during this century than in the preceding 2,000 years. In the early 1900s, the sovereign states of Europe had become so entangled in political alliances and economic competition that even the minor saber-rattling antics of the day appeared to lead easily to war. The ensuing World Wars I and II were truly unprecedented, and thankfully since unparalleled, global wars in that they involved states and societies far beyond the area of the origins of the conflict. They also brought into play new applications of technology for warfare which had awesome and devastating effects. The use of airplanes, tanks, rockets submarines and battleships significantly increased both the firepower and the reach of modern armies. Another critical difference in the new modern context of broader global links was that this conflict and the one that followed were >total wars= which involved entire societies, combatants and noncombatants alike. Not only were massive numbers of soldiers brought into battle, but increasing numbers of civilians were enlisted to support the war effort.

On the >home front= (the region behind the front lines of combat, or >the front=) civilians worked in the factories which produced the weapons of war, and because they contributed to the war effort, they became targets of attack for their indirect role in furthering the conflict. These wars were by all accounts the most bloody and brutal of conflicts and they demonstrated an entirely new order of killing ability. Estimates vary, but it is reasonable to say that between 9 and 11 million and between 17 and 20 million soldiers were killed in World Wars I and II respectively (See Table I). More significantly, the staggering death toll for civilians climbed

dramatically with World War II to over 35 million.¹¹ It was only at the end of World War II that the world learned of the horror of the Holocaust; Hitler=s calculated genocide of over six million Jews as well as millions of others such as Romany (Gypsies), the disabled, gays, pacifists and dissidents. Thereafter, a terrifying new trend in modern wars has been for increasing numbers of non-combatants, or civilians to be engaged in and become the victims of violent conflict. This has been done in order to terrorize civilians in order to make them more compliant.

The most profound innovation to come out of World War II, and that one that still has the most destructive potential for our world was nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons have phenomenal destructive capability consisting of both an explosive power, and far wider reaching and longer lasting effects of nuclear radiation. Radiation can cause slow deaths from horrific radiation sickness after the blast as well as pollute the area of the blast, making it uninhabitable for decades. It was the United States which first developed and used a nuclear device in war and it remains the only state to have done so. Indeed, U.S. forces detonated two atomic nuclear devices against Japan, one at Hiroshima and one at Nagasaki in 1945. Less than ten years later, the U.S. developed an even more powerful nuclear weapon, the hydrogen bomb. Since then, was a disturbing proliferation of nuclear arms among a handful of nations in the >nuclear club=. This club included the U.S., the Soviet Union (now Russia), China, France and the U.K., but now there are new members who it is believed, have at least some nuclear weapons capabilities, or are near enough to having these weapons to be a significant threat to global security. These new nuclear powers are Pakistan, India and Israel. North Korea may now have the materials and the ability to make a bomb as well.

Not since the bombings in Japan has a nuclear bomb be used in a conflict, but the specter of >nuclear holocaust= (the use of sufficient nuclear weapons to completely destroy a society, or even our whole world) remains. Indeed, in a form of rather perverse logic, one of the arguments for the U.S. and the Soviet build-up of their nuclear arsenals was that their stockpiles would act as a deterrent against the use of these weapons by assuring that whoever used nuclear weapons first would face an excessive retaliation. This principle is appropriately known by the acronym **MAD** (mutually assured destruction). Nuclear weapons have taken pride of place as the most common weapons of mass destruction (**WMD**) sought after by states, alongside other chemical and biological weapons (see below). So terrifying was the prospect of using these weapons, however, that the U.S. and Russia have, since the early 1970s, engaged in efforts to at least reduce the numbers of these weapons in the world. In an ironic twist, they have, through various treaties such as the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties (**START** I, II and III) actually reduced the number of nuclear arms in the world from a high of approximately 70,000 warheads in the mid-1980s down to below about 32,000 warheads currently.¹² They have also tried, unsuccessfully, to prevent other nations from developing a nuclear weapons capability. Now there are new threats emerging of so-called rogue states, and non-state actors or terrorists developing nuclear weapons (see below). Despite the earlier theory that wars using WMDs have become unacceptably destructive, the threat of these weapons being used remains as does violent conflict using conventional weapons such as tanks, small arms, land mines, rockets and the like.

There were other significant trends in modern warfare in the 20th-century. These included an overall increase in the costs and impact of war on people, their economies and the environment;

a dramatic increase in the geographic areas which are involved in battles; an overall increase in the length of battles and the number of battles or skirmishes in war; an increase in the size of armies, the technology and weapons used by them and the amount of money spent on armies and war, and increase in the number soldiers relative to the total population as well as the number of civilians involved in and affected by conflict; and an increase in the speed and frequency with which conflicts break out and spread, especially so-called Low Intensity Conflicts (LICs) in developing states and regions. There is now, moreover, an even greater use of technology, and especially electronic >high-tech= weapons systems. These include very costly computer weapons and intelligence systems and laser guided bombs and rockets. These have significantly distanced warriors from the actual fields of combat. While they have made warfare comparatively safer than even before for soldiers in the armies of countries wealthy enough to afford these weapons, these high-tech and stealth weapons have also made it easier to dehumanize the enemies.

After World War II, violent conflict took on a new nature in the guise of the **Cold War**. The **Cold War** (1945-1990 -this is actually a misnomer since the political and ideological tensions led to a considerable escalation in >hot= violent conflict around the world, just not in the nation states of the primary belligerents), as the name suggests, was a time of rising political tensions and posturing which did not lead the primary adversaries, the United States of America, the Soviet Union, and, to a lesser degree, China into actual direct violent conflict. These two countries squared off against each other over largely political, ideological and economic differences. These included a sense by all sides that their respective political economies, democratic capitalism for the U.S. and state-run communism for the Soviets and Chinese were

diametrically opposed, and that each country was working to further its control over the world through either conquest or hegemonic control of spheres of influence. It was, however, nonetheless a time of very violent conflict.¹³

The **Cold War** caused a large number of conflicts around the world, even if the >superpowers= of the U.S. and the Soviet Union sought to avoid direct clashes. As nationalist movements in the developing world, especially in Africa and Asia, rose to throw off old colonial regimes, political instability and weak states emerged. Before many of these new movements and states could consolidate control, superpower interests insinuated themselves into these regions. Both the superpowers engaged in proxy wars and conflicts around the world by supporting opposing sides with advisors, arms, money and materials. Indeed, the superpowers circulated an unprecedented number of weapons, especially small arms but also including planes, tanks and artillery into the developing world. This significantly increased the risk of unstable states engaging in violent conflict. In this way, smaller intra-state conflicts exploded into regional wars which did lead to direct involvement by superpower forces in a short period of time. This was particularly true in the case of the conflict between North and South Korea and in Viet Nam¹⁴. By the end of the 1980s, however, the Soviet Union was on the verge of collapse and it was no longer able to sustain its reach into developing regions. Although it appeared that the number of armed conflicts rose dramatically during the Cold War, and then started to decline somewhat following 1991, recent indicators are that the number of armed conflicts around the world are starting to edge up once again (see graph) In contrast the U.S., as the remaining superpower, has managed to extend and escalate its export of conflict since the end of the Cold War in 1991.

Researching to Learn:

Resource Conflicts: For the case of Coltan in the Congo see:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1468772.stm>

<http://www.globalissues.org/article/442/guns-money-and-cell-phones>

Conflict Barometer: <http://www.hiik.de/en/index.html> Provides comparative analysis of recent and current conflicts and explains the factors driving the conflict.

Atlas of Twentieth-century death tolls from war and violent conflict

<http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/warstats.htm>

For the issue of child soldiers see: <http://www.child-soldiers.org/home> and for the case of children being abducted to serve as soldiers in Uganda see the Invisible Children site at:

<http://www.invisiblechildren.com/home.php>.

For American perspectives on security issues see: <http://www.csis.org/>.

For the controversies surrounding the continued use of landmines see: <http://www.icbl.org/>

For the security issues and impact of violent conflict on civilian populations and vulnerable states see:

Amnesty International: <https://takeaction.amnestyusa.org>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/>

United Nations: <http://www.un.org>

The recent and current state of war and violent conflict

Since the end of the Cold War, there have been significant shifts in the nature of armed conflict. In the past, the primary general cause of wars was the aggressive assertion of geopolitical state sovereignty, or belligerent nationalism among states, aimed at supporting and expanding state political economies. Now, most conflicts are internal or >civil= in nature, even if they threaten to or do involve external actors. Although more formal wars involving interstate conflict and organized armed forces have declined in number, interstate civil wars and violent conflicts, or LICs (for Low Intensity Conflicts, which often spread beyond one state or have multiple states involved) remained prevalent and are likely to increase in numbers. Indeed, in some LICs in countries such as India, Nigeria, Colombia and India there are multiple armed conflicts. There has also been a decided shift in theaters of war, and the people and organizations involved in violent conflict. The vast majority of recent conflicts have tended to occur in developing regions (the recent war in eastern Europe/the former Yugoslavia is an exception) where there are weak states and faltering economies. This is particularly true of sub-Saharan Africa where Cold War conflicts in places such as Angola and Mozambique raged through the last years of the 20th century, and in Central Eurasia (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan). Yet these conflicts can clearly be linked to a range of international actors and institutions and this suggests that they emerged in a global context.

As we shall see, many recent conflicts involve complex and often hidden relations among many state and non-state actors such as local government and armed forces officials, armed non-state actors or rebel groups (in some cases these people may refer to themselves as freedom fighters or members of a liberation movement while others may see them as >terrorists -see below), private security and mercenary firms, and multinational corporations. Another disturbing trend is for armed groups to turn to the recruitment -often forced- of children and youths as armed combatants.¹⁵ These conflicts, moreover, have global implications. To understand the global nature of violent conflict today, we need to address three critical and interrelated questions. First, why does violent conflict persist; what are its causes? Second, how is it conducted; what means do we have to engage in armed conflict and how does this increase its risk? Finally, what impact does violent conflict have on our world?

The will for violent conflict: Greed or Grievance

Wars and violent conflicts have been driven by a whole host of factors. These factors can broadly speaking, be broken down into two causal theories: Grievance or Greed¹⁶. The grievance theory suggests that people are motivated by their leaders to engage in conflict based on real or perceived grievances about their position compared with other groups in society. Recent violent conflict has been seen to stem from tensions over differing religious, ethnic, political and cultural views and experiences. In many cases, groups argue that they must fight to save their >group= - either to defend it from attack, or to assert its interests. These groups state that their actions are based on their rights to **self-determination** A critical element for people who claim a grievance

or grievances as the prime motivation for them to fight is a sense of longstanding past wrongs or offences committed by their >enemies=.

These factors have certainly been at play in the tensions among various combatants in recent civil conflict. In the former Yugoslavia, Slobadan Milosovic employed the rhetoric of religious and Serbian ethnic self-determination to justify the >ethnic cleansing= of Muslim opponents. Similarly, Hutu extremists in Rwanda who attacked Tutsi and Hutu moderates in 1994 claimed they had suffered historically at the hands of Tutsi elites. It is clear that in states or regions where one ethnic, religious or political group dominates, there is a high risk of violent conflict ensuing.¹⁷ Indeed, in cases where one group has at least an absolute majority of the population (but does not constitute a completely homogenous society), it is highly likely that a civil war will erupt, as was the case when the Buddhist Singhalese majority (approximately 85 percent of the population) of Sri Lanka sought to prevent the Tamil separatist/nationalist minority (approximately 15 percent of the population) from creating a separate state (See the In Focus section in this chapter).

There is a danger, however, of reducing the cause of these conflicts to 'essentialized' >ethnic= or >tribal= attitudes as if this explains the issue. In many cases, other issues cut across or blur the lines of perceived ethnic or religious unity for a given group. Such was the case when the Hutu majority attacked moderate Hutus in Rwanda. Membership in ethnic groups is somewhat fluid, and people define themselves differently at different times; labels do not determine who people are or how they will act. These terms obscure the underlying economic and political problems which underlie the rhetoric and can be better understood as clear and rational motives for

conflict. Nevertheless, political and religious elites who have a stake in winning a war often whip up a fervor of support among members of these groups or compel moderates to join the cause. In some cases this dynamic boils over into larger conflicts at a regional level such as between majority Hindu India and majority Muslim Pakistan over the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir, for example. Significantly, there is no indication that ethnic and religious diversity in a balanced way increases the risk of conflict. Indeed, the risk is less where potential rebel leaders cannot find a broad enough ethnic or religious base to draw recruits from. Yet these grievance factors alone do not explain why people turn to violent conflict to settle differences. Not all poor unemployed people who have an allegiance to an ethnic or religious group engage in war. So we now must consider what other factors contribute to setting the stage for violent armed conflict?

Associated with these contending views are perceptions of social and economic inequities which fuel conflict. These include pressures and tensions over growing disparities in wealth within states and across the world, increasing economic insecurity related to unemployment, lack of access to resources, rapid population growth and environmental degradation. The factors which seem critical to the likelihood of an armed conflict breaking out within a given state are both economic (see below) and geopolitical. In addition to the problems of potential ethnic domination, a country's geography, history and educational system and economic opportunities can play important roles in increasing the risk of armed conflict breaking out¹⁸. If a country has a highly geographically dispersed population, as is the case in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) where population centers are separated by dense forest, rivers and broken terrain, then it is more difficult for a government to assert central control over all the people in all the regions. This leaves the central state open to more challenges to their authority, and increases the

chances for rebel groups to operate. Similarly, in countries where there is an inadequate educational system and young people consequently face few employment opportunities, the risk that they will be prepared to engage in some form of armed opposition is great. This factor can be exacerbated by a rapid population growth when a state economy cannot absorb most job-seekers, or if the economy is collapsing.

In Focus [boxed essay]

The longstanding civil conflict in Sri Lanka, an island nation off the south east coast of India, presents a useful case study of the complexities underlying recent violent conflicts. A former British colony (Ceylon), Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948. At that time, it inherited a not uncommon and dubious colonial legacy which included an imbalanced economy, heavily reliant on agricultural exports, most famously, tea. It also included political structures, developed by the British, which had tended to accentuate differences based on perceived and constructed 'racial' categories (i.e. a perceived or imagined physical typology of skin tone and physical features which can include what are believed to be essential cultural and ethnic attributes, and which is used to justify various social, economic and political policies including either the subordination and domination of a 'race' or its being privileged). In this case, the colonial model constructed four main race categories to compartmentalize Sri Lankans: Sinhala (the majority with approximately 66% of the population), Sri Lankan Tamils (14%), Muslims who spoke the Tamil language (6%) and Indian Tamils (14%). To a certain extent, these categories correlated to religious identities as well, with the majority Sinhala embracing Buddhism and the Tamils embracing Hinduism. Political parties and ideologies quickly started to coalesce around these ethnic identities. These were, however, not at all absolute or fixed identities, and many features

of ethnicity such as language and religion clearly cut across these political lines. Nevertheless, influential Sinhala-speaking Buddhist political leaders sought to gain advantage through the promotion of an ethnic nationalist identity for the state. At the same time, the remarkably generous and effective welfare system provided by the state had led to both significant population growth and heightened expectations among Sri Lankans from the 1940s into the 1970s. The rapid pace of growth was not met by the capacity of the state or the economy to absorb everyone, and the rural youth.

Increasingly, a non-racial political environment gave way to Sinhala nationalism. Early on, a Sinhala dominated independent government denied Indian Tamils citizenship, and later under the leadership of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, the government advocated a “Sinhala-only” language policy which they enshrined in the 1972 revised constitution. Over time, this ethnic nationalist government policy polarized the country between the Sinhala majority and the Tamil minority, leading to an accentuation of geographic/regional strongholds with the Tamil minority dominating the north and east of the country, and the Sinhala controlling the rest. The Tamils then gradually embraced a Federal Party policy of a separate ‘homeland’ for them in the Northeast. It was from this northeastern stronghold that the Tamils consolidated their position and embarked on a violent opposition to the Sinhala-dominated government which is still ongoing.

Tamil opposition escalated into violent conflict in the 1970s when aggrieved youth, frustrated by shrinking economic opportunities, turned on fellow Tamils they perceived to be government collaborators. This was, arguably, the first clear indicator that the fault lines of conflict were not

strictly based on ethnic alignments, and may have been driven instead by economic concerns. The aggressive Tamil youth then turned its attention to attacks on the government and state security forces. This led to an escalation of violence when the government military retaliated in a brutal fashion, and the Tamils hardened their stance by forming increasingly radical and militant secessionist resistance groups. It is worth noting, however, that opposition to what many perceived to be the heavy-handed and repressive tactics of the government did not come from the Tamils alone. Indeed, at the same time as the Tamil opposition groups were challenging state policies, disgruntled Sinhala youth rose up in a powerful insurrection movement to protest the same lack of economic opportunities which Tamil youth had evinced. The *Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna*, the People's Liberation Front (JVP) were a militant Sinhala group which took up arms against the state both in the early 1970s and again in the later 1980s.¹⁹ Clearly, the politics of ethnic nationalism was not the only factor in provoking violent armed conflict. The Sri Lanka government followed a policy of brutal repression in dealing with the JVP, and instituted terroristic tactics, including the abduction and summary execution of JVP leaders. Additionally, the army tortured and openly displayed the dead bodies of JVP activists. By 1990, the state had all but crushed the JVP, leaving an estimated forty to fifty thousand people dead.²⁰ From this it is clear that the government was not only concerned with the ethnic nationalist conflict which focused on the Tamils.

Still, the state sought to focus attention away from its shortcomings and brutal repression of the JVP and onto the Tamil opposition. This in turn led to a sharpening of the ethnic dimension of conflict with the Tamils. In response, the Tamil opposition groups –though keep in mind that not all Tamils joined the resistance- forged a more openly separatist movement. By the later 1980s,

the LTTE, or Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, were violently fighting in the open for a 'Tamil homeland' in the northeast of the country. Their tactics became increasingly violent and desperate as they faced off against a much better funded-and armed Sri Lankan army. Still, they managed to force a long-standing strategic stalemate through the use of asymmetrical or 'terrorist' tactics, including women suicide bombers' attacks on public buildings and civilian targets. Indeed, the LTTE has the dubious distinction of being the preeminent practitioner of the recent phenomenon of using female suicide bombers²¹. While these tactics have made the Tamil Tigers notorious in the eyes of many Sri Lankans, the larger global community has, especially recently, expressed equal concern for the heavy-handed tactics of the government in its effort to crush the resistance.²² Indeed, the Sri Lankan government has been charged with continuing to use unconventional terroristic tactics such as abductions, torture and assaults on the Tamil Civilian population. Thus, it would appear that 'terrorism' operates on both sides of the conflict, and that the state is as engaged in these tactics as the opposition. In the end, in both the JVP case and the ongoing conflict with the Tamils, there are clearly elements which cut across ethnic lines. Many Sinhala are sympathetic to the plight of the Tamils, and they have called for an easing of tensions, or a negotiated settlement which would accommodate some degree of autonomy. Still, the conflict continues, and as of early 2009, the Sri Lankan government appears within sight of a final crushing of the LTTE and its aspirations for a separate Tamil homeland²³.

In many cases, such as South Africa where increasing numbers of unemployed and uneducated youths have turned violent crime and gang violence, this group constitutes a >lost generation= who could easily be attracted to a rebel/liberation movement.²⁴ Another major factor in the likelihood of a country experiencing civil war is if they have had a recent armed conflict. Recent

conflicts weaken the economy, the state and civil society. They also create large numbers of refugees (those who are forced to leave the country to find a safe haven), and **internally displaced persons (IDPs)** (people forced to flee their homes but who remain within the country). Many, if not all of these problems have converged at various times and set the stage for the many conflicts the world has endured since the end of the Cold War.

In the post-Cold War world when the superpowers have withdrawn their support for various regimes, these problems are no longer effectively contained by nation states, especially in less developed regions where governments are weak. This has especially been the case in places such as Sierra Leone in West Africa where weak governments have left open the door to rebel groups and criminal warlords alike. Staggering poverty and unemployment also stalk these societies, predisposing people, young men especially, to turn to other means of ensuring a living. As a result, a multitude of different interest groups, ranging from rebel forces or national liberation movements (depending on whose perspective they are viewed from) to outright criminal gangs are vying to assert their own interests.

Today, armed conflicts seem to be driven by more than a given group's sense of grievance. The most common and significant factors all seem to be linked to one or another aspect of the global economy and driven by economic motivations or greed. The >greed theory= of civil war argues that current armed conflicts are really driven by underlying economic motives, not by any real or perceived sense of grievance against a government or competing group. The greed theory, to be sure, is cynical and in many ways undervalues people's sense of themselves, but it has a number of compelling points. It suggests that no matter what motives to fight a group may have, the

critical factor determining if they can start and sustain a war is financing it. In short, if other factors are in place, if a group can fund an armed conflict, it will. Greed theory further holds that in many cases, grievances are concocted in order to justify conflict, and that ultimately, not all combatant groups want to actually resolve the conflict since this would remove the claimed justification for the very being of the group. Various rebel groups or liberation fighters rely upon wars to fund their activities and existence. They often gain money from sympathetic outsiders, as does the Irish Republican Army from Irish Americans for their fight against British rule, or more often from some economic activity that generates revenue. In these ways, the economic factors driving war and armed conflict both provide the means for combatants to fight and they provide the underlying motivation to engage in battles.

Terrorism

One category of violent conflict driven by grievance that has taken center-stage in our world is terrorism. The Al-Qaeda attacks on the U.S. in 2001, which have been seen as an unprecedented act of terrorism, have drawn even greater attention to this problem in the West than ever before. Terrorism, however, is an elusive term which is hard to define. It actually has its modern origins not in the acts of ideologically driven political activists -non-state actors normally associated with terrorism- bent on doing violence to civilian non-combatants in order to achieve their goals, but rather in the systematic acts of violence committed by state actors - secret police, military and paramilitary organizations- against its civilian population. It is nevertheless, best understood as a political act of violence or the threat of violence against people, usually non-combatants, and infrastructure (buildings, transportation, power and service installations) to generate fear and gain publicity for a cause among as large an audience as possible. As the gap between powerful

state=s arsenals (such as the U.S.) and those of smaller non-state groups grows, and as smaller non-state interest groups such ethnic and religious minorities proliferate in number, acts of terrorism appear to be an increasingly viable alternative to formal, and ethically acceptable ways of expressing dissent or grievance. Terrorism has had a profound impact on societies the world over. It has killed, generated much fear and disrupted people=s lives and sense of security. In comparison with more conventional wars, however, terrorism has so far not had nearly as great an impact on death and disruption to peoples' lives. It nevertheless, remains a significant threat, more so now than ever before.²⁵

Likely new terrorist threats come in the form of deadly weapons, including biological and chemical agents, and small-scale nuclear weapons (so-called dirty bombs -small suitcase-sized devices that produce more radioactive fallout and less blast than a conventional nuclear bomb). The risk of these threats has escalated considerable since the break-up of the Soviet Union. Much of the technology for chemical, biological (**chemical and biological weapons or CBW** are also referred to under the category of **WMD**) and nuclear weapons, including such terrifying agents as smallpox and plague, the scientific experts who develop and deploy them as well as stockpiles of materials which could be used to make them, can be found in the states of the **Former Soviet Union (FSU)**.²⁶ Weak state security and the inability of these state governments to keep experts on the payroll have added to the temptations of the illegal or black market in these weapons and materials for those who have them. This significantly increases the possibility of terrorist groups or states getting and using them. More recently, new threats of potential terrorism include poisoning food or water supplies and even 'economic terrorism' whereby a state, such as China for example, could have the potential to threaten to undermine the U.S. economy by shifting its

dollar assets in or out of key investments.²⁷

In some ways, terrorism is an act of last resort for a group or state which has failed to enforce its will in other ways. It can be seen as an asymmetrical form of warfare where either a government seeks to intimidate and overwhelm its citizenry using violence, or where a group does not have the means to overcome a government opponent that is heavily armed, well-financed and technologically sophisticated. It is important to note, however, that the concept is ambiguous since one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter or liberator. While it may seem that >terrorist organizations= abound today, many are fighting for political reasons like the right to self-determination or national liberation. Nelson Mandela was labeled a terrorist by the Apartheid Regime for his role in acts of violence, only to go on to become the first truly democratically elected president of South Africa.²⁸ While the 2001 attacks on the U.S. were horrific, and condemned by the world's community of nations, there are those in the world who see the U.S.'s >war on terrorism= as an equally ideologically-driven attack on innocent Muslims in the Middle East. However one defines terrorism, it remains a global problem.

The relative ease with which people or organizations bent on using the tactics of terrorism can obtain weapons, ranging from large- scale WMDs to small arms, explosives and land mines keeps the risk they will be used high. Political tensions between states which threaten the use of WMDs such as North Korea and the West have also escalated since the end of the Cold War. There is, moreover, a broader range of ways that criminal and terrorist organizations can clandestinely finance their activities. For them, instability and violence provide fertile grounds for profit-making from a range of activities. These include the global arms and drug trades,

prostitution, the export of primary commodities and earnings from sponsored migrant workers which amounts to virtually indentured labor or slave labor. It is this issue of financing these activities which remains at the heart of the global problems of violent conflict for states and non-state actors alike.

The ways and means of war and violent conflict

The economic causes of and links to armed conflict are widespread -indeed even global- and they are the most significant factor in the risk of war. They range from the revenue-generating activities essential for combatants to engage in conflict through the role of profiteering trans-national corporations (TNCs, also multi-national corporations or MNCs) in destabilizing countries to the proliferation of and easy access to cheap small arms and land mines.²⁹ All of these activities can provide the ways and means for wars and armed conflicts to be conducted. They strongly suggest that, at least in the case of civil wars, rebellions and uprisings -which constitute the vast majority of recent conflicts (on average, fewer than 10% of recent conflicts have been between states, all others are within states)³⁰ greed and the profit motive are the driving force behind today=s civil wars and violent conflict. Indeed, the single greatest risk factor for violent conflict to break out in a developing country is the degree to which that country relies upon some type of primary commodity -such as oil, timber, diamonds, and precious metals.

Resource-based conflicts depend on a vicious and often brutally violent cycle. This cycle may occur where a weak state and economy relies heavily³⁰ on a single primary commodity, such as oil in Nigeria, or in the case of Colombia, drugs. The government may therefore have to cater to the

needs of a large petroleum TNC, which may include violating human rights and damaging the local environment in order to gain access to the oil reserves. Oil revenues from the powerful TNCs may be so large that they induce greed and corruption in the fragile state, thus leading to instability. Instability provides a fertile environment for violent conflict as various factions vie for control of the revenue. Revenue from the oil funds the purchase of arms on the international market which are used to keep the region unstable in order to allow for continued unfettered access to the oil and the profits it produces. The TNC may help foster this environment by at best turning a blind eye to corruption and violence, or at worst, actually supplying arms and combatants to keep the profits flowing. In the end, according to the >greed theory= these conflicts often expand into fully-fledged civil wars or LICs, drawing in many factions who seek to sustain themselves from the profits of the conflict.

In the current state of affairs, many countries enduring some form of civil war or LIC have actually developed a conflict economy. In conflict economies, combatants rely on armed violence to gain power, profit and status by controlling revenue generating activities. In some weak states, the lack of government control over the economy provides opportunities for non-state actors to exploit these revenue generating activities. This in turn motivates rebel groups to destabilize a state or region if it can profit from doing so. Not only does conflict enable rebel groups to gain access to sources of finance, it can also provide the *raison d=etre* for many of these organizations. In many cases, rebel groups then come to resemble warlord armies engaged in criminal activity rather than self-proclaimed freedom fighters. In other cases, predatory states seek to make profits from primary commodity resources, or are induced to do so by TNCs. It is usually the political elites in these places that gain all the benefits and revenues from these

resources and all too often they do so at the expense of common people and the local environment. In these cases, local groups who suffer from these activities sometimes rise up to defend their interests, and they engage in armed conflict to recapture control of the resources or the areas they are found in.

This is particularly true of oil resources in countries such as Nigeria where multi-national oil companies such as Shell, Mobil and Chevron-Texaco have ravaged the land and generated widespread civil conflict in their quest for oil and profits under an agreement with the Nigerian government. In other cases, such as in Colombia, it is drug profits which fund cartels that have destabilized the state that seeks to curtail the illicit global trade in drugs. Most recently, the mineral Coltan (or Columbite-Tantalite, a metallic ore found in the Congo region of Africa It is very high demand because once refined, it is the principle material used for capacitors which control electricity in almost all cell phones, laptops, pagers and many other electronics) has become the newest commodity fueling violent conflict. Various state and non-state actors in central Africa, including in Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi, have escalated violence in the Congo conflict in order to gain ready access to Coltan sources.³¹ In most cases, these activities are kept secret, lest they draw the scrutiny of the international community which could lead to some form of intervention.

Current conflicts occur in a twilight world where illicit activities meet and overlap with legitimate state and business interests across the globe.³² There is an air of secrecy surrounding many aspects of recent conflicts, in large part because they are linked to private companies that are not accountable to the international community. This allows many different players to make

huge profits while avoiding public awareness which might lead to intervention and the undermining of profits. There is a clear link among the private sector activities of large TNCs engaged in primary resources extraction, the global arms trade both illicit and legitimate, and the combatants -whether state or non state- who profit from war. The best recent examples of these links are found in Angola and Sierra Leone where oil and diamonds have fueled and funded devastating civil wars. In Angola, where earlier Cold-War tensions were played out in a long-term civil war, oil TNCs, including ExxonMobil and Chevron, have provided huge sums of money to the government as drilling bonuses and payments. These profits have been used to purchase arms to fight the ongoing civil war against the opposition movement, UNITA. The arms have been purchased, in some cases, from firms affiliated with the major oil companies, including Exxon. In Sierra Leone, and neighboring Liberia, it was diamonds handled by the international firm De Beers (which has a virtual monopoly on the world's gem-quality diamond market -see the box below on blood diamonds)-now more appropriately referred to as >blood diamonds= which fueled armed conflict. In many of these cases, those involved keep the international community and legitimate state governments out of the picture by using illicit markets for arms and commodities, and by hiring private companies to conduct secret activities essential to sustaining the conflict.

A disturbing trend in war is the increased activity of private military companies (PMCs) in theaters of conflict the world over. PMCs are, in effect, corporate-style private military organizations or modernized mercenaries. These companies are hired by state and non-state actors alike to engage in conflict-related activities including providing: strategic security for installations such as airports, intelligence, training for combatants, supplies of weapons and

vehicles (everything from helicopters to tanks and troop carriers), combat support, and post-combat reconstruction. The now defunct South African PMC, Executive Outcomes, was for example instrumental in securing Sierra Leone government=s control of diamond sources for a time. Most major PMCs, such as Sandline International and Vinnell Corporation are based in Britain and the U.S. respectively, and they are tied directly and indirectly to larger wealthy TNCs. In some cases, the PMCs are also linked to powerful political interests. This is the case with Haliburton Corporation, a U.S.-based company which has been contracted by the government to manage many aspects of the current war in Iraq, including profitable oil reserves. This raises the question as to whether U.S. involvement in armed conflict has been instigated to further these big business interests such as Haliburton and U.S. oil companies.³³ One of the most troubling features of PMCs= is that they operate beyond the reach of international scrutiny and responsible representative governments. It would appear that the link between profits and the proliferation of war also extends to other business interests, especially arms manufacturing

The drive by developed states to profit from the manufacture and sale of arms, particularly inexpensive small arms, has also fueled violent conflict. The proliferation of arms and arms sales has significantly increased the availability of weapons, especially to poor countries engaged in conflict and where there are primary commodity resources. This has made violent conflict all the more affordable, and arguably more likely. Arms manufacturers and the profits they generate are concentrated in developed western countries such as the U.S. During, but especially after the Cold War, arms stockpiles from the U.S., Russia, Israel and Western European countries have been flooded onto the world=s markets, both legitimate and illegal. Indeed, since the end of the Cold War, the world has been literally awash in small arms and ordnance, including incredibly

damaging and cheap land mines (see below for the impact of land mines). World arms exports reached over \$52 billion worth in 2000 with over 95 percent of these arms coming from developed nations (over 60 percent from the U.S. alone), by 2007, this amount rose to nearly \$60 billion³⁴ (See Table II). Although developing countries share of arms imports has declined over the past few years, they still imported an estimated 65 percent of official arms exports, and probably took in a greater share of illegally exported weapons.³⁵

Similarly, developing states are prone to trading their primary resource commodities directly for arms. In Angola and Mozambique, for example, opposition forces were able to trade ivory and diamonds for arms, and in Southeast Asia and South America, drug cartels get their guns straight from brokers who take drugs in lieu of cash since they are more easily converted to money in their home countries, and less easily traced by governments. In both cases the commodities ended up in markets in developed countries.

It is the trade in small arms (including rifles, machine guns, pistols, mortars, grenades and grenade launchers) and land mines which plays a major role in facilitating violent conflict, particularly in developing countries.³⁶ These arms are easy and cheap to manufacture, they are easily smuggled around the world, their use requires almost no training or organizational support, they are simple and easily repaired, they are light and manageable enough even for children as young as 10 yrs old to use, and they are inexpensive. These weapons are, moreover, becoming ever more powerful. Some automatic rifles can fire in excess of 600 rounds (bullets) per minute, wreaking havoc and causing large numbers of casualties.³⁷ In weak or poor states, the temptation for those who seek to control high value commodities to buy and use inexpensive

small arms to maintain their control of a predatory conflict economy is all too often the case. The devastation wrought by these small arms and especially land mines has had a horrific impact on those least able to recover and made our world all the more dangerous

The impact of war and violent conflict.

The impact of war and violent conflict on the human community has been profound. It is clearly hard to capture in words the depth of the impact in human terms. One can write of lives lost, horrific damage to body, mind and spirit, and the wider effects on societies and economies, but these do not really do justice to the suffering or reveal the true impact -nevertheless, some attempt at this must be made. While a far larger number of people have died from causes other than human-human violence (see chapter on health), the numbers of people killed by direct violence and those lost by conflict-generated crises such as famine, dislocation, economic collapse and many other associated ills. In addition to the counted and untold deaths directly attributed to war -some estimates suggest near 200 million people since the year 1 C.E., there have been the usually unaccountable numbers of >collateral= victims (see table # for estimates). Recent and current conflicts, moreover, have had a far greater impact on civilians and non-combatants (in some cases, civilians have been forced to or chosen to engage in combat, even if they are not formally trained as soldiers and do not serve in an organized army) than on soldiers in organized armed forces. Violent conflict has also hampered development, and in many cases forced entire societies and regions into a regression of social progress and quality of life. This has likely had an incalculable affect on progress not achieved in many parts of the world. In sum, the efficiency with which we have developed our capacity to conduct violent conflict has had a diametrically opposed impact on our efficiency to improve our lives by virtually all known

measures.

There are a number of direct effects of war beyond the basic death toll. First, violent conflict now permeates every level of society. It undermines people's sense of peace and security, it generates a mentality of conflict where people perceive violent interactions to be the normal pattern of behavior and it leaves a legacy of fear for future generations. It involves all members of societies including civilians, and it has a harsher impact on those least able to withstand or recover from its effects. This is especially true of women and children who are often the most rightless and vulnerable members of a society. Indeed, many forces engaged in civil conflicts directly target civilians with terror and atrocities in order to intimidate people into submission and allow them to maintain control of the resources that fund their operations. This has included the brutal hacking off of people's limbs, the destruction of people's homes, towns, hospitals, schools, water and electricity supplies and places of work. The whole fabric of society is unraveled by war the leading to the breakdown of civil rights. It has moreover, displaced an enormous number of people. War and the threat of violent conflict have created millions of refugees (those who have fled their countries in search of peace and security) and internally displaced persons (IDPs refugees who remain within their state of citizenship or home. This has caused untold misery for these people who are uprooted from their homes, work and families, and have very difficult times while living in severely compromised circumstances in refugee camps or makeshift temporary accommodations. In developing countries, the majority of refugees are women and children and they are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and victimization as displaced people. Wars have also generated many millions of orphans and truncated families as children are separated from or lose parents, and fathers and mothers are

killed.

Women and children have suffered disproportionately from violent conflict. Children lose the ability to develop and gain an education for the future. Many are forcibly conscripted into combat where they fight alongside adult soldiers or they are forced to become slave-like workers for commodity production. Some children join armed forces willingly as the only way to survive in a conflict political economy. They then lose ties to family and place, learning only how to fight or serve a military force. Even in the aftermath of battles, children are forced to scavenge for weapons, or to navigate through and attempt to disarm land mines. It is estimated that there are over 500,000 child and youth soldiers fighting in conflicts around the world today.³⁸ Even larger numbers of women are deliberately targeted for victimization in current conflicts and we are only now beginning to understand the extent of their suffering. Women and young girls have suffered extraordinary levels of sexual violence during war as male combatants have raped, abused, beaten and abducted them in untold numbers. In many cases women and girls have, moreover, been subjected to even greater rates of assault, forced labor -often as sex slaves-, mutilation and amputation than men. Male have done so to terrorize women and societies into submission. In addition to the actions of male combatants, women have also experienced high rates of sexual assault by other members of society, including political elites and police, in the wake of conflict while the society is still under disruption.³⁹ In some societies, male combatants have seen women as easy targets for killing because they are perceived to be of less value to that society than men.⁴⁰ Overall, violent conflict has victimized and demeaned women and children and further undermined their status in societies, thereby eroding the global level of human rights.

A major lingering threat which poses problems for civilians long after a conflict is over is land mines. Even civilians who are not directly attacked in a theater of war have been victimized by the indiscriminate effects of land mines and unexploded ordnance. Indeed, one of the gravest problems facing people in developing countries where access to arable land often means the difference between life and death is the legacy of anti-personal land mines deployed during a conflict but not removed. Inexpensive (many cost less than \$3) and easily laid land mines have killed or maimed thousands around the world (an estimated 20,000-25,000 a year through the 1990s). Land mines also inhibit travel, prevent farmers from using arable land, undermine the resettlement of refugees and limit the reconstruction of entire regions in former war zones. Most victims are, again, women and children who do the bulk of agricultural work in developing countries. Long after the combatants have quit the field of war, land mines remain to impede recovery. Yet it has only been since 1997 that the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines was able to push for the ratification of a Mine Ban Treaty to prevent the continued manufacture and use of mines.⁴¹ While members of the international community strive to remove mines, their efforts are countered by cost and the continued deployment of mines. Each mine can cost \$1000 to remove and deactivate (some now come with >anti-handling devices which prevent even careful removal), and many countries, including major manufacturers and exporters of land mines such as the U.S., have refused to sign the Mine Ban Treaty. There remain an estimated 65-100 million land mines buried in various parts of the world, with more being deployed in new theaters of conflict every day.

There are more general and less obvious effects of violent conflict which deserve our attention. Perhaps one of the greatest long-term effects of violent conflict has been the disruption to the

environment. Wars have increased the likelihood of and sharpened the effect of both famines and epidemic diseases. Disruptions to the normal balance of people and the environment have inevitably led to food shortages because of interruptions to farming and because of problems of supply and delivery in conflict zones. Epidemics have moreover erupted or become more severe (even becoming world-wide pandemics as was the case of the Influenza pandemic after WWI) because of the disruptions of war. Wars also affect the prospects for development and economic prosperity. Conflict economies tend to be hard on fragile environments. Rain forests and coastal zones where gems, timber and oil can be found are hardest hit by techniques of indiscriminate resource removal as combatants seek to exploit these resources as quickly as possible in order to sustain the fighting. Old growth forests and their complex ecosystems are destroyed -often for the foreseeable future as are oil-bearing lands. In this regard, indigenous peoples are hardest hit by war since they often rely upon the fragile ecosystems that war targets or destroys. In the end, only a handful of political elites and TNCs profit from the ravages of war, and they are the ones best able and most likely to perpetuate conflict for their own ends.

Conflict economies generally do not sustain broader development or have a multiplier effect (the effect of one sector of the economy stimulating investment and growth in other sectors) The reliance on primary commodity revenues in such >snatch and grab= societies does not support other development. Diamond mining and drug production, for example, tend to see most profits leave the local country or get used up in war. These activities, moreover, foster bribery, corruption greater economic inequities and more abuses of human rights .The instability of war, moreover, makes economic recovery difficult both in the wake of destroyed infrastructures and undermined societies and in the lack of confidence international investors may have to invest in

the country. In short, war and violent conflict have limited or caused a regression in just about every indices of human development. All these effects are pervasive and persistent. They have also contributed to a vicious cycle where they breed poverty and instability, thereby increasing the likelihood of war, and where recent conflicts tend to significantly increase the chances of future conflicts.

The question of our interconnectedness with these conflicts can be illustrated by a hypothetical scenario about blood diamonds. Blood diamonds are gem-stones that are mined or gathered from sources (rivers, excavations, dug shafts etc.) in regions or countries enduring a civil war. As the theory of greed which argues that there is a political economy of war which drives people to engage in conflict because it is profitable suggests, people in regions where there are diamonds - Sierra Leone is the most notorious example- and the profits they yield have driven violent conflict. So serious was the problem of profits from diamonds gathered in conflict zones being used to fuel civil war that the international community brought sufficient pressure to bear on De Beers (a South African and U.K.-based company which controls over 80% of the world=s gem-quality diamonds) and the rest of the diamond industry to force them to address the problem. In 2000, members of the international community and the diamond industry devised the Kimberley Process (named after the South African town where a major source of diamonds was discovered in the late 19th century) which is intended to ensure that new diamonds are produced from regions where they do not generate or support violent conflict. The problem of conflict diamonds, and other primary high value commodities such as Coltan, being used to fund violent conflict and perpetuate conflict economies persists.⁴²

In order to fully appreciate the global dimensions of the cause of violent conflict we must also consider what impact our personal choices have on connections which may be linked to violent conflict. Here we can see that consumer choices -the purchase of a cell phone which utilizes the mineral coltan dug from the Democratic Republic of the Congo or a diamond ring dredged from a river in Sierra Leone, for example- can be part of a chain of connections that begin in a developed country and, through complex and often obscure channels, lead to violent conflict.

Table I

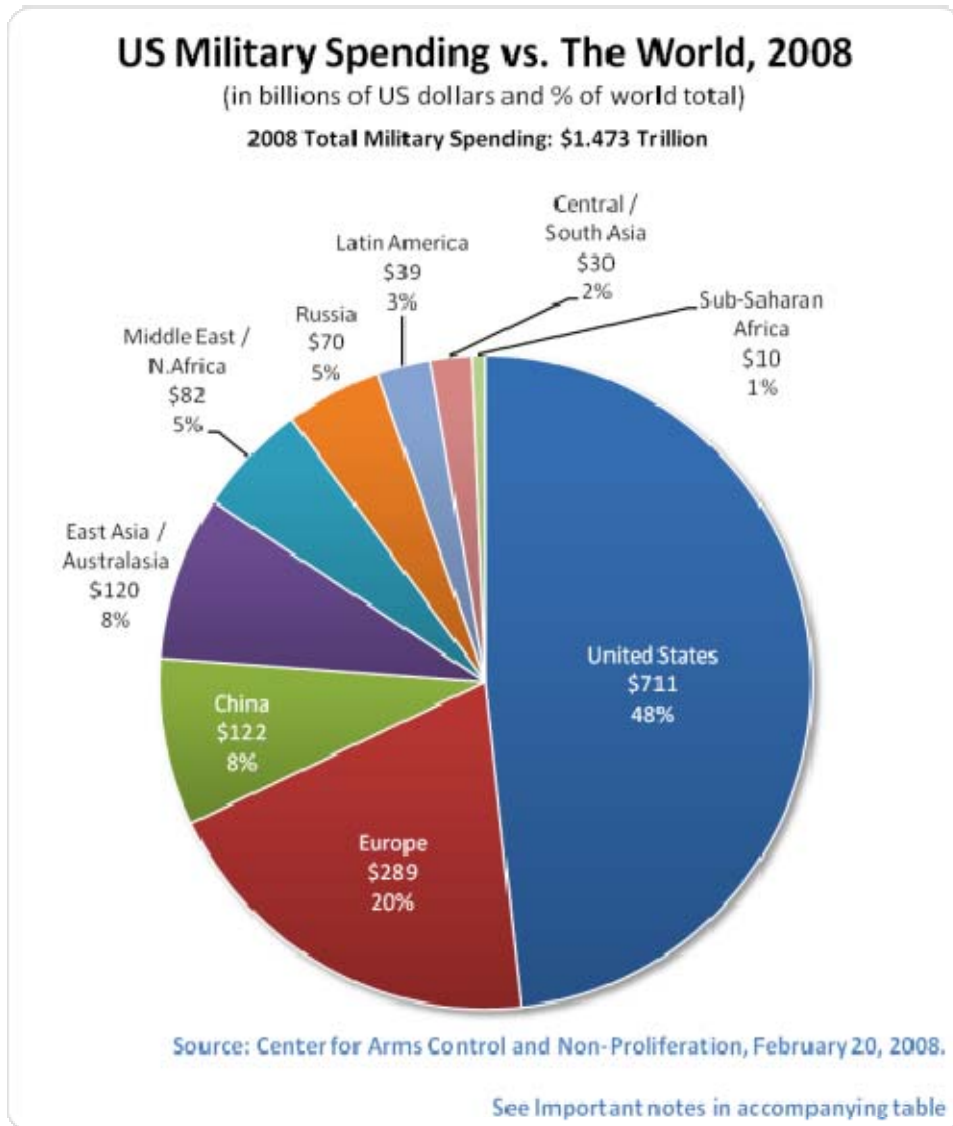
Estimated number of deaths from ten major wars of the 20th-century

Conflict/dates	Military Deaths	Civilian Deaths
World War II 1938-45	20,000,000	35,000,000
World War I 1914-18	9,000,000	5,000,000
Korean War 1950-53	2,500,000	600,000
Viet Nam, 1965-73	2,200,000	500,000 +
Sudanese Civil War, 1984- on	1,800,000	500,000 +
Mozambican Civil War, 1981-95	1,500,000	750,000+
Chinese Civil War 1945-49 War in	1,200,000	350,000+
Iran-Iraq War, 1980-88	900,000	N/A

Russian Civil War 1918-21	850,000	100,000
Chinese Civil War 1927-37	500,000	N/A
World Totals	63,000,000	44,000,000

Source: D. Barash and C. Webel, *Peace and Conflict Studies*, (Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks California, 2002)

and M. Renner, *Ending Violent Conflict*, World Watch Paper No. 146. (World Watch Institute, Danvers, MA, 1996)



Military spending: U.S. vs. other countries: 2003

Source: Global Issues Forum

Table II

Military spending in 2008 (\$ Billions, and percent of total)

Country	Dollars (billions)	% of total	Rank
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Source: [U.S. Military Spending vs. the World](#), *Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation*, February 22, 2008

Notes:

The figure for the United States is the budget request for Fiscal Year 2009 and includes \$170 billion for ongoing military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as funding for the Department of Energy's nuclear weapons activities.

All other figures are projections based on 2006, the last year for which accurate data is available.

All countries that spent over one billion per year are listed.

Due to rounding, some percentages may be slightly off.

If you are viewing this table on another site, please see







<http://www.globalissues.org/article/75/world-military-spending> for further details.

United States	711	48.28%	1
China	121.9	8.28%	2
Russia	70	4.75%	3
United Kingdom	55.4	3.76%	4
France	54	3.67%	5
Japan	41.1	2.79%	6
Germany	37.8	2.57%	7
Italy	30.6	2.08%	8
Saudi Arabia	29.5	2.00%	9
South Korea	24.6	1.67%	10
India	22.4	1.52%	11
Australia	17.2	1.17%	12
Brazil	16.2	1.10%	13
Canada	15	1.02%	14
Spain	14.4	0.98%	15
Turkey	11.6	0.79%	16
Israel	11	0.75%	17
Netherlands	9.9	0.67%	18
United Arab Emirates	9.5	0.65%	19
Taiwan	7.7	0.52%	20
Greece	7.3	0.50%	21
Iran	7.2	0.49%	22
Myanmar	6.9	0.47%	23

Military spending in 2008 (\$ Billions, and percent of total)

Country	Dollars (billions)	% of total	Rank
Singapore	6.3	0.43%	24
Poland	6.2	0.42%	25
Sweden	5.8	0.39%	26
Colombia	5.4	0.37%	27
Chile	4.7	0.32%	28
Belgium	4.4	0.30%	29
Egypt	4.3	0.29%	30
Pakistan	4.2	0.29%	31

Arms sales (agreements), by Supplier, 2000-2007 (in billions of constant 2007 U.S. dollars)

Supplier	Total Sales in US Dollars (billions)	Percent of total sales
<p>Source: Richard F. Grimmett, <i>CRS Report for Congress; <u>Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations, 2000-2007</u></i> . October 23, 2008</p> <p>Notes: Percentages are rounded; Each country shown as follows:</p>		
United States	 134.835	38%
Russia	 67.549	19%
France	 32.096	10%
United Kingdom	 26.425	8%
China	 12.547	4%

Arms sales (agreements), by Supplier, 2000-2007 (in billions of constant 2007 U.S. dollars)





Supplier	Total Sales in US Dollars (billions)	Percent of total sales
Germany	 13.859	4%
Italy	 7.045	2%
Other European	 39.024	11%
Others	 22.523	

Figure 2. Worldwide Arms Deliveries, 2000-2007 and Suppliers' Share with Developing World (in millions of constant 2007 U.S. dollars)

Supplier

Worldwide Deliveries

Value

2000-2003

Percentage of Total to Developing World

United States 50,551 60.30

Russia 19,752 91.60

France 10,056 66.30

United Kingdom 23,290 75.30

China 4,094 89.50

Germany 6,380 30.90

Italy 2,095 33.40

All Other European 15,266 56.00

All Others 12,132 48.20

TOTAL 143,617 65.10

Supplier

Worldwide Deliveries

Value

2004-2007

Percentage of Total to Developing World

United States 51,216 64.30

Russia 20,125 95.90

France 12,174 73.00

United Kingdom 14,512 69.40
 China 4,460 93.20
 Germany 7,328 32.90
 Italy 1,975 31.40
 All Other European 12,248 37.40
 All Others 10,881 39.90
TOTAL 134,918 64.70

**Supplier Worldwide Deliveries
 Value 2007**

**Percentage of Total to
 Developing World**

United States 12,793 59.50
 Russia 4,700 97.90
 France 2,100 33.30
 United Kingdom 2,600 34.60
 China 1,400 85.70
 Germany 1,000 40.00
 Italy 500 40.00
 All Other European 3,200 34.40
 All Others 2,700 18.50
TOTAL 30,933 55.60

Source: U.S. Government

¹ H. Belloc and Basil. T. Blackwood, *The Modern Traveler*, (Edward Arnold, London, 1898), p. 41.

² George Gordon Noel Byron, Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto 1, Stanza 86, found at

<http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext04/chpl10.txt>

³ For these cases see variously, A. Rowell, J. Marriott and L. Stockman, *The Next Gulf. London, Washington, and Oil Conflict in Nigeria*, (Constable and Robinson, London, 2005), G. Campbell, *Blood Diamonds. Tracing the deadly path of the world's most precious stones*. (Westview Press, no place of publication listed, 2002), The Global Issues forum on Nigeria at: <http://www.globalissues.org/article/86/nigeria-and-oil> For the case of Coltan and conflict see the British Broadcasting Corporation report at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1468772.stm> and the Pulitzer Center's report at" <http://www.pulitzercenter.org/openitem.cfm?id=177>

4. See World Health Organization, *Summary of the World Report on Violence and Health, 2002* (WHO Publications, Geneva, Switzerland, 2002), p. 2.

⁵ For the global dimensions of the Cold War see O.A. Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge, 2007).

6. For examples of this see M. Pugh and N. Cooper, *War Economies in a Regional Context: Challenges of Transformation*, (Lynne Rienner, Boulder CO, 2004)

⁷ R. Holmes, Battlefield. *Decisive Conflicts in History* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2007), pp.1-35

⁸ For more on these sections relating to the history of war see variously P. Turchen, *War and Peace and War. The Rise and Fall of Empires* (Plume, New York, NY, 2007), R. Holmes, *Battlefield. Decisive Conflicts in History* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007) and W. McNeill, *A World History, 4th Edition*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 1999).

⁹ See the excerpt of his tactics in P. Riley et al, *The Global Experience. Vol. 1, Fifth Edition*, Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2002), pp. 63-64.

¹⁰ H. Belloc and Basil. T. Blackwood, *The Modern Traveler*, (Edward Arnold, London, 1898), p. 41.

¹¹ A useful detailed listing of recent war deaths with extensive citations can be found at the Twentieth Century Atlas of Death Tolls at: <http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/warstats.htm>

¹² R. Howard and J. Forest, *Weapons of Mass Destruction and Terrorism* (McGraw-Hill, 2008).

¹³ See Wested, *Global Cold War*.

¹⁴ O.A. Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2007), pp. 115-118.

¹⁵ D. Rosen, *Armies of the Young. Child Soldiers in war and terrorism* (Rutgers University Press, Rutgers, NJ 2005) and see the campaign against the use of child soldiers at: <http://www.child-soldiers.org/home> and for the case of children being abducted to serve as soldiers in Uganda see the Invisible Children site at: <http://www.invisiblechildren.com/home.php>.

16. For a discussion of these theories, see P. Collier, L. Elliott, H Hegre, A. Hoeffler, M Reynal-Querol and N. Sambanis, *Breaking the Conflict Trap. Civil War and Development Policy* (The World Bank and Oxford University Press, Washington DC, 2003) M. Renner, >Breaking the Link Between Resources and Repression= in *The World Watch Institute, State Of The World, 2002* (W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 2003) and The Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, *Final Report* (Carnegie Corporation, New York, 1997)

17. See P. Collier, >Economic Causes of Civil Conflict And Their Implications For Policy= (World Bank Policy Document, Washington DC, June 15, 2000)

18. P. Collier, *Economic Causes*, p. 6.

¹⁹ See S. Abeyratne, *Economic Roots of Political Conflict: The Case of Sri Lanka*, *World Economy*, Volume 27, Issue 8, Sept. 2004, pp. 1295-1214,

²⁰ J. Rogers, J Spence and J Uyangoda, *Sri Lanka, Political and Ethnic Conflict*, *American Psychologist*, July 1998, pp. 771-777, P. 775.

²¹ See for example D. Zedalis, *Female Suicide Bombers* (University Press of the Pacific, Honolulu, HI, 2004) and R. Skaine, *Female Suicide Bombers* (McFarland Press, Durham NC, 2006).

²² See for example the ongoing coverage in the *New York Times*, and in particular the article *Near Sri Lanka's War Zone, Civilians Struggle to Cope*, 12 February 2009. See also reports from Human Rights Watch at: <http://www.hrw.org/en/video/2008/03/06/sri-lankas-ghosts>

²³ T. Fuller, *Sri Lankan War Nears End, but Peace Remains Distant*, article in the *New York Times*, 19 February 2009

²⁴ See Aran MacKinnon, *The Making of South Africa. Culture and Politics*. (Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, NJ, 2004), chp. 11.

²⁵ See R. Howard and R Sawyer, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism. Understanding the new security environment*. (McGraw-Hill, 2006) and analysis of security and global terrorism at the Center for Strategic and International Studies: <http://www.csis.org/>.

²⁶ See Howard and Forest, *Weapons of Mass Destruction*.

²⁷ W. Morrison and M. Labonte *China's holdings of U.S. Securities; Implications for the U.S. Economy*, Report prepared for the United States Congressional Research Service, January 2009. And T. Gkjelton, National Public Radio Report: *Downturn raises risk of global financial warfare*, broadcast 19 February, 2009.

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²⁹ For the role of TNCs in armed conflict see J. Banfield, V. Haufler and D. Lilly, *Transnational Corporations in Conflict Zones*, (*International Alert*, London, U.K., September 2003) and *The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists*, >Making A Killing: The Business of War= and >Privatizing Combat, *The New World Order=* (The Center For Public Integrity, Washington DC, 2002)

³⁰ M. Renner, >Military Trends= in *Vital Signs 2001* (World Watch Institute, W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 2002), pp.82-84

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