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Virtual Wars: A Comparative Analysis of the 1991 Gulf War and the 'War on Terror'

Jonathan Michael Mendel

PhD

2007

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17 APR 2008

Abstract

This thesis maps out the development of virtual and networked warfare, from the anti-Soviet Afghan insurgency through to the 1991 Gulf War and the ongoing violence of the 'war on terror'. I demonstrate that we have seen two parallel developments over the past few decades: the US has become able to dominate the fighting of large-scale, high-tech virtual wars, and opponents of US-led forces are able to deploy techniques of networked warfare that US-led forces cannot effectively combat. It is therefore the case that US-led 'successes' in the major combat operations phases of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom are being followed by a US-led failure to deal with the networked warfare of Afghan, Iraqi and other insurgent groups.

This thesis investigates the policy impact of these developments, and their broader ethical and political implications. I demonstrate that – if we are to ameliorate the ongoing bloodshed in Afghanistan and Iraq, and avoid carrying out additional military interventions that generate networked opposition to which we do not have an effective response – there is a real need for an ethical engagement with others, and for more effective participation in the ideational aspects of conflict.

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Acknowledgements

I am grateful to David Campbell and Stuart Elden for supervising this thesis and for their invaluable support in developing this research. I am also grateful to Michael Dillon and Stephen Graham for examining the thesis and for their insightful responses to this work.

A number of people have contributed very useful feedback on work that has been incorporated into the thesis, including: Luiza Bialasiewicz, James Der Derian, Stephen Graham, Gordon MacLeod, Ruth Mendel and Simon Philpott. I am also grateful to Dave Whitter, and several others who would rather not be named, for providing me with valuable information relating to my area of study.

This research would have been far less enjoyable were it not for the positive and supportive environments provided by Durham Geography Department and Newcastle School of Geography, Politics and Sociology; I am also grateful to the Watson Institute for hosting me on a very useful overseas visit. I have benefited from presenting parts of the thesis at a number of seminars and conferences – receiving valuable comments on and questions about my research. While there were too many organisers of and participants in these events for me to name them all here, I am nonetheless indebted to them all for some extremely valuable feedback on my work.

I am grateful to the ESRC for funding my PhD research; the preceding MA was funded by Newcastle University Faculty of the Humanities and Social Sciences and the Andrew Smith Memorial Bursary. I am also grateful for funding for conference expenses from BISA (and their CRIPT and Poststructural Politics working groups), the Henry George Foundation and the International Union.

List of Acronyms

- AA – American Airlines
- CIA – Central Intelligence Agency (US International intelligence agency)
- CPA – Coalition Provisional Authority
- CSG – Counterterrorism Security Group (US agency)
- ECBA – Enhanced Combat Body Armour
- FAA – Federal Aviation Administration
- FETA – Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan
- GIA – Algerian Armed Islamic Group
- GPS – Global Positioning System
- ICG – International Crisis Group
- IED – Improvised Explosive Device
- IRA – Irish Republican Army
- ISAF – International Security Assistance Force
- ISI – Inter-Services Intelligence (Pakistani intelligence agency)
- JDAM – Joint Direct Access Munition
- JOC – Joint Operating Concepts
- JSTARS – Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System
- MICLIC - Mine Clearing Line Charges
- MIME-NET – Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network
- NCW – Network Centric Warfare
- OSCE – Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
- PTSD – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- RMA – Revolution in Military Affairs
- SAPRIN – Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network
- SAS – Special Air Service
- TRIPs – Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights
- UA – United Airlines
- UAV – Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
- UN – United Nations

- UNMOVIC – United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Committee
- USAID – US Agency for International Development
- VPN – Virtual Private Network
- WMD – Weapons of Mass Destruction
- WTO – World Trade Organization

Introduction

A Potentially Explosive Situation

In its detailed analysis of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Cobra II describes Corp Jeremiah Day and colleagues' role in clearing mines ahead of US troops as they rapidly advanced towards Baghdad (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 475-476). To clear mines in Iraq, the US generally used Mine Clearing Line Charges (MICLICs). Day's unit first used one of these charges to try to clear the route ahead of US troops. But it didn't explode: as Gordon and Trainor rather dryly put it "the charges were effective when they worked. This one did not" (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 475).

The next stage was a 'medal of honor' run. The risks involved in this are made clear in the name of the task: the Medal of Honor is a US battlefield medal that is usually awarded posthumously. In this run, Lance Corporal Biamchimano put plastic explosives behind the MICLIC and used a timer to set off the charge.

This did set off the MICLIC. However, this still did not entirely clear the mines: some remained visibly in the way. Corporal Day, along with Sergeant Lauritzen and Lance Corporal Diaz therefore resorted to a rather more basic method of clearing the mines: they picked up the mines to move them, and all that Lauritzen could do is hope that he would not end up as "a pink mist and a memory" (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 476). As Lauritzen and colleagues found out, the mines had been deactivated; however, picking them up to move to them was obviously not an ideal way to test this.

These events bring to the forefront a number of themes in my research. In this episode, one could see the US utilisation of the speed and technology that I will argue play a significant role in cyberwar. The reason why the minefield had been reached so fast, and the speed with which it was cleared was so imperative, was cyberwar's acceleration of combat. However, what we can also see here is the limitations of cyberwar and the need for a mixture of new and old techniques. Despite the technology available to them, the rapid US advance towards Baghdad depended to in part on some (un)fortunate soldiers finding out if mines were going to explode by picking them up and moving them.

Despite extensive US surveillance of the battlespace, and widespread use of high-tech and expensive weapons, one aspect of their advance towards

Baghdad still depended on the soft flesh of a human hand picking up a mine, leaving Lauritzen unsure whether his hand would still be there seconds later. With these issues in mind, analyses of war today must pay attention not just to the development of 'new' cyberwar technologies and techniques but also to the significant roles played by older technologies and the frequent stumbling blocks that cyberwars run into.

In cyberwar, things often happen too quickly for one to have all the necessary information before making a decision; however, decisions are still necessary. While US military knowledge of events in Afghanistan and Iraq is still rather limited, things are developing at a striking speed. Even in this situation, though, decisions must still be taken. As with the mines that Corporal Day and his colleagues needed to clear, there is the potential for things in Afghanistan and Iraq to explode into ever-higher levels of violence, leaving countless human bodies damaged, destroyed or reduced to a 'pink mist and a memory'. There is also, however, the possibility of using these potentials to move things in much more positive directions.

Research Questions

In the thesis, I will thus investigate how war has been fought and conflict has taken place over the past three decades (focusing on examples from Afghanistan and Iraq). I will analyse both changes in the ways in which conflict takes place, and longer term continuities. This will lead me to address a number of research questions.

The primary research question addressed here will be how changes in military, insurgent and 'terrorist' conflict over the past three decades are reflected in the anti-Soviet Afghan insurgency, some of the anti-US Islamist violence that followed this, the 1991 Gulf War, and the 'war on terror'. I shall therefore analyse how the options available to 'major power' forces have changed and expanded. In particular, I will investigate the US-led development of cyberwar, and the central role that Iraq has played in this development.

However, developments in cyberwar techniques have clearly not passed without resistance. I will therefore also analyse how those resisting 'major power' forces have developed a range of techniques of networked warfare. I will

map out the development of these netwar techniques from the anti-Communist Afghan insurgency through to the current violence in Afghanistan and Iraq.

When analysing ‘new’ wars, there is often a foreshortening of the historical field that can blind one to longer-term continuities. In order to avoid this risk, I will be careful to ask which aspects of ‘new’ war are novel, and which of this are continuations of older – often very much older – trends. I will investigate to what extent these changes constitute a revolution in military tactics, strategy and/or technique, and to what extent these are drawn on older military goals and practices.

An additional factor, when analysing these ‘new’ wars, is what we can learn about them and how we can study them. I will argue below that we have seen certain significant changes: for example, the development of complex, networked insurgencies. These changes can make it harder to study conflict: for example, the speed and complexity of the ongoing Afghan and Iraqi insurgencies make it rather hard to determine what is happening. With this in mind, I will consider what theoretical approaches will be useful for analysing ‘new’ types of conflict.

War is not ethically or politically neutral: on the contrary, I will emphasise the importance of representational and normative factors in virtual wars. There are, therefore, a number of ethical and political questions arising from the more analytical research questions outlined above. I will argue that conflict calls for an ethical and political response and will therefore consider what ethico-political factors can motivate contemporary political action. Among those discussed in the thesis – albeit very incompletely, due to space restrictions – will be responses to (the suffering of) others, and a concept of heteropolarity.

This analysis of motivations for ethical and political action leads to two additional questions: if there are certain reasons why we should act, what is it currently possible to do? And what should be avoided? I will therefore consider how one might or might not now go about military interventions. While avoiding a ‘principled’ pacifist position, I will argue that we should be very cautious about future interventions. I will demonstrate that the move to netwar means that – if an intervention is not to lead to the type of failure that is currently playing out in Afghanistan and Iraq – there are both pragmatic and ethical reasons for prioritising representational factors.

There are also broader issues regarding the type of political action that we can take away from 'policy' circles. I will argue that certain political changes have accompanied the move to cyberwar. Towards the end of the thesis, I will therefore begin to consider how this move cyberwar might be resisted, and how certain aspects of netwar can be both challenged and utilised.

Theoretical Questions

These research questions raise a number of broader theoretical questions. As will be shown below, when one tries to analyse how war has changed over the past few decades there are a number of confounding factors. In particular, the increasing role of networking, acceleration and complexity can – as will be argued in the thesis – necessitate a move beyond 'conventional' approaches to research if one is to investigate how war has been fought and conflict has taken place over the past three decades.

In order to engage with these questions, it is therefore necessary to consider how one might theorise the acceleration associated with recent developments in conflict (in particular, the ways in which this acceleration impacts upon our discursive reality, and our attempts to theorise about and within this reality). It is necessary to consider how one can theorise the role of networks in such conflict and, in part as a corollary of this, how one can theorise the complexity associated with conflict today.

With this in mind, I will draw on Arquilla, Baudrillard, Der Derian, Mackinlay and Ronfeldt's work, in order to think about and engage with the complexity of virtual war. However, it is also important to engage with the reality of virtual war: with the often-brutal effects that virtual operations have on people 'on the ground'. I will therefore also deploy Lacan and Žižek's work, in order to engage with this violent reality.

There are also theoretical issues around how to engage with the ethical and political questions raised by conflict. I will utilise the work of a number of thinkers in order to do this: in particular, Campbell, Der Derian, Derrida, Edkins, Levinas and Žižek. I will use these perspectives to analyse the possibilities for ethical engagement with others, and also the promise of the radical political act. The ideas of these thinkers will also be invaluable when

offering an outline of both the policy implications of the thesis and the possibilities for political action in a broader sense.

Theories of and about Virtual War

A number of different terms have been used to describe what the thesis title refers to as virtual wars. It will be helpful to go through some of these terms in this introduction: I should explain why I choose to use some terms and avoid using others. I will therefore begin the thesis with an analysis of various terms for virtual war.

I will argue that virtual and virtuous war are both useful terms. However, these terms can both benefit from additional refinement: I will therefore draw a distinction between cyberwar and netwar conflict. I will also begin to analyse the links between new and old aspects of conflict – and use this to argue that a number of the other terms for ‘new’ war are unhelpful.

Having laid some of the foundations of my account of virtual war, cyberwar and netwar, I will then address the issue of ethical and political engagements with others: drawing on Connolly’s work on existential faith, and Campbell and Levinas’ work on ethics. The Introduction will then conclude by outlining the arguments that will be made in the thesis chapters.

Problems of Definition

As will become clear in this Introduction, settling on definitions of concepts such as ‘war’ and ‘virtual war’ is problematic. I certainly would not want to offer any final or stable definitions of these concepts. Instead, I would follow Nietzsche’s argument that “only that which has no history is definable” (Nietzsche 1989, 80). However, while accepting this Nietzschean claim, I have found it useful to construct working definitions of certain key concepts. As Shane Mulligan argues, to say that only that with no history can be defined, “is not to say that an author cannot define it (it’s frequently done), but that any definition will be missing some aspects of the concept’s meaning in our life” (Mulligan 2005, 353).

In other words, I *will* offer certain definitions below. It would be difficult or impossible to discuss ideas around virtual war over the course of an entire PhD thesis without offering certain definitions. However, it should be

emphasised that these definitions always remain incomplete: it is not possible to develop a definition of a concept such as virtual war without missing out a number of significant aspects of that concept's meaning in and impact on our reality.

Virtual and Virtuous War

Given the title of this thesis, 'virtual war' is clearly an important concept here. I will also extend this concept of 'virtual war' below – following Der Derian by arguing that 'virtuous war' is also significant.

One influential source of the term virtual war is Ignatieff's book with this title (Ignatieff 2000). In Ignatieff's account, virtual war becomes possible when "war without death – to our side – is war that ceases to be fully real to us: virtual" (Ignatieff 2000, 5). The thesis, however, will challenge Ignatieff's account of virtual war: in Chapter 1 I argue that his reading of the 1991 Gulf War as "the last of the old wars" fails to take into account the changes that were visible in the way the Gulf War was conducted (Ignatieff 2000, 5).

Due to my objections to Ignatieff's work (which will be discussed in Chapter 1) the main source from which I draw the terms virtual and virtuous war, and an influential thinker in this area, is James Der Derian (Der Derian 2001b). For Der Derian:

[t]echnology in the service of virtue has given rise to a global form of virtual violence, *virtuous war*... In spite and perhaps because of effort to spread a democratic peace through globalization and humanitarian intervention, war is ascending to an even 'higher' plane, from the virtual to the *virtuous*... At the heart of virtuous war is the technical capacity and ethical imperative to threaten and, if necessary, actualise violence from a distance – *with no or minimal casualties*... virtuous war exercises a comparative as well as strategic advantage for the digitally advanced... virtuality has become the 'fifth dimension' of US global hegemony (Der Derian 2001b, xi-xv. Emphasis in Original).

This ability and imperative to "actualise violence from a distance" allows 'us' to maintain a distance from the very real violence of war (Der Derian 2001b,

xv). In a further stage of this process, the violence becomes associated with an ethical imperative to make use of this newfound ability. Such warfare thus becomes virtuous with “the linking of virtuous intentions with new technologies of killing” (Der Derian 2001b, xv and 48).

Žižek’s work in this area is also important – and worth discussing here – because it advances theories of the virtual while explicitly challenging the ‘common sense’ complaint that theories of virtual war do not allow an adequate response to war because they cannot take account of the real suffering that war causes. For Žižek:

Virtual Reality itself is a rather miserable idea: that of imitating reality, of reproducing its experience in an artificial medium. The reality of the Virtual, on the other hand, stands for the reality of the Virtual as such, for its real effects and consequences (Žižek 2004h, 3).

In the case of virtual warfare, it is horribly clear that the virtual has some very real effects. In particular, with the numerous casualties caused by virtual warfare we see the virtual taking on a bloody reality. For example, the decisions made by an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) operator staring at a computer screen in the US can take on a bloody reality on the ground in Afghanistan.

As noted above, Der Derian argues that virtuality offers a “fifth dimension” in which political action takes place (Der Derian 2001b, xi-xv). Actions that take place in the virtual dimension can and do have profound effects on our reality. For example, Chapter 1 will show that the remarkably quick US victory in the 1991 Gulf War was due to them being able to fight a virtual war with which the more ‘conventional’ Iraqi military could not engage. Chapters 2 and 3 will show how virtual networks (of Al Qaeda, and of Afghan and Iraqi insurgencies) have been used to overlay aspects of our political reality with a virtual network. This ‘fifth dimension’ has thus had significant effects on other dimensions of our political reality.

My account of virtuality is therefore not ‘just’ abstract or theoretical. On the contrary, I will show below that ‘theoretical’ issues can take on a brutal reality. Understanding the ways in which such ‘theoretical’ notions become true – their virtuality takes on reality – is important for addressing more ‘practical’

concerns. Which 'theoretical' account of virtual war prevails thus makes a major difference to many people: it can literally be a matter of life or death.

What we see here is thus not a usurpation of reality by virtuality, nor a continuing primacy of reality that indicates the paucity of theories of virtual war. Instead, there is an interplay between reality and virtuality: as argued above, the virtual offers an additional dimension in which action can take place, and this action can and does impact on our reality. Moreover, as will be shown below, for virtual war to be effective they must to draw on various much older aspects of our reality (for example, the technology of virtual war must be interoperable with older technologies and techniques).

One example of this interplay between reality and virtuality – and the very real effects of theories of virtual war – is the way in which the theories of 'shock and awe' functioned in Operation Iraqi Freedom. One can initially note Ullman and Wade's assertion that:

The mechanism that we concluded would cause and create the outcome of influencing and shaping an adversary's will and perception was through the application of shock and awe' [sic]. We recognised that in order for this concept to work, 'shock and awe' would have to be sufficiently powerful, frightening, intimidating and threatening to convince, compel or scare an adversary into accepting the imposed strategic, political, or operational aims and objectives (Ullman and Wade 1998, vi).

This 'abstract' theorising about shock and awe came to play an important part in the violence of Operation Iraqi Freedom – and offers a significant example of how virtuality can impact on our reality. Such 'abstract' concepts can thus work to shape the way violence takes place.

It is therefore worth noting Ullman's argument that the Pentagon misinterpreted what he meant by shock and awe. For Ullman, the

concept calls for a 360-degree, non-stop campaign using all elements of power to coerce the enemy regime into succumbing rapidly and decisively. That has not happened in this war for two major reasons:

The opportunity to target Saddam accelerated the war's start before all of the military elements were in place, and the decision to pause to see whether Saddam's generals would choose not to fight tempered the intensity of the initial onslaught (Ullman 2003a, 1-2).

A particular (mis)interpretation and appropriation of the concept of shock and awe – of a particular theory of virtual war – thus had a significant impact on the conduct of the Operation. For Ullman, this insufficiently intense version of shock and awe allowed the Saddam regime to survive for longer than might otherwise have been the case (Ullman 2003a, 1-2). Certainly, the type of intense attack with which Ullman envisaged shock and awe beginning would have caused a different distribution of casualties, and may have caused the Saddam regime to collapse more quickly and in different ways. A particular (mis)reading of virtual military theory can thus have very significant practical consequences: shaping the violence on the ground.

New and Old in Virtual and Virtuous War

One should note that, while virtual war is often viewed as a new thing, there have been what one might call 'virtual' and 'virtuous' elements to warfare for millennia.¹ Ideas of the type of virtue appropriate to fighters, and moral (often religious) justifications for fighting, have been present for thousands of years. For example, Sun Tzu's *Art of War* argues that "Moral Law" is one of war's five constant factors (Tzu 1981, 15). Moreover, actualising violence at a distance has been a goal of military technologies and techniques ranging from spears designed for throwing to the 'biological weapons' used in medieval siege warfare.²

I will therefore oppose the claim that either virtual or virtuous wars are entirely new things. To accept this would mean disregarding the importance of

¹ As will be discussed in Chapter 2, De Landa offers a particularly striking illustration of this. He shows how an imaginary 'machine historian' might interpret almost the whole history of warfare as part of the development of the type machines, networks and norms that allow virtual and virtuous warfare to take place (De Landa 1991, 1-10)

² The 1346 siege of Caffa offers one interesting example of such warfare (Wheelis 2002). The Tartars besieging the city began to fall ill with the Black Death and catapulted the bodies of plague victims into Caffa, thus spreading the disease to those inside the city walls and causing substantial casualties (Wheelis 2002).

older technologies and techniques in such wars, and would thus limit the extent to which one can engage with and learn from them. Chapters 1-3 will show that, on the contrary, the interoperability of new and old technologies plays an important part in the efficacy, or otherwise, of virtual war. Moreover, as was demonstrated by the USSR's defeat in Afghanistan (analysed in Chapter 2) and as is being shown by the current problems that international forces and the US-led Coalition are facing in Afghanistan and Iraq (discussed in Chapter 3), superior technological resources do not ensure victory (Coll 2004; Gray 1997, 27; Hoffman 2004; Mackinlay 2005). Issues of new and old will also be discussed at greater length in the Introduction below: in particular, in a section on concepts of 'new war'.

Cyberwar and Netwar

While the terms virtual and virtuous war are useful, they can also be somewhat too broad. The actualisation of the abstract idea of virtuous war takes a whole range of concrete forms: relying just on the term 'virtuous war' will not be sufficiently precise.

Arquilla and Ronfeldt introduce the terms cyberwar and netwar in part as a reaction against a term that they viewed as overly broad: the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) (this 'revolution' will be discussed below). In a similar attempt to move away from the broadness of the concept of virtual war, I will also draw on the terms cyberwar and netwar myself. These concepts were introduced in part in order to challenge the assumption that 'new' wars necessarily involve high-technology weapons and large-scale operations. Arquilla and Ronfeldt use the netwar/cyberwar distinction to

offer a distinction between what we call 'netwar' – societal-level ideational conflicts waged in part through internetted modes of communication – and 'cyberwar' at the military level... While both netwar and cyberwar revolve around information and communications matters, at a deeper level they are forms of war about 'knowledge' – about who knows what, when, where, and why, and about how secure a society or a military is regarding its knowledge of itself and its adversaries (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1997a, 27).

Both ‘netwar’ and ‘cyberwar’ thus refer to particular ways of using information. They are both, to an extent, counterparts of the information revolution in our wider society; however, Arquilla and Ronfeldt argue that these concepts are also applicable to older conflicts (for example, the use of cyberwar and netwar tactics by the Mongols) (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1997a, 34-37).

Netwar is likely to involve more non-state actors than cyberwar (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 3). The involvement of these non-state actors can allow netwar to function at a significantly lower level of conflict than cyberwar: for example, one could read the conflicts around the anti-globalisation protests in Seattle as an example of netwar tactics being brought into play by the protestors (de Armond 2001).

The cyberwar/netwar distinction thus aims to challenge an apparent tendency for discussion of the RMA to focus on the higher intensity military conflicts associated with cyberwar rather than the lower intensity societal conflicts associated with netwar (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 4; Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1997b, 7). I have found that this distinction between cyberwar and netwar – while neither entirely clear nor infallible – is often productive. It will therefore be used in this thesis.

Although there is no clear dividing line between cyberwar, netwar and other types of conflict, these concepts are still useful in order to highlight some changes in the ways in which wars have been fought, and to resist the tendency for RMA-related work to focus on relatively high-intensity and high-technology conflict. It is thus useful to differentiate between these different aspects of virtual war. However, as argued above, while I find these definitions useful they will inevitably fail to encompass some of the meanings that these concepts have accrued and which they will take on (Mulligan 2005, 353).

Chapter 1 and 3 will analyse the efficacy of the US-led cyberwars fought in the 1991 Gulf War and in the initial phases of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. The type of cyberwar analysed in Chapters 1 and 3 owes a great deal to the technologies now available (for example, to what Virilio describes as the “decisive acceleration [that] finally permitted the deterrence of explosives...to be surpassed by that of the means of their air or space delivery”) (Virilio 2002a, 2). However, this is not necessarily the case with netwar: netwar depends more upon

the organisation of resources (and their delivery), in contrast to cyberwar's focus on delivery (and what is delivered).

Like virtual and virtuous war, the use of a netwar or networked form to organise information about conflict and to organise the delivery of one's weapons is clearly not a new thing. As noted above, Arquilla and Ronfeldt use the successes of the Mongols as an example of how netwar can be waged (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1997a, 24). It was through the Mongols' superior communications capabilities (for example, the use of scouts and messengers) that they were able to be so successful and to make relatively small numbers of troops (usually outnumbered by opponents) function like 'Mongol hordes' (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1997a, 24).

Chapter 2 will therefore look at how – prior to the 'war on terror' – another version of netwar was developed during the anti-Communist insurgency in Afghanistan. Techniques used echoed previous conflicts, such as the anti-American resistance in Vietnam and the insurgency in Algeria, as well as much older conflicts (such as those conducted by the aforementioned Mongol 'hordes'). However, these techniques were enacted in different ways in Afghanistan, and Chapter 2 will therefore analyse this netwar alongside the blowback from the anti-Communist Afghan insurgency. It will be shown that these netwar techniques had some striking effects when turned against the US in the September 11 2001 attacks and subsequent insurgencies.

Chapter 3 will extend this, to look at the interplay between cyberwar and netwar. Through analysing the 'major combat operations' phases of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom, I will demonstrate that US cyberwar capabilities have developed further since the 1991 Gulf War. However, one response to this cyberwar is the netwar that is currently being fought by insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq.

It will be shown that such netwars – which US-led forces have failed and are failing to win convincingly – are a corollary of the US's 'successful' use of cyberwar techniques. As will be argued in Chapter 3, it is necessary to find better ways of engaging with others if one is have any hope of avoiding such failures.

Postmodern War

Just as the terms virtual and virtuous war are overly broad, a number of the terms commonly used to describe such wars suffer a similar problem – though often to a more significant extent. In particular, references to ‘postmodern war’ tend to be unhelpfully broad.

The term ‘postmodern war’ is often used in a relatively loose way. For example, while Michael Ignatieff takes considerable care to explain what he means when he argues that Kosovo was a virtual war, he is much less clear about what it means to call Kosovo “the first postmodern war in history” (Ignatieff 2000, 112). To an extent, this is a problem with the term ‘postmodern’ in general – its meaning is complex and shifting.

As Fredric Jameson puts it (in the course of several attempts to develop something like a definition of postmodernism), “[p]ostmodernism theory is...the effort to take the temperature of the age without instruments and in a situation where we are not sure there is so coherent a thing as an ‘age’ or...‘current situation’ any longer” (Jameson 1991, iii). For Jameson, “[t]he concept [of postmodernism,] if there is one, has to come at the end, and not at the beginning, of our discussions” (Jameson 1991, xxii).

In terms of the political implications of postmodernism, “[t]he political form of postmodernism, if there ever is any, will have as its vocation the invention and projection of a global cognitive mapping, on a social as well as a spatial scale” (Jameson 1991, 54). While Jameson reads postmodernism as “the cultural logic of late capitalism”, there is considerable uncertainty and complexity in defining what ‘late capitalism’ is (to add to the uncertainty in defining ‘postmodernity’) (Jameson 1991, xix-xxii and Chapter I). Given all these problems around defining postmodernism and postmodernity – these aforementioned attempts to take the “temperature of the age without instruments and in a situation where we are not sure there is so coherent a thing as an ‘age’” – it is therefore hard to see how one could construct a useful definition of ‘postmodern war’ (Jameson 1991, iii).

Despite these problems, it should nonetheless be noted that Chris Hables Gray does an impressively good job of writing about ‘postmodern war’, reading war as “a living text...And we are all of us bound into it, or for it, even as we tell our parts, as it writes our future” (Gray 1997, 2). Gray paints an – often

compelling – picture of conflicts where “images and simulations are sometimes just as important as actual events because they become events in and of themselves” (Gray 1997, 47).

However, Gray’s use of the concept of ‘postmodern war’ is much less compelling than the substance of many of his arguments. An initial problem with the idea of war being postmodern is that – as noted above – there is considerable uncertainty about what postmodernity might mean. Gray tries to deal with this by arguing that, while philosophers disagree considerably about what ‘postmodern’ might mean, there is more consensus in fields like art and architecture (Gray 1997, 81). For Gray, in the field of war, there is a consensus it is when information is used as a principle that conflict becomes postmodern (Gray 1997, 81). However, while information tends to play a significant role in what is called postmodernism (in Lyotard’s account of the move to a ‘postmodern condition’, for example) I fail to see why one would want to call war postmodern just because information plays a major or determining role (Lyotard 1984). Moreover, I have not been able to find the type of consensus on this issue that Gray believes to be present: there are numerous different claims as to what does or does not constitute ‘postmodern war’ or postmodern conflict (Cooper 2002; Falk 2003b; Goldstein 2003a; Hammond 2004; Hoffman 2004, 18; MacKinnon 1993a; Norris 1992; Pagnucco 1994; Purcell 2003, 144; Rothstein 2001).

As argued above, information has played important (or principle?) roles in war for millennia. For example, one might note (as analysed above) how the Mongols were able to use their effective handling of information in order to make relatively small numbers of troops function as hordes. One would, however, not generally want to call these much older wars ‘postmodern’.

If the only defining principle of ‘postmodern war’ is information, than another term (‘information war’ is an obvious choice) would serve better than ‘postmodern war’: such alternative terms would be just as descriptive, and less loaded. Alternative terms could be less caught up in the debates around ‘postmodern’ theory, less tied to a ‘post’ that supposedly comes after or expands on modernity, and more able to deal with the nuanced changes in the ways in which information has been used in war over time.

New War

My objections to the term ‘new war’ follow on from some of my objections to the ‘post’ in ‘postmodern war’. I would first note that even the most dramatic developments in the tools and practices of war – the development and use of the nuclear bomb, for example – are never entirely new. Just as Newton relied on ‘standing on the shoulders of giants’, those who developed technologies and techniques such as the nuclear bomb drew on the work of a number of earlier thinkers. Moreover, Chapters 1 and 3 will show that the ‘state of the art’ of cyberwar in Afghanistan and Iraq has always had to draw on ‘old’ as well as ‘new’ technologies.

Bearing these problems in mind, ‘newer war’ might be a better term. However, even with this type of change of terminology, there is the issue that what is new soon become old (nuclear weapons, for example, were once startlingly new but have now been with us for six decades).

One of the most prominent users of the term ‘new war’ is Mary Kaldor; it will therefore be helpful to analyse how the term works in her book on the subject (Kaldor 2006). For Kaldor, new wars are relatively low-intensity conflicts which are also influenced by transnational factors – caught up in globalisation (Kaldor 2006, 2-3). As will become clear in the course of the thesis, I would be broadly sympathetic to this emphasis on the importance of globalisation in what I refer to as netwar or networked conflict. Where I disagree with Kaldor, though, is with the appropriateness of the term and concept of ‘new wars’.

Kaldor is clearly aware of the difficulties in distinguishing what she calls ‘new wars’ from older conflicts (Kaldor 2006, 151). However, I would still argue that her concept of ‘new wars’ is flawed both in terms of her timeline, and due to deeper theoretical problems with the concept itself.

For Kaldor, key to the new phase in globalisation which allows these new wars is “the astonishing revolution in information and communications technology” (Kaldor 2006, 75). However, while I would acknowledge that this revolution is significant, I would argue that one can find many of the characteristics of Kaldor’s ‘new wars’ in wars which predate this revolution: for example, Chapter 2 will show that the anti-Soviet Afghan insurgency was also networked and globalised, and that different constructions of identity played a

significant role in this conflict (Kaldor 2006, 79-83). I would therefore argue that this type of 'new war' began rather earlier than Kaldor believes.

I therefore disagree with Kaldor's description of 'new wars' as new (or, at least, as being as new as she argues they are). This does not render her argument invalid – as noted above one could, for example, perhaps refer to 'newer wars' or 'slightly newer wars'. However, I would again suggest that it would be more helpful to use a more specific, less vague term for this type of war (globalised war or information war might be possibilities; in the thesis, I will largely describe this type of 'new' war as netwar).

Kaldor argues that the current conflict in Iraq is the type of 'new war' she describes, although she does note that "its novel character should not be defined in terms of technology" – a position which resonates with Chapter 3's reading of this conflict as netwar (Kaldor 2006, 150). Kaldor is also critical of Bush and Rumsfeld's view of "new war [which] is more like an updated version of old war, making use of new technology" (Kaldor 2006, 151). Again, I would be quite sympathetic towards Kaldor's theoretical positions. However, I will view the "networks of state and non-state actors...like a social movement" which Kaldor argues make up the Iraqi insurgency as networks using techniques with relatively long histories rather than as something radically 'new' (Kaldor 2006, 158). As argued in Chapter 2, this way of fighting could be seen in the anti-Communist Afghan insurgency as well as in the organisation of earlier networks.

There is thus a lot of fruitful analysis in Kaldor's account of 'new wars'; however, what she is analysing as new has a much longer history than the term 'new war' would suggest. In the thesis, I will analyse how the history of netwar techniques has allowed them to be deployed in particular ways in the present.

One could, perhaps, conduct a similar analysis of how 'new war' is constructed from various much older ways of fighting and organising. This would, however, quickly render the concept of 'new war' unhelpful and anachronistic. For example, what was a 'new' technique several years ago in Iraq may now be viewed as old, even outdated (one might, for example, note the

rapid developments in the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) by Iraqi insurgents).³

The Revolution in Military Affairs

I have related objections to the way the concept of a ‘Revolution in Military Affairs’ (RMA) is often used: the term ‘revolution’ implies something radically new. In the thesis, I analyse a number of changes in the ways in which wars are fought. Such changes could be read as a revolution, as a world historical change. Although I would – as will be argued in Chapter 4 – be very cautious about such an account of history, there has been a great deal of interesting work done around the idea of a ‘revolution in military affairs’.

This term originated in the Soviet Union in the 1970s, and draws an analogy between a loosely Marxist view of economic revolutions and a postulated RMA (Metz and Kievit 1994).⁴ Arguments for the existence of a RMA began by looking at the development of nuclear and missile technologies, but later incorporated the role of distance-weapons and communications and data-processing technologies (Metz and Kievit 1994). The term RMA has been widely taken up by writers associated with the US military and is often used by theorists who wish to make clear the links between changes in the military and other, wider societal changes (Project on Defense Alternatives 2004; Kipp 1995).⁵

Some writers on the subject would go so far as to see the RMA as directly analogous to the industrial revolution. Michael Vlahos, for example, argues that “[w]e are in the midst of an economic upheaval equivalent to the industrial revolution in its capacity to transform our lives. Like the Industrial Revolution,

³ The widespread use of IEDs – along with remote detonation – was initially seen as a relatively new development in the Iraqi insurgency. However, this quickly developed further: for example, when US forces jammed the radio signals that insurgents used to detonate IEDs, insurgents quickly switched to using IEDs where a continuous signal is sent to the device (with the IED going off when the signal is stopped – by jamming, for example) (Hashim 2006, 191-192).

⁴ There were also earlier discussions of a ‘revolution’ in warfare (for example, in the aftermath of the two world wars) (Hart 1947). However, insofar as these discussions were accurate, they were referring to earlier revolutions: for example, the way that the industrial revolution may have allowed “the development of mechanical power to the increasing domination of man-power” (Hart 1947, 1).

⁵ I am, however, not accusing theorists who prefer different terminology of viewing military changes as things that take place in isolation. For example, Der Derian is quite clear that the move to virtual war is due at least in part to political and economic factors (Der Derian 2001b, xiv).

this metamorphosis will reach up to politics and to war” (Vlahos 1996, 88; Pickett Jr. 1996).

The RMA is thus usually viewed as intimately connected to – or a corollary of – the information revolution in our wider society (Joint Vision 2004a; Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 5; Owens 1996a, ix).⁶ Given the RMA’s close links to the information revolution, new ways of manipulating information are seen as a driver of the RMA (Jones 1996, 15; Vlahos 1996, 115). Information therefore plays a central role in this ‘new’ type of warfare – serving as a target in war, a weapon, a critical resource or a realm (Jones 1996, 15; Vlahos 1996, 115). While new technologies often play a major role in wars associated with the RMA, it is therefore the case that the “revolution in military affairs has not just been down to technology: ‘information infrastructure’ has played a bigger role in transformation” (Shaw 2005, 32).

Once again, though, there are questions as to whether these changes are revolutions: as argued above, information has also been important in warfare for millennia, as have various types of information infrastructure. For example, Sun Tzu emphasises the importance of information: he argues that “what enables the wise sovereign and the good general to strike and conquer...is *foreknowledge*” (Tzu 1981, 90. Emphasis in original).

Insofar as the RMA is a revolution, then, it is a revolution in the way that information is dealt with: the fact that information is important in warfare is clearly not revolutionary in itself. A useful analogy here might be the way in which libraries function: both in the sense of ‘traditional’ libraries, and ‘virtual’ libraries of e-books. Both are clearly concerned with the management of information, and information in the ‘virtual’ library may be nothing new (if anything it is more common to see older books being made freely available, for copyright reasons) (Mathes 2006). The revolution – insofar as there has been a revolution – lies in the new ways in which the information can be processed.

However, once again (and in line with Arquilla and Ronfeldt’s arguments), it is also the case that the concept of an RMA is overly broad. There have been a number of developments in the ways in which information is

⁶ Once again, it is possible that this may be an artefact left over from the loosely Marxist origins of the term. For example, some accounts of the RMA could be read as a kind of economic determinism, where the information revolution in the economic sphere makes certain changes in the political and military spheres inevitable (Owens 1996a, ix).

managed (ranging from the increased amount of bandwidth available to the US military, to the very decentralised structure of organisations such as Al Qaeda). However, references to the RMA tend to focus on military reforms instead of the other (potentially more radical) developments in the ways in which political movements are organised. Ironically, by focusing on cyberwar as opposed to netwar, analyses of the RMA can miss out on developments in netwar techniques that – as will be argued in Chapter 2 and 3 – are potentially more radical than cyberwar techniques, and are currently limiting what can be done with cyberwar.

Network Centric Warfare

‘Network Centric Warfare’ (NCW) is also an influential concept within the military. For Dombrowski et al NCW is “a naval manifestation of a more general phenomenon” – what one might call a naval version of the RMA (Dombrowski, Gholz et al. 2003, 6). The concept of NCW has spread well beyond the US Navy – entering, for example, into the US Armed Forces’ Joint Operating Concepts (Joint Vision 2004a, 14). This noted, however, the term is often still associated specifically with naval warfare.

Perhaps the most useful way to look at NCW is thus, after Arquilla and Ronfeldt, to argue that the Navy has historically been at the forefront of moves to centre the role of information in warfare (hence its development of NCW) (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1997a, 48). The Navy is now heading towards a doctrine along the lines of what Arquilla and Ronfeldt call cyberwar and which one might also call virtual war (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1997a, 48).

For the purposes of this thesis it will therefore be most useful to view NCW as a particular aspect of the broader changes brought by the move to cyberwar. There already are a number of terms for these phenomena, and NCW is not among the more helpful ones.

Networks are – as will be shown below – an important aspect of netwar and cyberwar. However, the term ‘NCW’ is problematic because, as will be argued in Chapters 2 and 3, an important aspect (and, in many situations, advantage) of network modes of organisation is their decentralised ‘nature’ (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 5). It is therefore somewhat awkward to talk about a type of networked warfare that is centred on such decentralisation (as is rather implied by the term ‘NCW’). ‘NCW’ is thus an especially awkward term

because – while it sounds like it should describe wars in which networks play a major role – the US military’s focus on relatively large-scale cyberwar conflicts means that discussions of NCW generally fail to offer an adequate account of netwar.

Ethics, Faith and Engagement with Others

Existential Faith

For William Connolly, the methods that we use in our research are inextricably tied to an “existential faith”, to a particular “image of being” on which we (generally) rely during our research (Connolly 2004b, 332-333). Connolly argues that “[a]n existential faith is not immune to new argument or evidence...commitment to it, rather, is seldom exhausted by them” (Connolly 2004b, 333). I would broadly follow Connolly’s argument (although I will also move beyond this slightly, and argue that the demands placed on us by the Other can exceed any existential faith). It will therefore be worth considering the role of my own existential faith(s) in the critical engagements offered by the thesis.

With this in mind, I should acknowledge that a certain existential faith – a particular conceptualisation of being and politics – has played an important role in the methods used and positions taken in this thesis. I have drawn on a broadly Socialist commitment to ideals of justice and equity (and several years of ‘practising’ this faith in various ways).

However, my study of the development of virtual war has served to modify this faith and to modify my methods: the problems of virtual war are – as will be argued in Chapter 4, in particular – not amenable to being addressed through ‘conventional’ Socialist or Marxist accounts of historical progress. As Amin and Thrift argue, it is thus the case that “what were considered to be stable moral and ethical positions have to be rethought” (Amin and Thrift 2005, 225). Nonetheless, I would continue to see ethical engagement as important: I would broadly follow Amin and Thrift’s argument that, while ethical positions need to be rethought, it is still the case that “ethics is required” (Amin and Thrift 2005, 225).

Ethical Engagement and Heteropolarity

As shown above, there has been a proliferation of concepts around war. This plurality of concepts can, to an extent, be read as a reflection of the current situation in international politics. Der Derian has argued that we now face a ‘heteropolar’ world (Der Derian 2005). Rather than the international system being ‘balanced’ between, for example, different blocs or superpowers, in this heteropolar world a plurality of differences becomes key (Der Derian 2005). We need, as Der Derian puts it, to deal with the way that the other is always ‘in our face’ (Der Derian, Gourevitch et al. 2005).

With this move to heteropolarity, failing to engage with the Other is not a desirable option. As will be shown in Chapter 3, an ethical engagement with others is needed if the US and other states wish to avoid the type of cyberwar failures that have been seen in Iraq and Afghanistan. Such an engagement is, though, not straightforward. A number of political movements – ranging from global justice movements to Islamist terror networks – have refused to allow the governments of the ‘advanced’ capitalist states to set the terms of this engagement. Clearly, most people would also (quite rightly) object to a PhD Geography student in the North-East of England setting the terms of such an engagement.

We therefore face a situation where ethical engagement is both necessary and a significant challenge. The existential faith ‘behind’ this thesis clearly draws on particular (perceived) ethical obligations – beliefs about our obligations to relate to others in certain ways. This has also – as noted above – been modified in the course of writing the thesis. I have thus followed a process along the lines of that suggested by Connolly: acknowledging that my work is incomplete (leaving open “a place for mystery”) and thus allowing my work to change in response to realities and ethical imperatives that I was not previously aware of (Connolly 2004b, 443. *Emphasis modified*).

Rather than laying out an ethical protocol that is separate from the body of the thesis, my ethical approach and existential faith will thus run through the thesis and drive it in certain directions. My engagement with the discourses of virtual war is not ethically neutral – I would hope to have particular political effects, and impact on political discourses in particular ways – and the thesis

itself should thus be read as an ethical engagement with and response to certain others.

Ethical engagement will, then, play an important role in the thesis. The idea of such engagement is, however, far from self-explanatory and cannot in itself provide a guide for action. As Campbell argues, “as much as we may wish to disagree with the pro-invasion arguments of Jean Elshtain and Michael Walzer...we have to concede that they are nonetheless engaged intellectuals, at least in the broadest sense” (Campbell 2005, 128).⁷ As will become clear below, I would disagree with the pro-war arguments of Elshtain and Walzer (Chapter 1 directly draws on and critiques Walzer’s work) and view them as ethically problematic. However, despite these disagreements, I would certainly acknowledge that Elshtain and Walzer have engaged with politics in interesting – and often rather effective – ways (Elshtain 2003; Walzer 1977; Walzer 1992; Walzer 2002).

While I see ethical engagement as important, I would therefore oppose certain types of engagement. At this point, it is worth emphasising that I am advocating not ‘just’ engagement, but *ethical* engagement. A politically engaged intellectual can still act in ethically problematic ways.

It will be helpful to draw on Emmanuel Levinas’ work here. I will argue below that one needs to maintain a dialectical relationship between an ethical response to the Other and the aforementioned existential faith.

It was at least in part as a critique of the violence of certain types of ‘rationality’ – in particular, that of the Holocaust – that Levinas developed his account of ethics and the Other (Levinas 1981; Levinas 1989b; Levinas 1999). Heteropolarity (as discussed above) makes this ethical obligation particularly apparent: the Other increasingly gets ‘in our face’ (Der Derian 2005; Der Derian, Gourevitch et al. 2005).

Levinas’ account of ‘ethics as first philosophy’ begins by asking “[d]oes the ‘knowledge’ of pre-reflective self-consciousness really know?” (Levinas

⁷ Jenny Edkins’ position on ethically engaged intellectuals is also interesting. For Edkins, “the intellectual must do the impossible: both be an intellectual and refuse the role of pundit and the status of expert. This stance is one of dis/engagement, a repudiation of claims to technical knowledge by the person who is considered to have such knowledge. There is always a contradiction in using the position of ‘intellectual’ strategically, in the pursuit of political ends” (Edkins 2005, 68). This position resonates with Chapter 1’s argument about the importance of acknowledging our ignorance.

1989b, 80). Criticising the claim that a positive, complete 'I' lies behind our subjectivity, Levinas instead emphasises that which is Other to this 'I'. The Other is, in a sense, prior to the subject: "[o]ne has to speak, to say *I*, to be in the first person, precisely to be me...But from that point, in affirming this *me* being, one has to respond to one's right to be" (Levinas 1989b, 82. Emphasis in original). Levinas therefore prioritises ethics over a certain kind of being: before the subject can become a subject, it is both affirmed by and called to respond to the Other.

This call to respond to the Other is not an abstract thing. Instead:

One has to respond to one's right to be, not by referring to some abstract and anonymous law, or judicial entity, but because of one's fear for the Other. My being-in-the-world or my 'place in the sun', my being at home, have these not also been the usurpation of spaces belonging to the other man whom I have already oppressed or starved, or driven out into a third world; are these not acts of repulsing, excluding, exiling, stripping, killing?...The other man's death calls me into question, as if, by my possible future indifference, I had become the accomplice of the death to which the other, who cannot see it, is exposed; and as if, even before vowing myself to him, I had to answer for this death of the other (Levinas 1989b, 82-83).

In the context of the Gulf War and the 'war on terror', it is clear that certain political positions are implicated in the killing, maiming and traumatising of countless others. Our 'place in the sun' (for example, the social and economic reforms brought about by Britain's Labour government) have come hand in hand with what were, as will be argued below, some particularly unfortunate military interventions. The damage done by these conflicts – and our knowledge of this damage – leads to an obligation to respond: an obligation to maintain a critical responsiveness to others. Moreover, as argued in Chapter 3, if one wishes to avoid future netwar failures then it is necessary to reform US and UK foreign policy in order to offer a fuller engagement with others.

At this point, it will be helpful to clarify the above account of existential faith in relation to this discussion of ethics. As noted above, this thesis was

initially driven by a broadly Socialist existential faith (which has been modified in response to the events that I have been studying and responding to). However, it is also worth noting that this faith both grew from (very flawed) attempts to respond to the Other and – in response to my failures in doing this, and to my awareness of the damaging effects of the conflicts I have been studying – this faith itself been modified. ‘Existential faith’ can thus be both driven by and modified in response to an alterity which is, as Levinas puts it ‘otherwise than being’ (Levinas 1981). Existential faith (even for nontheists such as myself) can be affected by factors other than that which is.

It should be emphasised that – even if our existential faith is driven by attempts to respond to this ethical obligation to the Other – this does not mean that International Politics will necessarily be or become ethical. Levinas was writing in the shadow of the Holocaust – and was clearly aware of the terrible things that humans have done and can do to others. Likewise – while I would not wish to draw an equivalency between the Holocaust and these other events – this thesis has been written in the shadow of mass killing in violence ranging from the Highway of Death at the end of the Gulf War to the US use of white phosphorous as an anti-personnel weapon in Iraq.

As argued above, we thus should respond to our ethical obligations to others. Moreover (as will be shown in Chapter 3) there are good pragmatic reasons why we will need to find better ways of engaging with others if we want to avoid future netwar failures. However, it is not entirely clear how such an ethical engagement might take place. As will be argued in the thesis – in Chapter 4 in particular – ethical and political action is now very problematic: it is hard to respond to the Other without our actions being incorporated into the violence of Empire. However, this obligation – otherwise than being, and other to the being in which responding is problematic – nonetheless remains.⁸

While I have used Levinas’ work to emphasise the importance of responding to others, it is far from clear how one might move from a Levinasian account of ethics to political action. Certainly, many of those who are offering ethical and political responses to others are not responding in what I would see as

⁸ It is therefore the case that – while Žižek’s account of the radical political act can be read as a “gesture of suspending ethics” – Chapter 4 will analyse the potential for such acts to serve as ethical responses to others (Luebbe 2003, 6).

desirable ways. Elshtain, for example, would claim to be offering an ethical response to others (to their “innate human dignity”) when she supports the ‘war on terror’ (Elshtain 2003, 195). Nick Cohen’s pro-Gulf War and pro-Operation Iraqi Freedom arguments have emphasised the ethical imperative to respond to the suffering of others in Iraq (Cohen 2007, Chapter 2-3 and 10-11). Levinas’ own engagements with politics were also problematic (for example, his response to the massacre of Palestinian civilians at Sabra and Chantilla was rather troubling) (Campbell 1999, 39; Levinas 1989a). I would seek a different kind of ethical engagement here; the question, then, is if or how this can be justified and other types of ethical engagements can be rejected.

For Campbell, “[w]hat is required is an ethos of political criticism that is concerned with assumptions, limits, their historical production, social and political effects, and the possibility of going beyond them in thought and action” (Campbell 2005, 133). I would be sympathetic to this position: I have argued above that part of the ethos of this thesis will be encapsulated in its critical reading of virtual war. However, as Campbell is clearly aware, this ‘going beyond’ can take a range of forms; I would view many of these forms as ethically problematic. Levinas is (correctly) careful not to fall into a naturalistic fallacy of conflating ‘is’ and ‘should’: while Levinas argues that we are ethically obligated towards the other, the fact that we should act in a certain way does not mean that we will do so (Levinas 1989b, 82-83; Moore 1903). Moreover, an awareness of this ethical obligation to others does not provide us with any concrete guide to political action.

This difficulty can, to an extent, be ameliorated through supplementing Levinas’ work with particular existential faiths. The obligation to the Other is thus not so much prior to my existential faith as held in a dialectical relationship to it: responding to the Other will modify this existential faith, and the ways in which I respond to others will be mediated by this faith.

Those with differing existential faiths may respond to others in different ways: for example, both Elshtain and Cohen appear to have a genuine commitment to their ethical positions, and their existential faiths move them to respond to others in very different ways to me. It should also be noted that through engaging with the events of the ‘war on terror’ – and with one another – our existential faiths might be changed.

My critical reading of the discourses of virtual war will, to an extent, be part of this process of ethical engagement and change. The outcome of this cannot be certain: these decisions can be read as ethical precisely because of their uncertainty and undecidability. As Campbell argues, “undecidability is the necessary precondition for the existence and exercise of responsibility”: if ethical decisions were predetermined, we would be left with compulsion or determinism instead of ethics (Campbell 1999, 44 and 50; Edkins 1999, 5).

This is a troubling position to be left in: as Simon Critchley summarises the problem, “decisions have to be taken. But how? And in virtue of what? How does one make a decision in an undecidable terrain?” (Critchley 1992, 44). Having accepted this undecidability of ethics, one cannot rule out the possibility that bad (sometimes horrifically bad) decisions will be made.

For Derrida, this risk is somewhat ameliorated because “the emancipatory promise” plays a key role in and beyond deconstruction (Derrida 1994, 59). In a loosely analogous way, my existential faith remains somewhat outside of these undecidable ethical decisions and can guide them in particular directions. In the process, this faith and the experience of this faith may itself be changed. The uncertainty of such an ethical engagement is the best – or the least bad – option currently available to me.

Outline of Chapters

As shown above, the terms virtual and virtual war can be helpful. However, it is useful to refine one’s analyses of virtual war further: one should analyse the development of both cyberwar and netwar techniques. The body of the thesis will therefore make this distinction: analysing the parallel development of cyberwar and netwar, and the political options that remain open to us.

Chapter 1 will draw on Arquilla, Baudrillard, Edkins, Ronfeldt and Žižek’s work, in order to analyse the events of the 1991 Gulf War. While there are numerous definitions of ‘war’, it will be shown that the Gulf War failed to take place as the type of war that could be called a ‘just war’. Instead, it used cyberwar techniques to function rather more like a massacre or an atrocity. Chapter 1 will also emphasise the failures of our political reality, including the political reality of the 1991 Gulf War: our discursive reality will always fail to

cover over a real lack. This will allow the chapter to move towards a negative ontological framework, and thus develop a more useful approach to studying our political reality.

Chapter 2 will begin to develop the thesis' account of networks and netwar, analysing the 'success' of the (US-backed) anti-Soviet Afghan insurgency and how this developed into the networks attacked the US on September 11 2001. Chapter 3 will take this further, looking at how and why the cyberwar 'successes' that the US has achieved in Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom were followed by netwar failures.

Chapters 2 and 3 will therefore show that the relatively instrumentalist manipulation of networks – as was seen in US support for the anti-Communist fighters in Afghanistan – will always bring with it a serious risk of blowback. Moreover, Chapter 3 will show that cyberwar adventures that fail to offer an ethical engagement with those who are caught up in this cyberwar will generate violent netwar responses (which the UK and US are currently unable to deal with effectively).

Chapter 4 will focus on the trauma and suffering caused by virtual war, and on ways of moving beyond the violence of the *status quo*. I will use this chapter to analyse trauma and suffering as virtual – with a lack at their centre rather than any positive real – and thus address the common criticism that theories of the virtual fail to take account of the real trauma and suffering that is caused by conflict and war. Responding to those others traumatised by virtual wars – and drawing on Holloway's "scream of refusal" against the violence of capitalism today – this chapter will therefore make more concrete some of the ethical commitments of the thesis (Holloway 2002, 1).

Having analysed the violence of virtual wars and conflict in the preceding three chapters, I will thus use Chapter 4 to consider ways of moving beyond such violence. I will therefore emphasise both the totalising nature of today's *status quo* – the move towards what Hardt and Negri call Empire, which works through a logic of incorporation rather than colonisation – and the imperative to move beyond this to find what Negri calls 'time for revolution' (Hardt and Negri 2000; Negri 2003b). I will then conclude the thesis with a call for political action, drawing inspiration from the famous final actions of the passengers of United 93. For practical reasons, I did need to choose a cut-off date for the inclusion of

events in the thesis: the conflicts below are still ongoing, and it would not have been feasible for me to keep revising my thesis – right up until the day of submission – in order to keep pace with current events. My analyses will therefore focus on events prior to the end of 2006.

Chapter 1 – Virtual War and the 1991 Gulf War

The Gulf War “was the last of the old wars: it mobilized a huge land force and the vast logistical support required to sustain it, and it was fought for a classic end” (Ignatieff 2000, 5).

Introduction

The 1991 Gulf War played an important role in the development of cyberwar, so an analysis of this war will be a good place to begin my account of how conflict has developed over the past few decades. I will therefore use this chapter to analyse the events of the Gulf War.

This will also be a useful opportunity to start to address the theoretical question of how one can analyse cyberwar conflicts. In particular, I will use this analysis of the 1991 Gulf War to offer a critique of epistemological objectivism: I will argue that we cannot access any positive real behind our discursive reality. This critique will then be applied to the political reality of war and international politics.

While I will argue that the Gulf War did not – in a sense – take place, I will also offer an analysis of the ways in which the Gulf War failed to take place. It will be argued that the Gulf War is an early example of the deployment of virtual war techniques in large-scale cyberwar operations.

The Gulf War shows how cyberwar can be used in order to ‘win’ large-scale conflicts against relatively conventional opponents. Because of the use of these cyberwar techniques, I will reject Ignatieff’s aforementioned claim that the Gulf War was “the last of the old wars” (Ignatieff 2000, 5).

While I do not believe that a positive real can be found behind our reality, this does not amount to a claim that the 1991 Gulf War and other political constructions have no existence in reality. Instead, I will reject the essentialising claim that a positive real can be accessed prediscursively, behind the masks of our symbolic reality. I will therefore argue that the failure of our symbolic reality to fully encompass a real lack means that both our social reality and individual identities are always incomplete. It follows that, while there are numerous discursive constructs of concepts such as ‘society’ and ‘the

individual', these can never be 'really' complete, can never be totalised into any complete real thing with a positive existence.

It is important to maintain this distinction. I would never claim that the 1991 Gulf War had no reality. However, I *would* advocate a move away from the futile search for a positive real behind numerous aspects of this war and towards an interrogation of the reality of the war and of how it has been simulated. It will thus be demonstrated (both in this chapter and in Chapter 4) that we should not seek to reduce the shifting layers of our discursive reality to anything so stable or reassuring as a positive real (Baudrillard 2001a, 253).

Virtual War: The Gulf War Did Not Take Place

Events in the Gulf, and a New World Order (or Lack Thereof)

During the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) Iraq had been relatively successful in obtaining foreign aid (and had therefore been able to weather the crash in oil prices in the mid-1980s) (Hiro 1992, 84). However, by mid-1990 this was no longer the case and it sought alternate solutions to its economic problems (Hiro 1992, 84). Tensions with Kuwait rose over: claims of Kuwait drilling oil in contested areas of the Rumaila oilfield; Kuwait's overproduction serving to depress oil prices further; and the substantial amount of debt (incurred during the Iran-Iraq war) that Iraq owed to Kuwait (Hiro 1992, 89-90; Matthews 1993, 41).

On 25 July 1990 Saddam met with April Glaspie, US ambassador to Iraq (Hiro 1992, 91). When they discussed the tensions and border dispute with Kuwait, Glaspie chose to "express no opinion on this issue" (Bush and Scowcroft 1998, 311; Hiro 1992, 93). While Bush argues that this non-opinion on boundary disputes was "standard State Department language", this has often been seen as the US giving Saddam a 'green light' to invade Kuwait (Bush and Scowcroft 1998, 311; Hiro 1992, 93; Waas 1991b). It certainly does seem that – if the US did not want war – it would have been extremely useful if Glaspie had been rather clearer in her statement. As Bernard Trainor puts it, "what Saddam Hussein was doing was feeling [Glaspie] out as to what the American position would be if the Iraqis moved against the Kuwaitis. And the response that he got was a very satisfactory one" (Trainor 2006).

A crisis began when, on 2 August 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait; on the same day the UN Security Council passed a resolution demanding that Iraq withdraw

(Bone 1991b; Hiro 1992, 101 and 526). The invasion was very well-organised, and within nine hours of invasion the Iraqis – whose army was massively superior to Kuwait's, due to build-up for the Iran-Iraq war and its ability to buy large quantities of arms on international markets – controlled most of the major buildings in Kuwait City (Gunn 1991; Hiro 1992, 102-104; Waas 1990).

The Iraqis showed somewhat more awareness of the military importance of information in the invasion of Kuwait than in their attempts to deal with Coalition forces: when invading Kuwait the Iraqi army established “emcom” – not making any radio transmissions and hiding their locations (Clarke 2004, 56). On 2 August the UN Security Council passed Resolution 660, calling for Iraq to withdraw (Hiro 1992, 526). By 3 August economic sanctions began to be imposed on Iraq (Hiro 1992, 112). These sanctions were backed up by UN Security Council Resolution 661 on 6 August (Bone 1991b; Hiro 1992, 112).

There was considerable debate about whether war was necessary or sanctions or a similar solution would suffice, and about whether a solution to the crisis in Iraq and Kuwait could be linked to other issues (such as the establishment of a Palestinian state) (Bone 1990a; Bone 1990b; Ireland 1990e). However, with the US and UK refusal to allow any ‘linkage’ of Kuwait to other issues which Saddam saw (or claimed to see) as important playing a significant role, no agreement was negotiated (Bone 1990b; Emery 1991; Ireland 1990e). Therefore, with UN Security Council Resolution 678 authorising Member States “to use all necessary means to uphold and implement resolution 660...and all subsequent relevant resolutions and to restore international peace and security in the area”, Operation Desert Storm began on the night of 16 January 1991 (Hiro 1992, 319; MacDonald and Watt 1991).

UN involvement played a significant role in legitimating the war. The Bush administration did actively seek “to demonstrate that this action was not a solo US effort against an Arab state” (Bush and Scowcroft 1998, 342). Moreover, as Dickson notes, “[t]he concepts which were employed in harnessing support for the war and were those of opposing aggression, standing up for the rights of small nations, and upholding the authority of the UN. Such arguments

were used by almost all supporters of the war” and had a significant mobilising effect (Dickson 1991, 40; Oakley 1990).⁹

However, the involvement of the UN was rather less complete than one might have seen in an ‘ideal’ example of multilateral security. Rather than viewing the UN as an active participant in the security/military processes, the Bush administration tended to regard it more as something to be kept onside (Bush and Scowcroft 1998, 416). As Scowcroft puts it:

While we had sought United Nations support from the outset of the crisis, it had been as part of our efforts to forge an international consensus, not because we thought we required its mandate. The UN provided an added cloak of political cover. Never did we think that without its blessing we could not or would not intervene (Bush and Scowcroft 1998, 416).

A UN ‘cover’ of legitimacy for what the US would have done anyway is not as significant a change to the World Order as some would have liked. However, for the reasons given above UN involvement was an important aspect of the construction of the Gulf War as a virtuous war: it allowed the bloodshed in the Gulf to be viewed as war in the service of the principles of sovereignty and multilateral security.¹⁰

One aspect of the Gulf War which has drawn comment is thus its place in and signalling of a ‘new world order’, in which international intervention is used to maintain a structure of multilateral security (Dickson 1991, 40; Halliday 1991;

⁹ In the UK, they were especially useful in enabling the Labour Party leadership to maintain Party support for the war (Dickson 1991, 44; Ford 1990).

¹⁰ This implies that changes in the UN role between the Gulf War and Operation Iraqi Freedom need not necessarily be seen as decline. While one difference between the two interventions is that the former had explicit Security Council backing while the latter did not, if this primarily means that in the former conflict the US had UN ‘political cover’ for what they would have done even without such cover, while in the latter intervention they had less ‘political cover’, this does not exactly constitute an unravelling of a ‘world order’ or a collapse of UN influence. In fact, for those who opposed both wars it could actually seem *better* for the UN to refuse to back an unjust war than for them to offer one a cloak of legitimacy. One might note for example Cook’s argument regarding the refusal of the Security Council to explicitly sanction Operation Iraqi Freedom: “Those who wanted war subsequently claimed that by refusing to agree with them the UN had somehow failed to rise to its responsibilities. On the contrary, the Security Council admirably discharged its role by backing the UN weapons inspectors and by refusing to sanction an unnecessary breach of international peace and security” (Cook 2003, 207).

Ridgeway 1990).¹¹ There is no doubt that rapprochement between the US and the USSR was a significant change in the world order, and the UN did offer a relatively quick response to the Iraqi transgressions (enabled in part by China and the USSR choosing not to veto anti-Iraq Security Council resolutions, which may have come as a surprise to Saddam) (Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett 1994, 283; Hiro 1992, 165).

Also significant is that – whereas the actions of the superpowers had previously been constrained to an extent by a bipolar world order and the tension between them – the moves towards détente and the relative weakening of the Soviet position gave the US significantly greater freedom of action (Bennis 1991, 113). However, one striking feature about the run-up to the Gulf War is that those participating in the creation of what is retrospectively viewed as a New World Order did not necessarily view it this way at the time.

Notable here is how Bush viewed events in the Gulf. When Iraq invaded Kuwait, rather than looking for the UN to take the lead Bush was unsure of what to do. He states that “at that moment I had no idea what our options were. I did know for sure that the aggression had to be stopped, and Kuwait's sovereignty restored” (Bush and Scowcroft 1998, 315). Instead of seeking a multilateral stance, Bush therefore came to a rather unilateral view of the importance of defending a principle of sovereignty. Well before UN resolutions were in place to legitimate military action, Margaret Thatcher was also pushing Bush to take strong action (Bush and Scowcroft 1998, 319; Stothard 1991).

Desert Storm was a massive 6-week, US-led (but with the UK as a significant partner) bombing campaign of Iraq (PBS 1995a; Evans 1991e; Hiro 1992, 319-379). This ensured that Iraq's Air Force was non-operational, took out much of the Iraqi communications infrastructure, did massive damage to its military – targeting Iraqi troops from the air – and also had considerable impact on other infrastructure (Evans 1991h; Fletcher and Evans 1991; Hiro 1992, 319-379; Jenkins 1991).

Operation Desert Sabre began on 24 February 1991, with the fighting on the ground continuing until 28 February – after the Iraqi army had been forced to withdraw from Kuwait, leaving behind much armour and suffering heavy

¹¹ There have been at least two edited academic books published with the title The Gulf War and the New World Order (Bresheeth and Yuval-Davis 1991a; Ismael and Ismael 1994a).

casualties (and having had over 80,000 troops taken prisoner) (Evans 1991j; Hiro 1992, 380-393). UN Resolution 686 formalised the end of fighting and set out what Iraq needed to do in the aftermath of war (Bone 1991a; Hiro 1992, 398).¹²

There was no Positive Real Behind the Gulf War

Given that the above account of the Gulf War sounds relatively ‘conventional’, it may seem surprising that certain Baudrillardian assumptions underlie much of the chapter. With this in mind, I shall outline what these assumptions are and why they are significant before applying these ideas further in the rest of the chapter. In particular, the Baudrillardian assumption that the Gulf War did not, in certain senses, take place is important here (Baudrillard 1995).

This is obviously a somewhat controversial claim, and I should therefore clarify what I mean when I argue that the Gulf War did not take place. I will do this by considering what prevented the Gulf War from taking on certain of the characteristics of a war (Baudrillard 1995; Merrin 1994b, 450). The links between this Baudrillardian position and my empirical analysis of the Gulf War will become clearer as the chapter progresses.

The previous section has outlined the events that are generally interpreted as making up the 1991 Gulf War. However, I would argue that – in a number of senses – this war did not take place. The Gulf War did not feature the risk and engagement with an other that constitutes ‘war’ (or, at least, certain meanings of the word ‘war’) (Baudrillard 2001a, 232). This lack of risk prevented it from meeting the definition of ‘war’, or at least from meeting several common definitions of war.

It should be noted that what ‘war’ means is something that changes over time. As argued in the Introduction, such definitions change over time and as they are actualised within our political reality: as ideas of virtual war have developed these terms have also taken on different meanings. However, there

¹² It should, however, be noted that the US-led action did not strictly speaking take place in accord with the UN Charter: the action was largely under US command, whereas according to the Charter the UN should have taken control over the deployment of forces itself (Bone 1991c; Falk 1994b, 36). However, during the Gulf War the Security Council did not even meet in the first three weeks of bombing (Springborg 1994, 48; Tomasky and McKerrow 1991).

were a number of ways in which the Gulf War failed to fulfil certain criteria for what constitutes (some interpretations of) war.

It will be shown below that, in the Gulf War, the US-led Coalition was fighting a virtual war. Iraqi forces, on the other hand, were trying to fight a more ‘conventional’ war and therefore could not engage with their opponents. An engagement with – and risk of defeat by – opponents of the US therefore did not take place.¹³ The lack of engagement in 1991 meant that the two armies in the Gulf were, in a sense, not fighting: the type of fighting that involves a risk of defeat for both sides did not take place. This could be interpreted as showing that the Gulf War did not take place – for example, I will consider Merrin’s argument that this meant that the Gulf War should be viewed as an atrocity masquerading as a war (Merrin 1994a, 447).

Whether or not war took place in the Gulf is questionable, and depends on what one means by ‘war’. A number of past conflicts – which we do conventionally refer to as wars – have exhibited a similar lack of engagement. One might note, for example, the differing technological platforms that were visible in the Second Italo-Abyssinian War, and the strikingly quick Italian victory.¹⁴

Despite this, it is notable that the Gulf War failed to meet the criteria of what one significant approach to war and conflict would class as warfare: just war theory. Chapter 2 and 3 will argue that normative issues play a particularly important role in conflict today; normative approaches such as just war theory are therefore significant.

War is often seen as an important ‘test’ of moral judgement and political theories. For example, in Walzer’s influential book on just/unjust wars he views war as a serious test of moral judgement because it is “the hardest place: if comprehensive and consistent moral judgements are possible there, they are possible everywhere” (Walzer 1977, xxiii). What we see with the move to what Der Derian calls virtuous war is that ‘war’ becomes more of an ‘easy’ effacement

¹³ A joke (apparently originating with the comedian Bill Hicks, but in circulation at least since the 1991 Gulf War) makes the point that – for war to take place – there need to be two armies fighting.

¹⁴ Especially given the Italian use of chemical weapons, this is another conflict that it is tempting to read as an atrocity masquerading as a war (International Commission of the Red Cross 2005).

of moral decisions than a 'hard' place in which to make such decisions (Der Derian 2001b).

One interesting example of how changes in the ways in which wars are fought impact upon theories of war can be seen in Walzer's response to the Gulf War. In a preface to the second edition of Just and Unjust Wars, his argument has been somewhat modified (presumably at least in part in response to the events in the Gulf) (Walzer 1992). In the new preface, there is an interesting blurring of war/non-war when Walzer argues that, although the blockade of Iraq prior to the Gulf War was often seen as non-war, it was "practically an act of war" (Walzer 1992, xiii-xiv). However, despite this blurring of boundaries Walzer does still retain a sense of the important moral role of war: "sending troops into battle commonly brings with it so many unanticipated costs that it has come to represent a moral threshold" (Walzer 1992, xv).

For Walzer, the Gulf War still retains a significant moral content: "[w]hen it comes to resisting aggression [just war] theory is at least permissive, sometimes imperative" (Walzer 1992, xvi). Walzer also maintains that "Just-war theory still does important work here, making it possible to defend some acts of war and to condemn others" (Walzer 1992, xxi).

Therefore, while Walzer's position was modified in interesting ways by the events of the Gulf War, he still retains his focus on war as a test of – and place to make – moral and political judgements. This position becomes particularly apparent in his controversial 2002 article "Can There Be a Decent Left": Walzer uses the events of September 11 and the 'war on terror' to pose certain moral and political challenges to 'the left' (Walzer 2002).¹⁵

However, rather than being any kind of moral challenge, I will argue below that wars now serve more as a largely risk-free – or, better, one might follow Shaw and write about risk-transferred – attempt to regain an imagined previous moral certitude (Shaw 2005, 79-81). War becomes – for many, though certainly not all – a way of avoiding the hardest place of the political decision. These hard places are, instead, moved or reassigned so that others are forced to

¹⁵ In the influential and controversial book Just War Against Terror, Jean Elshtain also emphasises the important moral role of war: "we must and will fight...to defend who we are and what we, at our best, represent" (Elshtain 2003, 7). For Elshtain, the 'war on terror' is thus also a fight for – and test of – certain moral ideas: in particular, this is a 'war' for the ideal of "moral equality" (Elshtain 2003, 26-27).

deal with them. It will be useful to describe some of the ways in which this happened in the Gulf War.

The asymmetry of the Gulf War was key to Baudrillard's claim that no Gulf War took place (Baudrillard 1995). Some of the Iraqi tactics were very different from what one might expect from a country preparing to fight a 'conventional' war against the Coalition, and would suggest that an engagement between US-led and Iraqi forces – one where the outcome was uncertain – did not take place.

Firstly, Iraq hid its planes from the Coalition (Evans 1991g; Time 1991). Rather than use Iraq's planes to engage in an air war, Saddam sent them to hide from the conflict (both in Iran and in underground bunkers) (Evans 1991g; Time 1991). This tactic seemed to rather disappoint those in the Coalition air forces who *were* trying to fight a war – and were expecting to engage in combat with Iraqi planes (Allen 1991, 56). Rather than engaging in a conventional air war with Coalition planes, the Iraqis realised that their planes would fail to achieve such an engagement and they therefore tried to preserve them for future use (Elliott 1991a; Evans 1991g; Time 1991).

Iraq sent a number of its troops on holiday shortly prior to war (Times 1991). The Coalition found that Iraqi troops were less numerous than expected when battle began; this was not only due to desertions, but also to the fact "that Iraqi officers were paid extra for arranging for their men to go on leave. It was in their financial interests to ensure that the men under their command went home on leave" (Times 1991). Therefore, while Iraq was engaged in a substantial drive to conscript troops to meet the Coalition assault they also sought to ensure that some troops would not be there to fight (and risk injury and death). This is a sufficiently strange tactic that it is hard to see what rationale might lie behind it. I would suspect that this may have been an attempt to preserve Iraq's more experienced soldiers for later use (in internal repression, for example); however, this is just speculation.

Unusually, Iraqi troops needed to be fed by the enemy (Teimourian 1990). The Iraqi army was so poorly resourced that "some frontline troops [were] fed secretly by American soldiers at Saudi Arabia's border with Kuwait, allowing their equipment to be inspected by the enemy" (Teimourian 1990).

Coalition tactics to ‘encourage’ Iraqi troops to surrender (which may have removed more Iraqi troops from the conflict than death and injury) also showed the extent to which they could control the conflict (Taylor 1998, xix-xxx). Especially effective was the tactic of first dropping leaflets informing troops that the Coalition were going to bomb them if they did not surrender, then bombing them, then dropping leaflets saying that they had been told they would be bombed and once again inviting surrender (Auckland 1992, 6-13; Taylor 1998, 154). Rather than the risk of engagement with others, Coalition forces could tell the ‘enemy’ what would happen to them, do this to them as promised, and then repeat as necessary.

One consequence of the asymmetric nature of the Gulf War was the very different casualty levels between Coalition and Iraqi forces. The Coalition suffered 358 fatalities (many of these through accidents and ‘friendly fire’) (CNN 2001a). While this is of course terrible for those who were killed and those who were close to them, this is also an exceptionally low figure (given that 660,000 Coalition troops were fighting a large Iraqi army) (CNN 2001a; Biddle 1996). Iraqi casualties, however, were much higher – one of the lower of the well-reasoned estimates, Conetta’s, places Iraqi military casualties at 20,000 to 26,000; other estimates (including early analyses from the US military) suggest over 100,000 Iraqi military casualties (FAIR 1991; Conetta 2003a; Hiro 1992, 396; Taylor 1998, 265).

The Gulf War has therefore been described as ‘safe’ war, at least for Coalition troops (Baudrillard 2001a, 233; Der Derian 2001b, 50). The US troops in the Gulf would have been statistically more likely to die in traffic accidents had they remained at home than they were to die in the war in the Gulf (Baudrillard 1995, 69). This radical asymmetry has led to the suggestion that this would be better read as a massacre or atrocity than a war – that there was not a war between two armies taking place (Merrin 1994a, 447).

The asymmetry between the technologies, strategies and capabilities of Coalition and Iraqi forces was such that they can be seen to have been fighting on different, incompatible platforms: while Iraq was still trying to fight a ‘traditional’ war the Allies were engaging in a virtual cyberwar, and the two could not entirely meet (Baudrillard 1995, 62). Following Der Derian’s claim (noted in the Introduction) that “virtuality has become the ‘fifth dimension’ of

US global hegemony”, in the Gulf War virtuality gave an additional dimension to the US-led violence (Der Derian 2001b, xv). Only one side of the conflict could act in this dimension, but Coalition actions in the virtual dimension clearly impacted upon Iraqi forces; moreover, Iraqi forces struggled to engage with US-led actions in this virtual dimension (Der Derian 2001b, xv).

The asymmetry achieved through US-led use of the virtual dimension leads me to conclude, contra-Ignatieff, this is not an ‘old war’ but instead an early example of how virtuality can be used to add an additional dimension to US hegemony (Ignatieff 2000, 5). This type of change certainly does not bring an end to ‘old’ war (many relatively traditional techniques and technologies remain in use). However, it does add an additional dimension to conflict. This is a significant change.

As will be argued in this chapter, the Gulf War was used to avoid an engagement with others. Through enabling a relatively predictable moral and political response, these safe or risk-transferred wars allow those involved to efface the – potentially much more disruptive – responses that might be called for by a fuller engagement with others. The Introduction considers the problems caused by the other being ‘in our face’. These ‘wars’ allowed the range of others that are engaging ‘us’ – getting in ‘our’ face – and the numerous different ways in which they do so to be reduced to something that can be fitted within a ‘consistent’ framework.

In Chapters 3 and 4 I emphasise the importance of a range of different and difficult engagements with others. However, this type of risk transfer war can be used to avoid such engagements: both sides can fight on differing platforms, fighting different types of wars, and therefore fail to engage with one another. This lack of engagement will be considered at more length below, when the virtual and virtuous nature of the 1991 Gulf War is analysed.

The chapter will therefore show that one aspect of the Gulf War’s not taking place was that it did not fulfil certain mores regarding what a war is and should be (Baudrillard 1995). To draw on the play on words in the title of Campbell’s Politics Without Principle, one could say that the politics of principle – of a code of mores around war – in Walzer’s version of ‘just war theory’ was left lacking its principle in the case of the Gulf War (Campbell 1993). The Gulf

War failed to meet Walzer's criteria for what constitutes a war: this was not the 'hardest place' in which to test moral judgement.

Media Strategy

As Der Derian argues, the Media and Entertainment complex is now an extremely important part of war, to the extent that we can now talk of a Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network (MIME-NET) (Der Derian 2001b, xi). Given the aforementioned absence of a 'hardest place', media strategy and MIME-NET played an important role in the Coalition victory: they helped to simulate a certain kind of war.

The television coverage of the Gulf War "created the illusion of seeing a real war in real time" (Kellner 1992, 152; Stech 1994). There was 'real time' TV footage delivered from the Gulf, although one should note with Kellner that "[i]n fact, one could only see and hear live what was shown or reported from the places in Saudi Arabia, Israel, and Iraq where the networks had functioning satellite feeds and here too the words and images were subject to government control" (Kellner 1992, 152).

What was significant here was not that viewers at home were provided with 'better' coverage of the war in any strong epistemological or ethico-political sense of 'better' (in terms of motivating anti-war struggles, for example, the less timely coverage of the war in Vietnam was more successful) but the way that the media functioned. As Der Derian argues:

What is qualitatively new is the power of the MIME-NET to seamlessly merge the production, representation, and execution of war. The result is not merely the copy of a copy, or the creation of something new: It represents a convergence of the means by which we distinguish the original and the new, the real from the reproduced" (Der Derian 2001b, xx).

'Vietnam syndrome' was also a strong theme in media and political analyses of the plans to go to war in the Gulf (Bremner 1990; Bremner 1991; Goldstein 1991a). Partially in response to fears of this 'syndrome', and to fears that public opinion could force the Gulf War to end sooner than Coalition

governments wanted, the Coalition put relatively tight controls on the media reports and images coming out of the Gulf (FAIR 1991; Kellner 2003a; Walker 1991c; Wittstock 1991; Zoglin 1991). The virtue of the 1991 Gulf War was thus maintained.

This construct of virtuous war meant that, while the returning troops from Vietnam were famously denied a parade, celebrations that did take place after the Gulf War were celebrations of a war that did not take place: a 'clean' virtual and virtuous war that was constructed as the 'main event', regardless of the bloodshed on the ground (Evans 1991k; Kim 1990).¹⁶ There is thus no 'neutral' information on which a 'rational' subject could base their decisions. Instead, we only have access to information that has been mediated through the information operations of the US-led Coalition (and, in less effective ways, Saddam's regime).

This discussion of representation raises another aspect of the Gulf War's not taking place (*lieu* in Baudrillard's French) (Baudrillard 1995). An additional sense in which the Gulf War did not take place is that – as suggested by the above account of MIME-NET and the virtual dimension, and as will be discussed at more length below – important aspects of the war took a virtual 'place' place on screens across the world and in the skies above Iraq. Even to the extent that the events of the Gulf War happened, many aspects of this war did not take place 'on the ground' in the Gulf.

The Gulf War Was an Example of Cyberwar

Moving on from the above account of media and information operations, it should be noted that the role of information in the Gulf War was both significant and complex. I will therefore demonstrate below that the Gulf War can be described as a cyberwar. In such wars, as argued in the introduction, information is no longer 'just' something to be studied. Instead, it can work as a target in war, weapon, resource or realm in conflict (Jones 1996, 15; Vlahos 1996, 115).

¹⁶ Kim pushes this logic further, to argue that CNN's extensive coverage of the war means he could have a front row seat watching from rural Montana: "The only people who can't tune in, it seems, are the troops on the front lines. Once upon a time, soldiers felt they had somehow missed out unless they reached the front: these days it's the people *on the front* who miss the main event" (Kim 1990, 33. Emphasis in original).

To expand on the Ignatieff quote used as an epigraph for the chapter, he argues that the Gulf War

was the last of the old wars: it mobilized a huge land force and the vast logistical support required to sustain it, and it was fought for a classic end, to reverse a straightforward case of territorial aggression against a member state of the United Nations. Soldiers were committed in full expectation of casualties (Ignatieff 2000, 5).

However, this war was far from a conventional ‘old war’ in a number of ways. Perhaps the most ‘obvious’ difference between the 1991 Gulf War and ‘old wars’ was the new technologies used in the Gulf War. This allows the Gulf War to be read as a significant part of the move towards virtual war and cyberwar – these capacities played an important role in the US-led victory (Arquilla 2003; Isby 1993).

A wide range of virtual technologies and cyberwar techniques were used in this war in order to: enhance the US-led Coalition’s understanding of the battlefield, allow them to operate without being visible to the Iraqis, allow precision attacks, and manage media coverage of the war (FAIR 1991; Elliott 1991b; Evans 1991a; Evans 1991b; Fletcher and Evans 1991; Kim 1990).¹⁷ This technology was also used to reduce the need for human soldiers to get close to the combat and therefore helped to keep Coalition casualties low (Fletcher and Evans 1991; Kim 1990).

However, such technology did not, in itself, allow the move to cyberwar: this move was only possible because the new technology was used alongside much older technologies and the careful management of information. For Arquilla, “when we think about cyber, we need to reflect on the Greek root of the word, ‘kybernan,’ which means to control or to govern” (Arquilla 2003). Arquilla’s etymology is rather flawed here: *kybernan* can be more literally translated as ‘coxswain’ and there are therefore connotations of steering, piloting and governing (in particular, when applied to a boat) as well as controlling (Klein

¹⁷ Schwarzkopf acknowledged that one effect of the use of and focus on high-tech weapons was that the media did not, to a substantial extent, show the lives being lost in the conflict (Taylor 1998, 149).

1971; Veel 2003, 2). However, even given this flawed etymology, Arquilla's account of the meaning of the 'cyber' in 'cyberwar' is still interesting: his focus on the role of control in cyberwar is, as will be shown below, a useful way of approaching such conflicts.

The Gulf War was a new type of war at least in part insofar as 'cyber' techniques were used both to manage the information being handled by the Coalition and to disrupt Iraqi attempts to exert control (Arquilla 2003). The Coalition was thus able to achieve "information or intelligence superiority over the Iraqi military" (Knights 2005, 112-113). However, it will be argued below that the 'new' aspects of the Gulf War depended on the interoperability of new and old technologies: rather than representing a rupture between new and old, the new aspects of cyberwar build on much older technologies and techniques.

Information plays an important role in this new type of war. One of the striking things about the US-led Coalition's tactics in the Gulf War was the efficacy with which they gathered information about the battlespace and denied this type of information to the Iraqis. A first move to note is that there was an active disinformation campaign prior to the start of the war, in order to convince the Iraqis that the ground assault would begin with a beach landing in the East (Evans 1991i; Schwarzkopf 1991).¹⁸

This disinformation campaign depended on denying the Iraqis knowledge of the movements of the US-led Coalition: media stories planted to disguise US troop movements would have been of little value had the Iraqis had clear pictures of these supposedly nonexistent movements. It was therefore the case that, as Schwarzkopf acknowledges, it was "when we knew that [Saddam] couldn't see us any more [that] we did a massive movement of troops all the way out to the west" (Schwarzkopf 1991).

Electronic Warfare techniques played a significant role in the Coalition campaign, and were an important way of controlling the information available to the Iraqis (Isby 1993). Iraq's landline communications were targeted by special forces, forcing them to use radio communications instead (Isby 1993, 159). Moreover, 'electronic countermeasures' undertaken by the Coalition involved a

¹⁸ Note for example that Gen. Jenkin's briefed the media that "[a]n American marine amphibious force was poised in the Gulf, ready for action should the allies go ahead with a ground offensive" (Evans 1991f).

considerable amount of active jamming of Iraqi radar and communications: for example, almost all Coalition planes carried and utilised jamming equipment (Arquilla 2003; Isby 1993, 161; Knights 2005, 51-52).

Electronic Warfare was thus used to further limit what the Iraqis could know about the battlespace and the extent to which they could communicate with one another. Electronic Warfare – which, in a sense, did not take place ‘on the ground’ in the Gulf – was thus used to limit what the Iraqis could know about the place where combat was happening.

While – as will be shown in Chapter 2 – Soviet and Afghan Government forces had serious problems dealing with networked resistance in Afghanistan, the more conventional structure of Iraqi forces did not pose such problems for the Coalition. It is easier to get information on the positions, actions and tactics of opposing forces when these opponents – as was the case with Iraq – have a good knowledge of the Soviet way of fighting but not of the information revolution (Knights 2005, 112-113; Libicki 1996, 27). In terms of the Iraqi army, for example, Powell stated that this was sitting “waiting to be attacked, and attacked it will be” (Fletcher and Evans 1991).

The US used satellite and other aerial surveillance of Iraq in order to both monitor the positions of Iraqi forces and to assist with the targeting of weapons (Ellicott 1991; Nuttall 1991). Through a combination of satellite, radar and (aerial) infrared photography, the Coalition could access real time information as to the positions and movements of Iraqi forces (Dixon 1991).¹⁹ The introduction of night/thermal vision technologies among the ground troops also greatly enhanced what could be seen by these troops (Pearce 1992, 95 and 108). All of this served to substantially enhance Coalition options for finding and attacking Iraqi forces (PBS 1995a; Fletcher and Evans 1991; Pearce 1992, 95 and 108).

Iraq did try to challenge Coalition surveillance by building fake ‘targets’, including dummy missile launchers complete with signal transmitters, which did succeed in drawing part of the firepower that the Coalition used against Iraq (Evans 1991c). The fact that what proved most effective for the Iraqis was not trying to escape from visibility to the Coalition but rather creating excess visibility is, however, itself a sign of the extent of Coalition surveillance.

¹⁹ Another interesting feature of the war is that some of the aerial imagery – such as that used for targeting the USS Missouri’s guns – came from UAVs (Elliott 1991b).

Operation Desert Storm, having done significant damage to Iraq's radar infrastructure, ensured Coalition dominance over the skies of the Middle East: Iraq's runways were bombed, as were bunkers in which it was thought its planes were hiding (Evans 1991h; Isby 1993, 64; Jenkins 1991; Walker 1991d). Iraq was therefore denied aerial surveillance of the battlespace and, as noted above, the Coalition actively sought to worsen Iraq's situation by destroying its communications infrastructure (Arquilla 2003; Fletcher and Evans 1991). The Iraqi troops were, on a number of occasions, pressured into turning off their radios in order to avoid drawing Coalition fire (Knights 2005, 55).

Attacks on Iraq's communication infrastructure were effective to the extent that, when Coalition troops invaded Iraq, some of the Iraqi positions they reached still had their guns pointed in the wrong direction – expecting the attack to come from elsewhere (Pearce 1992, 111). Unsurprisingly, this substantially reduced the effectiveness of 'dug in' Iraqi positions (Pearce 1992, 111). Iraq's knowledge of Coalition movements was thus extremely limited, to the extent that its few attempts to cross the Saudi-Kuwaiti border and its costly and short-lived invasion of the town of Khafji can be interpreted at least in part as attempts to find out where Coalition forces were stationed and the strength of these forces (Evans, Walker et al. 1991).

The Gulf War also allowed the US-led Coalition (and, due to its especially advanced technology, the US in particular) to utilise its 'high-tech' weapons systems. These weapons included 'precision' laser-guided bombs, Tomahawk Cruise missiles, Apache helicopters with laser-directed 30mm guns and laser-guided Hellfire missiles, E3 Airborne Warning And Control System (AWACS) Sentry planes (Boeing 707 jets filled with electronics) and Pointer and Pioneer drones (PBS 1995b; PBS 1995c; PBS 1995e; PBS 1995f; Elliott 1991a; Elliott 1991b; Evans 1991a; Evans 1991b; Isby 1993, 64; Owen 1991; Walker 1991d).

A Global Positioning System (GPS) system was used in order to help Coalition troops navigate in the desert and to guide air attacks (allowing battle plans to be changed at the very last minute: rather than needing to show troops 'actual' markers on the ground, the GPS allowed the use of 'virtual' markers which could be shifted as required) (PBS 1995g; Isby 1993, 70; Tsouras, Wright Jr. et al. 1993, 93). Night-vision equipment allowed troops to have a better

vision than the Iraqis of the battlefield at night, and also allowed more effective aerial surveillance (Isby 1993, 66; Pearce 1992, 95 and 108).²⁰

Another interesting feature of this use of new technology was the interlinking of the new and old (which will be discussed at more length in Chapter 3, drawing on the example of Operation Enduring Freedom). In the Gulf War, the 20 year old anti-tank A10 Thunderbolt aircraft was still in use, and aging B52 bombers were used to drop large amounts of explosives on groups of Iraqi troops (Evans 1991a; Hawkes 1991; Isby 1993, 64-65).

These old technologies were used to complement the high-tech F117A stealth bombers – with the stealth bombers going in first to take out radar and other defences before the B52s were sent in (PBS 1995d; Evans 1991a; Isby 1993, 64-65). Surveillance through drone aircraft was used to greatly increase the accuracy of the guns on the 1944-built battleship USS Missouri (Elliott 1991b).

As shown above the Gulf War was an important example of the effective execution of cyberwar, both in terms of the technology used by the Coalition and the way that they used information. By attaining dominant battlespace knowledge the Coalition was able to bring their weaponry – both old and new – to bear upon the Iraqis with devastating effect.

Most of the weaponry used was comparatively old-fashioned – for example, more than 90% of the munitions used by the Coalition were ‘dumb’ rather than ‘smart’ bombs (Arkin 2000). However, it was the ways in which information was used and the way that old and new technologies were used together that made the Gulf War an early example of the efficacy of cyberwar (Arkin 2000). This also forms part of the reason why the Gulf War was not, contra-Ignatieff, an ‘old war’.

The Coalition’s effective use of information in the 1991 Gulf War was thus what ensured that this conflict had cyberwar elements. For example, the use of relatively old and vulnerable B-52 bombers was possible because the Coalition had a good sense of the state of Iraq’s air defences (or lack thereof). Without this battlespace awareness, it is doubtful that the Coalition would have

²⁰ This was effective to the extent that one British Warrior had to flash its headlights at an Iraqi bunker (which they could see in the dark, but which could not see them) so that they would know where to surrender to (Pearce 1992, 95 and 108).

been confident enough to bring these old, large, vulnerable planes to bear on Iraq. Moreover, the efficacy of these planes (as with the USS Missouri) was increased because Coalition surveillance, which relied heavily on virtual technologies, allowed far older weapons to target Iraqi troops and infrastructure rather effectively (Harris 2006, 113-115).

The compatibility of new equipment with older equipment, and with human soldiers, is an important factor in virtual war (as will also be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3). For example, even those advocating radical changes in the US Navy tend to assume that much of the fleet in the navy of the future will be legacy ships, which must be compatible with new platforms (Dombrowski, Gholz et al. 2003, 83).

A key part of the RMA is therefore ‘interoperability’: defined as “[t]he ability of systems, units, or forces to provide services to or access services from other systems, units, or forces, and use the services to operate effectively together” (The National Academies Press Home Page 1999). This interoperability will need to include the capacity for the latest technology to be used alongside legacy systems which cannot be replaced without substantial (and often impractical) additional investment (The National Academies Press 1999).

Brutality of Virtual and Virtuous War

There is something wonderfully seductive about the ways technology is used in cyberwar, and the ways in which control is exerted. However, seductive as this is – and while it may lead to wars appearing ‘clean’ – it is important to remember that cyberwar still causes a great deal of bloodshed. The fighting of the Gulf War as a cyberwar did not mean that it was any less brutal than a more ‘old-fashioned’ type of war. On the contrary, essential to the type of virtuous Gulf War that did not take place was appalling destruction that very much did take place. It will be worth looking at some examples of this here.

Put simply, the Gulf War lead directly to the death of a significant number of Iraqis: both civilians and soldiers (Conetta 2003a). Moreover, the damage done to Iraq’s infrastructure caused significant suffering following the war; this suffering was worsened by the imposition of sanctions on Iraq (CNN.com 2001b; Guardian Unlimited 2001a, 70-71; Knights 2005).

The ‘turkey shoot’ of retreating Iraqis caused considerable carnage, and was seen as especially ethically problematic because those killed did appear to be unambiguously in retreat (Evans 1991d; Hiro 1992, 388-389; Leader 1991a; Matthews 1993, 166-167; Walker 1991a). It should, for example, be noted that one possible reason why the Coalition stopped attacking the fleeing troops is that it appeared that its pilots might refuse to do so for ethical reasons; there was also concern about the publicity that such carnage could generate (Evans 1991d; Leader 1991a).

Constructing such brutality as virtuous was important: as General Clark argues, “[d]istinctive approaches to the use of public information and its consequences are as much a part of the battle plan as the troops on the ground” (Clark 2003, xiv). Some have gone as far as to argue that “‘media spin’ has become a new principle of war” (Stech 1994). This is the case because of – not despite of – the destructive effects of virtual war.

While the conflict in the Gulf had a number of devastating effects, it was virtual for those watching it from the US and UK: the brutality became unreal to them because it was papered over by the spectacular media coverage of the war (Ignatieff 2000, 3-4). This ‘clean’ spectacle helped the Gulf War to stand as a “war without death – to our side...that ceases to be fully real to us: virtual” (Ignatieff 2000, 5). ‘We’ could watch this war from the comfort of ‘our’ sofas, and the media spectacle became a key part of the “main event” (Kim 1990). While the Gulf War did mobilise large military forces and cause considerable carnage, it was thus virtual insofar as MIME-NET constructed this real violence as virtuous war.

The Reality of the Virtuality of the Gulf War

As discussed above, this virtuality impacts upon our reality in a range of ways. Kellner’s Persian Gulf TV War is an interesting and insightful study of virtuality and reality of the 1991 Gulf War; however, it also seeks to unmask something real behind our political reality (Kellner 1992). In order to respond to the virtuality of the Gulf War, it will therefore be helpful to draw on and offer a critical response to Kellner’s work.

I would broadly favour Kellner’s decision to view the Gulf War as a “TV War”, acknowledging the large role that television has played in this ‘war’,

although it might be better to talk about ‘media’ war in order to make clear that the influential media re-presentations of this ‘war’ were not solely TV-based (Kellner 1992).²¹ Kellner is, then, largely correct to argue that:

Most people related to the war through TV images and discourse, receiving their concept of the Persian Gulf region and the war from the mainstream media, especially television. Because few people in the audience had direct knowledge of the region and its conflicts, television was of key importance in producing the public’s views of the war, just as it is of fundamental importance in producing an individual’s view of the world. But above all the Gulf war was a TV war in that it was largely through television that people lived through the drama of the war and received their images and beliefs about it (Kellner 1992, 4).

Through helping to produce an individual’s view of the world, the media thus works to construct the discursive reality in which we live. This focus on (media) discourse and discursive reality could lead to the charge that this chapter is sliding into a kind of ‘Berkelean idealism’ that holds that nothing exists except for perceptions of the world.²² However, on the contrary, I would emphasise the importance of acknowledging that, for many individuals caught up in this war, it is again the case that this discursive “abstraction is inscribed into...very ‘real’ situation[s]” and that the discursive reality of the 1991 Gulf War has led to many very real deaths and to massive human suffering (Žižek 2002b, 36; Kellner 1992, 388).

Virtual technologies may have allowed (both in 1991, and more recently) parts of Iraq to be devastated at the push of a button and from a great distance (Kellner 1992, 158; Knights 2005, xi-xviii). However, this abstract manipulation of images on a screen would nonetheless have felt extremely ‘concrete’ to those at the wrong end of these massive bombardments (Kellner 1992, 158). As Žižek

²¹ To be fair to Kellner, he does show a reasonable awareness of the role and importance of non-televsual media; one might also note that TV is the primary news media source for most people in the US and UK (BBC 2006, 10; Kellner 1992, 4).

²² This is commonly interpreted as a relativist position, but Berkeley did not view it as such: for Berkeley, “all sensible things must be perceived by” a single God (Berkeley 1713).

observes, the virtual can take on a particularly brutal reality: this reality of the virtual is what one might, drawing on Lacan's work, refer to as the traumatic real (Žižek 2004h, 3-4).

I would also follow Kellner's argument that "[d]uring the Gulf War, the mainstream media were cheerleaders and boosters for the Bush administration and Pentagon war policy, invariably putting the government 'spin' on information and events concerning the war" (Kellner 1992, 1). However, Kellner's approach runs into problems when he goes on to argue that "[t]he challenge to *critical* media analysis is to *decode* the manifest political pronouncements and media discourses to attempt to analyze the political content *behind the masks* of disinformation and propaganda" (Kellner 1992, 5. Emphasis added).

This chapter will argue instead that there is a certain kind of nothing or negativity behind the masks of our symbolic reality. It is instead the case that, as Žižek argues, what lies behind these masks is the appearance or the fiction that something positive lies behind them (Edkins 1999, 111; Žižek 1989, 193-194).

Rather than looking 'behind' these masks in the attempt to find some positive thing that is in fact wholly absent, I will therefore seek instead to analyse how the reality of the Gulf War was and is discursively constructed or simulated in particular ways and thus also how the illusion that lies behind this 'mask' can be constructed. This technique of focusing on the real void behind the mask will take me close to Žižek's strategy of "*tarrying with the negative*" (Žižek 1993, 237. Emphasis in original). Using this approach, one conducts a

political analysis which is based on the assumption that understanding social reality is not equivalent to understanding what society is (describing the positive forms our social constructions take) but what prevents it from being (Stavrakakis 2000, 100).

An important part of this loss of any positive real behind the mask has been the loss of most separation between the (mainstream, and increasingly also the 'alternative') media and the (state) militaries. As discussed above, these now combine into what James Der Derian refers to as a 'Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network' or 'MIME-NET' (Der Derian 2001b, xx).

Rather than representing military realities – representing the realities of warfare – from a distance, the media is instead subsumed in the networks of warfare and has, as shown above, itself become part of military strategy. In the case of media artefacts such as ‘real time’ news, the media reports wars via the same strategies that helped to constitute the virtual warfare in which the US-led Coalition engaged in the 1991 Gulf War: “[u]sing networked information and virtual technologies to bring ‘there’ here in near-real time and near-verisimilitude” (Der Derian 2001b, xv).

This use of virtual technologies allows the (military?) fighting and (media?) representation of the war to merge into one another. The fighting of the war in what is constructed as a “bloodless, humanitarian, hygienic” manner and the broadcast of pictures which ‘prove’ the merciful and virtuous nature of this war to TV audiences at home take place simultaneously or near-simultaneously (Der Derian 2001b, xv).

This fusion of media and military realities is especially clear in the broadcasting of footage from the ‘smart’ bombs used in Iraq. As Butler argues:

The so-called ‘smart bomb’ records its target as it moves in to destroy it – a bomb with a camera attached in front, a kind of optical phallus; it relays that film back to a command control and that film is refilmed on television, effectively constituting the television screen and its viewer as the extended apparatus of the bomb itself (Butler 1993b, 10-11).

As real violence is taking place – the bomb is heading to destroy a target – the production of representations of this violence takes place simultaneously. In virtuous war, we thus see real violence reproducing itself as media representations of war that nonetheless fail to quite capture such violence. The compelling images filmed from such bombs are recordings “of a thoroughly destructive act which can never record that destructiveness...as a close-up to the site becomes increasingly possible, the screen conveniently destroys itself” (Butler 1993b, 10-11).

When analysing the use of such ‘smart’ bombs, it is a misconception to assume that a wholly separate military strategy lies ‘behind’ these media

representations. Military and media discourses have fused to such an extent that it is unclear whether the pictures filmed from 'smart' bombs were a by-product of their use for real military goals, or whether the destruction wreaked by such weapons was merely an unfortunate side-effect of the need to provide new footage for television coverage of the Gulf War. As shown above, the use of pictures of/from smart bombs allows their violence, and its media representation, to take place simultaneously.

Asking questions such as whether CNN's support of the Gulf War was due to the rising viewing figures and advertising rates it gained in the course of the Gulf War or whether the war was aimed at providing the 'appropriate' footage – and therefore revenue – for media such as CNN has now become about as fruitful as asking whether the chicken preceded the egg (see Kellner 1992, 318). One finds lots of military chickens, lots of media eggs, and no ultimate originator. While Kellner is thus correct to argue that "[t]he war...produced a militarization of the mainstream media, especially news and information", one should also note that the Gulf War simultaneously produced what one might call a 'mediatization' of the military (Kellner 1992, 421).

As argued above, the Gulf War is thus not the type of thing to which 'just war' theory can be applied. Those who are asking about how the media could falsely represent the Gulf War as a just war should not ask how a brutal and unjustified war was made to appear tolerable, even necessary. Instead, one should question how something that lacks the hardness of a real war can be represented as a just war. While it may be possible to develop a 'just massacre theory', this would be something significantly different to theorising about just wars.

Despite the insightful nature of his book on the Gulf War, Kellner fails to question why this conflict was analysed as if it posed the moral challenge of a 'real' war (Kellner 1992). This is unfortunate: Kellner is clearly aware that this war was extremely one-sided, with the Iraqi army having had no significant chance of avoiding massacre by the US-led Coalition (Kellner 1992, 415).

As shown above, the Gulf War failed to meet many of the conditions that normally lead to conflict being classified as 'war'. It could therefore more productively be analysed, not as a war (as in Kellner's approach) but as "an atrocity masquerading as war" (Merrin 1994b, 447). The aim would then be, not

to explain how an unjust war could take place, but to analyse how the atrocities and massacres of the Gulf War were able to masquerade as a war.

In the Bush administration's eagerness to present the Gulf War as a hard, 'genuine' war, we saw peculiar instances of bluff. These rang more like attempts to bluff 'ourselves' into believing that Saddam's regime was stronger than it was (and thus constituted an opponent who could 'really' challenge us to a war) than attempts to impress our strength on Saddam.

Note for example that, when Saddam "challenged [the Americans] with being incapable of sacrificing ten thousand men in a war...they replied by sending twelve thousand coffins" (Baudrillard 1995, 53). One can interpret this sending of coffins as an attempt to give the impression that they US might really sustain such high casualties and that they would be prepared to sustain them (Baudrillard 1995, 53). The low Coalition casualties in Iraq (as noted above) leads Baudrillard to ask "[s]hould we consider multiplying clean wars in order to reduce the murderous toll of peacetime?" (Baudrillard 1995, 69). The risk for those fighting on one side of this conflict was reduced to such an extent that they stood less chance of dying in 'wartime' than in 'peacetime'.

Once again, instead of war being the hardest place it may have been a way of avoiding different, more challenging types of engagements with others (for example, discussions around to what extent supporters of the Iran-Iraq War were responsible for the state of Iraq's economy). In the run-up to war, the Bush administration presented some of Saddam's attempts to negotiate a solution as themselves posing a serious risk (Kellner 1992, 95). In the Gulf War, on the other hand, the Allies were able to not only thoroughly plan what they were going to do to the Iraqi troops – but to tell them in advance, with a good degree of certainty, what they were going to do to them.

Virilio has characterised Baudrillard's argument that the Gulf War did not take place as "negational" (Virilio 1998, 17). For Virilio, "[t]he Gulf War was a world war in miniature...it was a worldwide war on the temporal level of representation" (Virilio 1998, 17-18). However, while Virilio sees this position as anti-Baudrillardian, it is actually extremely close to one reading of Baudrillard: as argued above, the representations of the Gulf War took various places across the globe but the war did not fully take its place 'on the ground' in the Gulf. Virilio calls this a worldwide war, and Baudrillard calls this a war that

did not take place in the Gulf. I would argue that neither position is negational, and that both viewpoints are potentially useful (and considerably more similar than might initially appear to be the case).

If anything, it certain claims that the Gulf War *did* take place which should be seen as negational. Those who believe that this war took place in the Gulf in 1991 tend to belittle the appalling damage done in the Gulf War by arguing that it took place and (in the usual account) ended more than a decade ago. If war now serves as a way of avoiding the risk of engaging with others, it also fails to allow any kind of 'final' engagement to take place: instead, its not taking place can be very much prolonged.

Arguing that the Gulf War did not take place can help one to recognise the brutal continuation of this conflict into sanctions, bombing raids and the recent invasion of Iraq. Such a reading of the Gulf War also allows more sophisticated ways of analysing its impact. For example, it fits very well with Towle's account of the Gulf War as part of a process of 'enforced disarmament' rather than any kind of 'real' war or Knights' account of how the Gulf served as a 'cradle of conflict' in which, over 15 years of operations, US military capabilities were developed and put into practice (Knights 2005; Towle 1997, 183). Instead of negating the violence that took place between the different 'wars', one could instead view the 1991 Gulf War and Operation Iraqi Freedom as "bookends that marked the beginning and end of almost fifteen years of continuous military containment and periodic armed clashes" (Knights 2005).

Also notable is Baudrillard's argument that, in the Gulf War, we saw a proliferation of representations of political events and as this took place our symbolic reality became all-the-more intense: we were left with too much reality, with what Baudrillard refers to as hyperreality (Baudrillard 2001a, 233). It is thus no longer productive to look for any positive real behind this play of signifiers: the proliferation of signifiers is such that looking for something positive 'behind' them will merely reveal additional chains of signifiers (Weber 1995, 37). In loosely Baudrillardian terms, one might say that the shift to hyperreality has now lead to the loss of any positive real behind an excessive reality (Baudrillard and Lotringer 1987, 69).

This precludes any attempt to critique media propaganda through reference to an understanding of something real that is assumed to lie behind the

representations of conflict (as much as anything else, the analysis of this proliferation of representations now leaves us with more than enough to deal with). In order to allow a productive political response to such simulations we should ask instead how the Gulf War was simulated and how these simulations can be challenged, resisted and disrupted (Weber 1995, xii). We should also ask how these simulations are used to cover over the real impossibility of our social and political reality through simulating a war (Stavrakakis 2000, 100).

As argued above, I would therefore – in a sense – deny that the Gulf War took place; I would also emphasise the important role of the virtual in the actuality of this conflict. However, I certainly do not deny the reality of the events of the Gulf War and the suffering that these events caused (and would argue that the violence of the Gulf War has continued right up to the present day).

It is often assumed that, in reading military action as virtual, one implies it will be less brutal than real war. However, the excessive reality of virtual wars means they can actually be expected to be more damaging to their victims than has previously been possible. The virtual therefore, as argued above, adds an additional ‘dimension’ in which the violence can take place (Der Derian 2001b, xv).

Virtual military actions, such as the massacre of retreating Iraqi troops with which the Gulf War ended – a ‘clean’ aerial ‘turkey shoot’ in which the thousands of Iraqi bodies were torn apart by overwhelming military force and virtual technologies – should have removed the illusion that such wars are any less destructive (Der Derian 2001b, xvi; Kellner 1992, 247). The role of trauma and suffering in virtual war will be analysed at length in Chapter 4 in order to emphasise this point.

The very fact that the violence in the Gulf has continued for so long, and many are still being killed, injured and otherwise harmed by it, should indicate how damaging such virtual wars can be. As Baudrillard puts it, “the indefinite delay of the war is itself heavy with deadly consequences in all domains” (Baudrillard 1995, 238).

Because of the ‘indefinite delay’ of the Gulf War, and the “almost fifteen years of continuous military containment and periodic armed clashes” that followed its failure to be ‘completed’, Knights argues that Iraq could be used as

the ‘cradle’ in which US-led post-Cold War conflict developed (Abrams, Armitage et al. 1998; Abrams, Bennett et al. 1998; Knights 2005, xi-xii). Despite the benign-sounding metaphor, Iraq’s role as a ‘cradle of conflict’ has clearly had deadly consequences.

Stealth Bombers: The Reality of the Virtual

One aspect of the violence of virtual wars is thus the way that their virtuality takes on certain brutal realities. A discussion of the reality and virtuality of the stealth bombers used in the Gulf will help to clarify some issues around the reality of the virtual, and how the virtual is able to impact upon our social and political reality.

Virilio argues that the actual function of the US stealth planes – their speed, their maneuverability etc. – was sacrificed to ensure they did not leave an ‘image’ on radar (Virilio 2002a, 111). For Virilio, the real function of the planes was sacrificed and their function became the way that they engaged with the virtuality of the Gulf War: their ability not to show create a radar image (Virilio 2002a, 111). Virilio argues that:

It is almost as if the image in the mirror were suddenly modifying our face: the electronic representation on the screen, the radar console, modifies the aerodynamic silhouette of the weapon, the virtual image dominating in fact ‘the thing’ of which it was, until now, only the ‘image’ (Virilio 2002a, 111).

One can therefore argue that – in radar-avoiding technology such as stealth bombers – we see confirmation of the loosely Baudrillardian thesis that the representation/the signifier has now overwhelmed the ‘thing’/the signified. The representation has become more important than any positive ‘thing’ behind it, such as the aerial properties of these stealth bombers. This can be taken further, through looking at Žižek’s account of “the reality of the Virtual” (as outlined in the Introduction) (Žižek 2004h, 3).

For Žižek (and, in Žižek’s reading, for Deleuze as well) there is a ‘transcendental’ that “is infinitely RICHER than reality – it is the infinite potential field of virtualities out of which reality is actualized” (Žižek 2004h, 4).

The virtuality of stealth bombers is very much part of their reality: these are not 'just' virtual reality weapons, and do not 'just' aim to create an artificial reproduction of our reality. Instead, these planes are used because their virtuality has significant impacts upon reality. This virtuality plays a major part in their stealthy actuality (their invisibility on Iraqi radar screens) and this virtuality can also take on particular realities 'on the ground'. For example, the virtuality of stealth bombers was actualised into the reality of bombing raids that evaded (and then destroyed) Iraq's radar and air defences.

When analysing stealth bombers, it is thus important not 'just' analyse their virtuality. One must also analyse the reality that this virtuality takes on. Likewise, this chapter will not only analyse the virtuality of certain concepts (the lack of any positive thing behind them): I will also analyse the realities that this virtuality takes on. Initially, I will therefore move to analyse both the lack 'behind' ethnic and national identities, and the realities that these (lacking) identities take on.

There is no Positive Real to be Found Behind Ethnic and National Identities

I have argued that we should analyse events such as the Gulf War without searching for any positive real behind the representations through which their reality is constructed. The advantages of such an approach, and the damage done by a more conventional epistemological stance, can be seen especially clearly in an analysis of how 'the Arab' was discursively constructed during the Gulf War and the political consequences of these constructions. This will require an analysis of the real lack in such ethnic and national identities.

Such identities played a major role in the Gulf War, and there were regular attempts to find some 'real' Arab behind the proliferating discursive constructions of such agents. This search for a 'real' Arab follows a similar (and similarly damaging) logic to that which Said critiques in *Covering Islam* (Said 1981). For example, questions are asked as to whether, among 'the Arabs', women were 'naturally' destined to have their freedoms limited, or whether they have the capacity to rise to the 'heights' attained by European women (Kellner 1992, 76).

When the US-led Coalition was determining whether or not to push for the Gulf states to democratise, there was much discussion as to the type of

politics in which 'the Arab' could engage (PBS 1997). For example, Bush was initially discouraged from taking action against Saddam when Egyptian President Mubarak assured him that 'the Arab world' could resolve Hussein's intransigence and claimed a 'special' knowledge that Hussein was merely bluffing (PBS 1997). In refusing to support the movements to democratise Iraq and the Kuwaiti liberation/resistance movements which followed the Gulf War, Bush seems to have accepted that 'the Arab' could not deal with or did not deserve luxuries such as democracy (Kellner 1992, 355 and 416).

Said observes that "[l]abels purporting to name very large and complex realities are notoriously vague...If it is true that 'Islam' is an imprecise and ideologically loaded label, it is also true that 'the West' and 'Christianity' are just as problematic" (Said 1981, 8). It should likewise be noted that labels such as 'Arab' are extremely broad and vague. While these labels may sometimes be unavoidable, they should therefore also be used with considerable caution: it is extremely dubious for broad statements to be made about 'the Muslim' or 'the Arab' (Said 1981, 8). These statements usually take the form of synthetic yet largely *a priori* truth-claims - seeking applicability to huge numbers of people but protected from any empirical falsification. In order to make the world appear to conform to such broad categories (and make data collection manageable), analysts often take it as axiomatic that, for example, one version of Islam is *the* universal Islam or that there is a universal Arab family which does not change (Mohanty 1991b, 61-62).

Said makes a related point regarding constructions of 'the Muslim' and 'the Arab': old clichés, which depend upon unsustainably broad assumptions about such things as a real 'Arab culture' and natural 'Arab behaviour', are blithely reproduced (Said 1981, xxvii-xxviii). Whereas most seventeenth century texts on such subjects as 'the Jew' are correctly acknowledged to be overly simplistic and often racist, similar texts on 'the Arab' are often regarded as classics and reproduced as such (Said 1981, xxvii-xxviii).²³

These attempts to attribute a common mind-set to millions of very different people living in very different situations should be rejected. We should

²³ As a more recent example, one might note that Robert Patai's The Arab Mind is often seen as key reading for those seeking to 'understand' the situation in Iraq; this is despite Patai making claims such as that "sex [is] a prime mental preoccupation in the Arab world", which would be seen as shocking if, for example, applied to Africa (Patai 1983, 118; Whitaker 2004).

instead (echoing Said's account of 'Islam') move to a recognition that there is no real version of 'the Arab' to be found behind these numerous representations of it. It is instead the case that, for both Arabs and non-Arabs, there are significant subjective elements which play a part in what it is to be 'Arab' and these layers of subjective representations cannot be reduced to any positive real (Said 1981, 41). Put simply, we should acknowledge that our political reality is much too complex and much too interesting to allow itself to be contained in such crude and broad categories as 'the Arab'.

Rather than focusing on finding real things behind 'the Arab', 'the Muslim' or even 'the 1991 Gulf War', I would instead echo Stavrakakis' approach to discourse analysis (quoted in part above, but sufficiently helpful to be worth quoting at more length below), preferring to work

from a negative ontological framework, according to which all human constructions constitute attempts to insinuate an impossible object (society) and master an excessive element (the real in Lacanian terms) which always escapes our means of representation... [This] type of theorisation and political analysis... is based on the assumption that understanding social reality is not equivalent to understanding what society is (describing the positive forms our social constructions take) but what prevents it from being (Stavrakakis 2000, 100).

I would likewise argue that, when analysing constructs such as 'the Arab' or the Gulf War, one should focus not on understanding any positive form that these constructs take (whether 'Arab culture' really leads towards autocratic government, whether the Gulf War was really a just war etc.). One should focus instead on what prevents there from being any 'complete' Arab or any complete war: the real lack that is central to these discursive constructs.

For example, even if someone attempts to adopt all the characteristics that would make them 'really' Arab, there will always be something missing, 'something more' that they could do in order to move closer to a real identity (Edkins 2003b, 12). However, this 'something more' is always lacking and identity is therefore always incomplete (Edkins 2003b, 12). This lack is "not

easy to bear...[and thus] generate[s] attempts to rearticulate these dislocated...discourses” (Stavrakakis 2000, 106).

To squeeze our political reality into narrow categories means that much of the important and interesting complexity of said reality must be effaced. It also means that that ‘we’ must prevent modes of political action that could dislocate this reality, that could ‘reveal’ the real lack at its core.

Foucault’s Pendulum, *Negativity and the Gulf War*

This theorising about virtuality, reality, negativity, the real and ontological frameworks can become somewhat dry and hard to follow. In an attempt to ameliorate this problem, it will be helpful to turn to Umberto Eco’s Foucault’s Pendulum (Eco 2001). One useful means of dislocating our political reality – or, at least, engaging with the possibilities for dislocation – might lie in the type of humour found in Eco’s work.

An early scene in Eco’s novel features the narrator desperately trying to ‘hack’ into a dead friend’s computer in order to recover some essential information (Eco 2001, 28-42). The machine asks “Do you have the password?”, and the narrator enters a wide range of possible passwords: different permutations on the name of God, different cabalistic terms, all without success (Eco 2001, 28-41). The answer to the question that finally works to ‘unlock’ the computer is a simple, negative and accurate response to the question: “NO” (Eco 2001, 42). In this case, “the answer, the key to knowledge, was ‘No’. Not only does the magic word not exist, but we do not know that it does not exist. Those who admit their ignorance, therefore, can learn something” (Eco 2001, 623).

Those of us who study politics are often asked whether we know what lies behind our political reality. Many researchers are in the position of desperately seeking a ‘correct’ password – arguing about whether God, human rationality, human evil, civilisational loyalties, or something else entirely lies behind the reality of politics and the political. The approach I advocate would, on the contrary, seek to cut through this with a ‘simple’ negativity: my answer to questions like ‘do you know what lies behind international politics?’ or ‘do you know what lies behind the human?’ would be ‘NO’. I would argue that this ‘simple’ NO works to open up the study of our lived realities much more

effectively than an endless and fruitless search for something lying behind this reality.

While acknowledging the *reality* of the Gulf War, I would therefore argue that it is not possible to find a positive real behind it. Far from bringing comfort to those seeking to maintain today's (neo)liberal hegemony, this 'no' allows a more effective critique of the political *status quo* than the belief that we can access the real prior to its 'distortion' in symbolic reality (see Norris 1990, 127 and 149). Likewise, we should not look for the real of 'the Arab' behind their symbolic mis/representations. We should instead analyse how these constructs are simulated through masquerades that cover over the central role of the impossible real, of the traumatic real lack in the symbolic. Admitting our ignorance as to what (if any) real thing lies behind our reality may allow us to learn something, and to do some valuable things.

The major political advantage of all these moves is that – while assuming that a positive real lies behind our symbolic reality can lead to politics becoming frozen by the assumption of a central, immutable Thing around which it must revolve – a focus on the real *qua* void makes clear the undetermined nature of the political. This real negativity cannot lead to anything like a causal determinism. Instead, it opens a space for political action – put simply, what is undetermined can also be changed. Often, it should be.

There was no Positive Real to be Found Behind Sovereignty in the Gulf

With the political importance of the undetermined in mind, I will argue that there was no positive 'thing' behind the concept of sovereignty in the Gulf. There was therefore no positive thing that could determine how sovereignty played out in this conflict.

Different concepts of sovereignty did play a central role in the Gulf War. Operation Desert Shield (the build up of troops in the Gulf, allegedly in order to protect Saudi Arabia, which preceded the Gulf War) was represented as a defence of the sovereignty principle: it was seen as imperative to stop Iraq from further breaching the international norms upholding the sovereignty principle by extending its influence outside its sovereign territory (Bush 1991a; Campbell 1993, 23) Even though (as noted above) Bush "had no idea what our options

were” when Iraq invaded Kuwait, he “did know for sure that the aggression had to be stopped, and Kuwait's sovereignty restored” (Bush and Scowcroft 1998, 315).

This focus on sovereignty ran into considerable tension with other justifications for the war. Notable here is the issue of human rights: much was made of the appalling human rights situation in Kuwait following the Iraqi invasion (Halliday 1990; Knipe 1990). However, the Gulf War defended the sovereignty of a Kuwaiti state which itself had a poor human rights record and which – immediately after Kuwait was ‘liberated’ from Iraqi occupation – was allowed to engage in considerable violent repression of those inside Kuwait (Leader 1991b; Walker 1991b). Moreover, the sovereignty of Iraq was respected to the extent that the Coalition allowed it to brutally put down Kurdish and Shia rebellions in the aftermath of the Gulf War (Fletcher 1991a; O'Brien 1991; Theodoulou and Ellicott 1991).

Desert Shield was entered into with the declared aim of protecting the security of the sovereign state of Saudi Arabia. When asked to allow US troops onto their territory, the Saudis initially showed a striking failure to trust the US to provide them with security. The Saudis responded to Bush's offer of US protection by pointing out that they “were not at all sure they wanted to be defended by the United States [because t]he US...did not exactly have a reputation in the region for reliability” (Bush and Scowcroft 1998, 325).

The Saudis were, however, eventually persuaded to seek help from US troops on 6 August – with the assistance of some US satellite photos that appeared to show threatening movements of Iraqi troops towards Saudi Arabia, and “a written guarantee from President Bush to leave his kingdom once the job on hand was accomplished” (Hiro 1992, 111 and 116). The Saudi decision to allow US troops to base themselves in the kingdom was, according to Clarke, substantially due to them trusting Bush's word that they would leave once the kingdom was secured rather than a faith in a multilateral security system (Clarke 2004, 588-589). With the acquiescence of the Saudi government, the US actually maintained a substantial military presence in the kingdom until 2003 (Burkeman 2003).

An important aspect of the virtue of the 1991 Gulf War was thus the use of a ‘principle’ of sovereignty (Campbell 1993, 23). What was striking shortly

after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was the struggle to find a principle on which to ground intervention. After some uncertainty in the immediate follow-up to the invasion, there was a shift to focus on (a particular interpretation of) the principle of state sovereignty as a reason to intervene (Bush and Scowcroft 1998, 315; Fletcher 1990a; Fletcher 1990b). For example, as noted above, Bush knew saw the restoration of Kuwait's sovereignty as a key goal of the Gulf War (Bush and Scowcroft 1998, 315).

The Bush administration was therefore left in the position of defending the principle of state sovereignty at the expense of the human rights of a supposedly sovereign people. For example, Bush defended the sovereignty of Kuwait to the extent of arguing that it was unacceptable for others to 'impose' democracy from outside (Bush and Scowcroft 1998, 376).²⁴ Therefore, while human rights abuses in Kuwait and Iraq were often cited as a reason for invasion, the Bush administration largely accepted Kuwaiti abuses following the war (Halliday 1990; Knipe 1990; Leader 1991b; Walker 1991b). The distinctly sub-optimal Saudi record on human rights was also largely disregarded (see Amnesty International 1993).

For the Realist school of international politics the reality of state sovereignty is a key axiom: states are seen as the key actors in international politics, and it is presumed that all or most of international politics can be explained through analysing how states act in their rational self-interest (for example Copeland 2003, 434). The liberal concept of 'democracy' is likewise often linked to the belief in state sovereignty: for example, states are necessary if the type of representative government envisaged by John Stuart Mill is to be possible (Mill 1946a, 141). As Cynthia Weber argues, we can then see that "[Political] Realism starts from individual sovereign states, [Liberal] idealism from a community of sovereign states: both start from sovereignty" (Weber 1995, 1).

However, as numerous thinkers have suggested, the type of boundaries defended in the Gulf War are already exceptionally porous – they might be better viewed as flows, links or networks than as dividing lines – and the politics of the Allied coalition in the Gulf War were therefore rather 'unprincipled' (Campbell

²⁴ In defending some aspects of Iraq's earlier foreign policy, Saddam has also emphasised the importance of the sovereignty principle (Iraq's sovereignty, in this case) (Hussein 1980).

1993; Walker 1993). These boundaries rely on a 'principle' of sovereignty which no longer 'really' exists, which is always (and continually) constructed and 'deconstructed' through an ever-changing flux of politics that cannot be contained within such principles (Campbell 1993; Walker 1993).

In order to defend this principle of state sovereignty during the Gulf War, "the US had to abrogate...democratic principles [such as] free speech" in order to protect what is essential to 'democracy' (Butler 1992, 7). For Butler, "this violent move reveals, among other things, that such notions of universality are installed through the abrogation of the very universal principles to be implemented" (Butler 1992, 7). The very construction and maintenance of liberalism and political realism thus involve certain acts of subjection. As Cynthia Weber argues:

For the foundational myth of the sovereign state to be believable, the state requires more than a creation myth justifying its authority. What must be done is to control how its people are 'written' or constituted – how their meaning is fixed...Only by maintaining control over the depiction of its people can the state authoritatively claim to be the agent of its people (Weber 1995, 27-28).

The violence used to maintain the belief in state sovereignty became brutally clear in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War. Although Bush claims that, before the war, he "became very emotional about the atrocities" committed by the Iraqis in Kuwait, his administration's response to Kuwaiti atrocities following the war was rather less emotional (Bush and Scowcroft 1998, 374). The Bush administration waited until July 1991 to note – in a wonderful example of understatement – that what we saw in Kuwait after 'liberation' (such as the "routine" use of torture in the aftermath of the war) was not "the optimum type of regime" (Walker 1991b; Fletcher 1991c). It seemed as if, in order to attain political virtue, one actually needed to defend the sovereign 'right' of dictatorships to determine what to do to 'their' populations.

We should therefore question the supposedly emancipatory nature of the 'sovereign' liberal state and, when analysing such concepts as 'democracy' and 'human rights', work to interrogate the abrogation of liberal norms that has

allowed the construction of liberal norms and the liberal state. We should thus ask with Nietzsche “how much blood and horror is at the bottom of all ‘good things’” (Nietzsche 1996, 42-44). In order to formulate an ethical response to this blood and horror, one option might be to pursue what Campbell refers to as a ‘politics without principle’ (see Campbell 1993). We could thus open up more opportunities for a politics that does not depend upon fixed principles by, initially, ceasing to base politics on the ‘principle’ of state sovereignty. Chapter 4 will explore the ethical and political possibilities of a politics that utilises the real lack behind our reality (instead of seeking a foundation in any positive principle) at more length.

Conclusions

This chapter has argued that the Gulf War showed a move to a logic of virtual war in which the representation has become more important than the ‘thing’, and that – instead of taking place in any conventional sense – a real lack lay behind the reality of this conflict. Through its role in the development of certain cyberwar techniques, the Gulf War highlighted some important changes in the ways in which wars are fought.

As well as analysing the development of cyberwar, I have also begun to engage with the ethical issues raised by conflict and virtual war, and suggested some moves towards a politics without principle. This account of ethical engagements with others will be expanded upon in Chapter 3 and (in particular) Chapter 4.

What should be seen as key to all of these claims is an engagement with or tarrying with the real lack in our symbolic (and therefore our social and political) reality. Moving beyond an (ultimately futile) search for something ‘behind’ our reality can be an effective technique for those of us who are studying international politics: as suggested in Eco’s work (as discussed above) “those who admit their ignorance can learn something” (Eco 2001, 623). Admitting our ignorance can open up additional opportunities for political action and political change.

While bearing this ‘ignorance’ in mind – there will be numerous aspects of conflict which this thesis cannot encompass – I will now outline how the ‘war on terror’ came to be through analysing Islamist networks prior to and during the

events of September 11 2001(Chapter 2) and the ‘major operations’ and insurgencies which have made up the ‘war on terror’ (Chapter 3). Chapter 4 will investigate how the aforementioned negativity – the real failures of various political discourses – can be used in political action.

Chapter 2 – Netwar: The Anti-Communist Afghan Insurgency and the Events of September 11

Introduction

For James Der Derian, the events of September 11 inflicted on “the world...a crash course in network warfare” (Der Derian 2001a). This chapter will analyse how such techniques of network warfare have been developed, and the important role that they have played in changes in the ways that conflict now takes place. I will also consider how one can conceptualise these netwar actors and conflicts.

The second part of the chapter will focus on how this ‘crash course’ in netwar was developed and delivered. However, in order to place these events in (at least part of) their historical context, I will begin by analysing the anti-Communist Afghan insurgency. I will thus demonstrate that – with their support of the anti-Communist insurgency in Afghanistan – the US played an important rôle in developing netwar techniques. The growth of Bin Laden’s networks and the events of September 11 will also be shown to be examples of netwar used as a force multiplier in asymmetrical warfare, but this time turned against the US.

The anti-Communist Afghan insurgency and the events of September 11 will therefore be read as an illustration of the efficacy of netwar techniques for attacking more hierarchical actors, and the problems that such actors face when trying to defend themselves from netwar attacks. Alongside these analyses the chapter will consider the ‘theoretical’ issues raised by the development of netwar, and the implications of this for concepts and practices of networks, territory and boundaries.

The Rise of Netwar

While the type of netwar deployed in the anti-Communist insurgency in Afghanistan was not altogether new and not unique to Afghanistan – as shown in the Introduction, netwar has a lineage that goes back at least to the Mongols – the development and use of netwar in Afghanistan is of particular interest for this thesis. The insurgents who fought the Soviets in Afghanistan, and the techniques that they developed there, are clearly linked to the ‘war on terror’. Many who were trained in Afghanistan, and the networks which developed there, were

involved in anti-US 'terrorism' and the events of September 11. Moreover, Chapter 3 will show that there are considerable similarities between the anti-Soviet insurgency in Afghanistan and the current insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Resistance to the Soviet Intervention and Communist Government in Afghanistan

Arquilla and Ronfeldt argue that, while the US is the world leader in cyberwar, others may have an advantage in netwar (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1997b, 6). As will be shown in a later account of the events of September 11, this did come to be the case by the start of the 21st century. However, the US played a significant role in an important utilisation and development of netwar tactics: it assisted insurgents resisting the Communist government of and Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

Following a 1978 coup, which installed a pro-Soviet and loosely Marxist/Communist regime in Afghanistan, there were tensions between the government and religious leaders who challenged their policies (Wigg 1979). A number of the more rebellious religious leaders were dismissed and/or arrested (Hiro 2002, 201-203; Wigg 1979).

On seeing an anti-Communist resistance emerging, Carter signed a 1979 Presidential Directive to give covert assistance to this resistance (Hiro 2002, 206). Such support continued throughout the 1980s before being scaled down in the early 1990s (Coll 2004, 232-233; Thomas 1989). Billions of dollars of US weapons, funds and training and Saudi funds flowed to the resistance, with the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI – the Pakistani intelligence service) generally serving as an intermediary (Coll 2004, 62).

From October 1979 Soviet troops from central Asia (who could not easily be visually distinguished from Afghans) took over some guard duties to support Afghan government troops (Hiro 2002, 207).²⁵ In December, the Soviet troops were involved in another coup in Afghanistan: President Amin was killed, and Babrak Karmal was installed as president (Binyon 1980; Gromyko, Andropov et al. 1979, 2; Hiro 2002, 208-209).

²⁵ The Soviet government was far from eager to send its troops to Afghanistan: it took eleven explicit requests from Afghan governments before the Soviets committed to the intervention (Chernyaev 1987, 2).

Karmal was a more 'conventional' Soviet/Communist leader, but did seek to ameliorate the civil war which was developing in Afghanistan (Binyon 1980; Hiro 2002, 208-209). He tried to "blame all previous problems on the former rulers" and promised political reforms (Boyne 2004, 208; Gromyko, Andropov et al. 1979, 2-3). Although a Communist leader, Karmal did try to win Muslim support: he emphasised the role of Islam in Afghan society, and declared that he would respect "the sacred principles of Islam" (Hiro 2002, 208). Karmal, however, was particularly unsuccessful in his attempts at winning over public opinion (Boyne 2004, 209; Hiro 2002; Massoud 2001a). The Soviet intervention, and Karmal's rule, actually caused many more Afghans to join the resistance (Boyne 2004; Hiro 2002, 209).

On several levels, the US and Saudi sponsorship of the insurgency in Afghanistan was extremely successful. In financial terms, it was especially efficient. By 1984, the US and Saudis had spent \$200m each on the conflict in Afghanistan (Coll 2004, 89). However, the war had cost the Soviets \$12bn and also led to the loss of much equipment (hundreds of planes and thousands of tanks and armoured vehicles) (Coll 2004, 89). It is estimated that the weaponry that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) gave to the rebels allowed them to destroy Soviet equipment worth 8-10 times that amount (Coll 2004, 68).

This funding of anti-Soviet forces was very effective, meaning that it was even supported by some who were extremely well aware of the dangers of blowback. For example, Richard Clarke (former State Department intelligence officer and Chairman of the Counterterrorism Security Group (CSG)) argues that the US policy of assisting Afghan rebels was justified because it was such an effective Cold War tactic (Clarke 2004, 51). For relatively little investment the US was able to cause serious problems for the Soviet Union, despite the Soviet commitment of more than 100,000 troops and their most advanced weaponry (Boyne 2004; Clarke 2004, 51; Fisk 1980).

The tactics of the insurgents were so effective that – overstating the point somewhat, when arguing for withdrawal – Gorbachev considers complaints that ten insurgents were superior to a whole brigade of 'green' Soviet troops (Chernyaev 1985, 1). It will be argued below that blowback may be an integral part of the type of netwar utilised by the US in Afghanistan. However, it should be noted that – according to certain contestable conceptions of US interests – the

blowback from the netwar in Afghanistan could be viewed as a worthwhile price to pay, given the gains that it allowed the US to make in the Cold War.

The situation that the Soviets faced in Afghanistan was sufficiently bad that, by the mid-1980s, the Gorbachev was seeking a means to withdraw (Chernyaev 1985, 1). Struggling to find an 'orderly' way of withdrawing, the Soviet Union stayed in Afghanistan until 1989 (Chernyaev 1985, 1; Chernyaev 1987, 1; Hiro 2002, 224; Nelson 1989).

To continue to make problems for the Communist government in Afghanistan, the US and Saudi Arabia supplied the Mujahedin²⁶ with a total of \$1bn in weapons per year from 1989 (Hiro 2002, 224).²⁷ The US and Saudi Arabia also used this material assistance to hold the networks of the insurgency together: any group that split from the Mujahedin would have lost its share of this assistance (Coll 2004, 103-104; Hiro 2002, 224-225). By the end of 1991 the Communist government of Afghanistan was losing control (Hiro 2002, 229). By April 1992 the Mujahedin were able to establish a government (Hiro 2002, 231).

The success of the Afghan resistance was startling: as Clarke puts it, "[s]ome Afghans and some Arab fighters pondered what you could do with money, Korans and a few good weapons. You could overthrow an infidel government. More importantly, *you could destroy a superpower*" (Clarke 2004, 54. Emphasis added). A number of those who were involved in the Afghan insurgency, and part of the US military, were surprised by the Mujahedin's success (Bin Laden and Miller 1998; Boyne 2004; Massoud 2001a).

Netwar and Afghanistan

The relatively poorly resourced network of insurgents in Afghanistan was thus able to defeat hierarchical Soviet and Afghan government opponents that significantly outnumbered and outgunned the insurgents (Clarke 2004, 54; Fisk 1980). This is, as will be shown below, an example of the efficacy of netwar techniques. To emphasise the advantages that these gave to insurgents, it is

²⁶ The term 'Mujahedin' is most often used to refer to Islamic fighters engaging in jihad; a more literal translation, though, might refer to someone who struggles or exerts themselves for Islamic goals (Longman Dictionary of the English Language 1991, 1047; Halliday 2002, 15-17).

²⁷ In 1991, weapons abandoned by the retreating Iraq army also flowed into Afghanistan from Saudi Arabia (Thomas 1991).

worth repeating the particularly scornful (albeit perhaps somewhat boastful) way in which Massoud assessed the Soviet troops.²⁸ This does give a sense of the problems that the Soviets faced.

Massoud initially describes what he heard of the conflict from his colleagues in the insurgency: the enemy “are not such good fighters – they just made their column and they launched their offensive, and from behind, we started our firing” (Massoud 2001a). When Massoud was fighting the Soviets, “we could one by one take under our target [sic] (pick them out one by one)” (Massoud 2001a). The netwar tactics of the insurgents allowed them to view one of the most powerful conventional armies in the world as a set of targets to be picked off.

Massoud successfully took advantage of the failure of the Soviets to keep pace with the insurgents:

The Russian tactics changed very slowly...and when they changed their tactics, we also changed our tactics. First...they launched their offensive with tanks. We were around the mountains at that time, and they started to use helicopters to deliver their troops. We also started to change our tactics at that time and tried to put our arms and ammunition in places where the Russians wouldn't be able to seize them, and we distributed all our troops on mountain tops, and with small mobile groups we moved and started our fighting against the Russians and took the initiative from the Russians and inflicted heavy blows on them in the Panjshir Valley (Massoud 2001a).

For Arquilla and Ronfeldt, “netwar refers to conflicts in which a combatant is organised along network lines or employs networks for operational control and other communications” (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, vii). Arquilla and Ronfeldt argue that “during the course of a netwar offensive, network forces will...be able to manoeuvre well within the decision-making cycle of more hierarchical opponents” (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 11). This was very much the case in Afghanistan: the insurgents there were able to respond to changes in

²⁸ Hekmatyar compares Massoud to “a rooster who is so conceited it walks on the ceiling on his toes, because he’s afraid that the roof would fall” (Coll 2004, 120).

Soviet and government tactics extremely quickly, and could therefore determine the context in which fighting took place – outpacing their opponents. As will be argued in Chapter 3, the current insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq have also been able to rapidly respond to changes in enemy tactics and therefore to determine much of the context of the fighting there.

Although the strength of Soviet forces meant that the insurgents would not succeed in a ‘head on’ confrontation, they were able to ensure that most confrontations took place in more favourable circumstances. As Massoud notes in the above quotes, fighting happened with insurgents attacking from behind, with Afghan government forces cut off from Soviet forces, in inhospitable terrain that Soviet armour could not penetrate, etc. Moreover, although the Soviets did vary their tactics, the speed at which insurgents could respond to such changes rendered these variations relatively ineffective.

An important element of netwar is the manipulation of knowledge of the situation in which combat takes place (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 107). Netwar can be used to ensure that one side remains nearly blind while the other more intensely or effectively networked side has a much better awareness of the battlespace (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 107).

In the context of Afghanistan this meant that, as will be shown below, insurgents ensured that much of the time the Soviet and government forces were not able to learn where they were (Coll 2004, 116). The insurgents could thus avoid direct confrontations, and launch effective and unexpected attacks on ‘enemy’ forces (often picking out relatively ‘soft’ targets such as supply columns) (Boyne 2004; Coll 2004, 116). In a useful feedback loop, the likelihood of attack made Soviet and Afghan government troops reluctant to go on scout duty and therefore further blinded their side of the conflict (Boyne 2004).

An initial success of Islamist fighters in Afghanistan was thus to prevent the Afghan government or Soviet forces from determining who and where insurgents were. It was therefore hard for the Soviets to know who to attack, or where attacks would come from. The resistance were so hard to ‘see’ that “[d]uring the 1980s, Soviet conscripts besieged by CIA-supplied Afghan rebels called them *dukhi*, or ghosts” (Coll 2004, 17. Emphasis in original). The Soviet

military had significant problems with analysing and dealing with this type of netwar or ‘ghost war’.

The Soviet and Afghan governments also displayed a distinct lack of awareness of what they were dealing with. For example, when reporting on the situation in Afghanistan Brezhnev only manages to view these diverse networks of fighters as a homogenous set of “bandit formations” (Cold War International History Project 1980). Most strikingly, Afghan President and Commander Karmal chose to blame only the US for the “hullabaloo” following the coup through which he became President (Binyon 1980).²⁹

The insurgents made good use of their superior knowledge of the enemy during the conflict. For example, as noted above the rebel leader Massoud was able to choose which targets to attack, and when (Massoud 2001a). Moreover, Massoud actively sought information on Soviet positions in order to assist in his attacks, going so far as to “persuade [some] sympathizers within the Afghan army *not* to defect because they were more valuable to him as informers than they were as fighters” (Coll 2004, 117. Emphasis in original; Thapar 1980, 6).³⁰

An awareness of Soviet tactics also allowed Massoud to effectively ‘encourage’ the desertion and defection of Afghan government troops. The Soviets often sent Afghan units ahead of Soviet troops, hoping that the Afghans would bear the brunt of insurgent attacks (Coll 2004, 117; Cross 1985). However, Massoud was able to take advantage of this tactic: his men blasted rocks into the path of Soviet troops in order to separate them from the Afghans (Coll 2004, 117; Cross 1985). In such a situation, Afghan troops usually defected to the Mujahedin – bringing their weapons with them (The Times 1982, 7; Coll 2004, 117).

As noted in Chapter 1, the use of psychological operations to encourage surrender was an important part of the US-led Coalition’s cyberwar in the 1991 Gulf War. Likewise, psychological effects (what you could perhaps call psychological operations) of the Afghan insurgency lead to some notable successes.

²⁹ Chapter 3 will show that the US is making similar errors in its attempt to deal with the insurgency in Iraq.

³⁰ Such connections saved Massoud’s life in 1984: he escaped assassination because the intended assassin chose to tell insurgents about the assassination plans (Mortimer 1984, 7).

Despite a recruitment drive (including additional conscription, and generous salaries) in the early 1980s, Afghans were so unwilling to fight in the army that troop numbers fell from 100,000 to about 30,000 (Thapar 1982, 7). Moreover, when Afghan soldiers were sent into battle, they were sufficiently reluctant to fight that “they were pushed to the front, with Soviet troops behind them to ensure they do not desert or defect before the first shot is fired” (The Times 1982, 7).

Many Afghan government and Soviet troops did desert and/or defect (The Times 1982, 7; Boyne 2004; Coll 2004, 117). Psychological Operations also served as very effective anti-aircraft weapons: “[o]n one occasion, an entire squadron of MiG-21s was destroyed when their pilots blew them up and fled to fight on the ground with the mujahedeen” (Boyne 2004).

The psychological impact of the war on the Soviet Union was also significant. When justifying his decision to withdraw from Afghanistan to the Politburo, Gorbachev read out “heartbreaking letters” from the bereaved families of Soviet troops (Chernyaev 1985, 1). This ‘heartbreak’ was caused not ‘just’ by the deaths of the troops, but also by the perceived unpopularity of the intervention (both internationally and in Afghanistan) and by the particularly unpleasant circumstances in which Soviet troops were being made to fight and die (Chernyaev 1985, 1; Chernyaev 1987, 1).

In a netwar conflict, information (gained by and distributed through one’s own network, denied to one’s enemy, and given to one’s enemy in psychological operations) is used as a force multiplier and is thus an important part of military action (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 44). As shown above, this force multiplier allowed the insurgents to increase the efficacy of their own attacks, to limit what the Afghan and Soviet armies could do, and to deplete Soviet and government forces while increasing their own numbers.

In some cases, resistance fighters played a role loosely analogous to demons (as discussed below) within these networks (see Basu 2003).³¹ One example of this would be when Afghan insurgents continued to serve as part of

³¹ In computing, a demon (sometimes referred to as a ‘daemon’) can be defined as a “program or part of a program which is not invoked explicitly, but that lies dormant waiting for some condition(s) to occur”; they are commonly used in artificial intelligence programmes (Computer Dictionary @ Computer-Dictionary-Online.org).

the government army, only acting to supply information to the insurgency when it was needed (Coll 2004, 117; Thapar 1980, 6).

Arquilla and Ronfeldt use the games Chess and Go as analogies for netwar (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 103)³². If one ‘player’ is denied a view of his/her opponent’s ‘pieces’ while the other ‘player’ has complete topsight, the ‘player’ with topsight can win even if his/her ‘pieces’ are outnumbered (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 107).

The Soviet forces in Afghanistan were left in the unfortunate position of trying to fight ‘ghosts’ and ‘demons’. They were playing against ‘pieces’ that could blend perfectly into the background of Afghan society until needed, then became visible momentarily – if at all – only to later fade away until needed again (Coll 2004, 17). For example, as noted above, insurgents took advantage of the terrain in rural Afghanistan in order to stay hidden while large bodies of Soviet troops passed; they then attacked softer targets, such as the resupply columns needed by these troops (Boyne 2004).

Afghan insurgents were able to maintain a much better sense of what government and Soviet forces were doing. A ‘conventional’ army will find it much harder to fade into the background and the Afghan resistance did make a considerable effort to gather information about its enemies (Coll 2004, 116-117; Massoud 2001a). As Massoud puts it, describing how the Mujahedin were able to gain information about and launch surprise attacks on Soviet troops: “[f]rom the informational point of view and from the tactical point of view, our troops did very well, and the Russians became like mad” (Massoud 2001a).

Arquilla and Ronfeldt refer to this type of netwar organisation as “panarchy” (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 9). Although this is a type of order, it is not what one would expect to see in a force controlled by a unitary ‘player’. For Arquilla and Ronfeldt, the type of panarchy associated with netwar depends upon

a powerful doctrine or ideology, or at least a strong set of common interests and objectives, that spans all nodes, and to which the

³² Arquilla and Ronfeldt do not cite Deleuze and Guattari here. However, I would suspect that Arquilla and Ronfeldt’s use of this analogy was influenced by its earlier use in A Thousand Plateaus (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 352-353).

members subscribe in a deep way; such a doctrine can enable them to be 'all of one mind' even if they are dispersed and devoted to different tasks (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 10).³³

There were considerable differences among those engaged in netwar against Soviet forces, and there was no single unifying doctrine or ideology. For example, fighters disagreed on the political implications of Islam and, while some fought as nationalists seeking to 'liberate' Afghanistan, others saw themselves as part of a wider Islamist project (Hiro 2002, 211-213). However, the removal of the Soviet forces and Communist government served as a common objective that allowed different groups to fight together. It served as a shared representational framework that let different actors work together as part of the same network.

While removing the Soviet forces and the Communist government was a common objective, this did not prevent considerable conflict between different groups; outright civil war followed the Soviet withdrawal (Coll 2004, 118-119; Hiro 2002, 233-235; Thapar 1980, 6). For example, prior to the Soviet withdrawal Massoud complained that Hekmatyar's Hezb-I-Islami party was trying to disarm Massoud's troops and cutting off their supply lines (Massoud 2001a). After the (official) withdrawal of Soviet troops, the Mujahedin spent a great deal of time fighting one another (MacNeil and Lehrer 1989). This internal conflict allowed the Communist government to last much longer than expected, and it was thought at the time that this government might even defeat the Mujahedin (Hussain 1990; MacNeil and Lehrer 1989).

The complex connections that can be formed between different nodes in a network are part of the strength of network forms. However, this interconnectedness can also work to intensify intra-network fighting after common objectives no longer hold a network together (Dombrowski, Gholz et al. 2003, 6). Interconnectedness allows different actors to communicate and work

³³ Such accounts of netwar structures bear some similarity to the account of organisational structures offered by the 'organisation in the mind' approach to Business/Management Studies. For example, Armstrong argues that members of an organisation both contribute to the experience and the construction of the organisation and "they *are contributed to*...there is a resonance in them of the emotional experience of the organization as a bounded entity, both conscious and unconscious" (Armstrong 2005, 6. Emphasis in original). The organisation and the "inner world" of its members are thus interlinked (Armstrong 2005, 145).

together effectively. However, as was seen in Afghanistan, the same connections can be used to intensify the conflict between these actors.

After the Mujahedin defeated the Communist government of Afghanistan, ethnic, political and religious tensions lead to a new civil war emerging. The rule of Afghanistan became divided between the groups of warlords who later became known as the Northern Alliance and a (more) fundamentalist government in Kabul (Hiro 2002, 233-237).

The Taliban was formed in 1994, lead by Mullah Omar.³⁴ It formed in part to challenge the chaos created by a number of local warlords, and also benefited from ISI support (Hiro 2002, 239-251). Drawing on the Deobandi approach to Islam, the Taliban focused “on a fairly narrow range of *shari’a* law, which emphasized personal behaviour and ritual” (Metcalf 2002, 63; Benjamin and Simon 2003, 135).

Omar was already known for his involvement in the Afghan insurgency (‘Ma’soum Afghani’ 1997; Hiro 2002, 239-240). He built up his reputation further through leading Taliban troops to punish the crimes (such as rape and kidnapping) and assist the victims of other Afghan military leaders (Hiro 2002, 239-240). The Taliban won support and funding from the Pakistani government and Pakistani businesses: importantly, they were able to allow goods to be moved through Afghanistan comparatively safely (Hiro 2002, 240-241).

With this Pakistani backing, the Taliban achieved a number of military successes: they captured a large number of weapons and vehicles (including, when they took Kandahar, planes) from other Afghan leaders (Hiro 2002, 240-241). They then expanded their operations further, laying siege to Kabul for nearly a year (Hiro 2002, 244-249). In September 1996 the Taliban captured Kabul and were able to form a *de facto* Afghan government (Hiro 2002, 249-250).

It should be noted that the functioning of the Taliban was itself dependent, to a significant extent, on normative factors that were used to organise their representational framework. They relied on a particular reading and extension of Islamic theology and law. Since the early 1990s Omar had earned his living and

³⁴ ‘Taliban’ is the plural term for ‘students’, and many of the Taliban were schooled in Pakistani Madrasas; in particular, many of their top leaders studied at the Madrasa Haqqaniya (Metcalf 2002, 62-63).

built up his reputation through working as a religious teacher and prayer leader (Coll 2004, 288). From the beginning, the stated goal of the Taliban was to “establish the laws of God on Earth”, and it was in pursuit of this goal that Omar’s followers were “prepared to sacrifice everything” (Coll 2004, 289).

As noted above, many of the Taliban entered the organisation through Pakistani religious schools (Coll 2004, 291; Metcalf 2002, 62-63). As they gained control of areas of Afghanistan, they were able to restore a kind of order through imposing a strict version of Sharia law (Hiro 2002, 240-241). The Taliban explicitly argue that they were able to provide ‘stability’ through focusing both on restoring the peace and on imposing Islamic law (‘Ma’soum Afghani’ 1997).

When in government, the Taliban’s stated goal was to “establish a pure and clean Islamic State in” Afghanistan (‘Ma’soum Afghani’ 1997). The Taliban government maintained that “Islam is a comprehensive way of life. It has radiating basics for every social, political, economical and military event” (‘Ma’soum Afghani’ 1997). Such issues thus played an important part in their government.

As shown above, the removal of the Communist government in Afghanistan is an example of the advantages of a netwar form when dealing with a more hierarchical opponent. However, it is also an example of the unpredictability that is an inherent part of the efficacy of networks in conflict. Netwar works so well because it

tends to defy and cut across standard spatial boundaries, jurisdictions, and distinctions between state and society, public and private, war and crime, civilian and military, police and military, and legal and illegal. A netwar actor is likely to operate in the cracks and gray areas of the society (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 13).

Hierarchical actors often find it hard to fight in these grey areas. In Afghanistan, the Soviet forces had great difficulty dealing with the way that the insurgents fought. Resistance was hard to classify in that it was non-state (but heavily reliant on US and Saudi money and weapons and Pakistani/ISI support) and mingled civilian charities and schools with military resistance (Coll 2004, 61

and 83). For example, Bin Laden's own work in Afghanistan combined 'humanitarian' actions such as building schools, shelters for refugees and clinics with his more explicitly military activities (Jacquard 2002, 22).

Maktab al-Khidmat had the use of money donated to Islamic charities (Gunaratna 2003, 5).³⁵ It used these funds for its humanitarian work, and diverted money and personnel from its charity work towards military ends (Gunaratna 2003, 5). For example, Bin Laden states that he first came into contact with Wadih el-Hage (jailed in the US for his involvement in the 1998 embassy bombings) when "God was kind enough to steer [el-Hage] to the path of relief work for Afghan refugees" (Bin Laden 1999).

The distinctly mixed structure of such networks meant that their political action could spread in any number of directions. As John Urry puts it, the fluidity of these networks is key to their efficacy but also means that fluids "may escape, rather like white blood corpuscles, through the 'wall' into surrounding matter, effecting unpredictable consequences" (Urry 2002, 65). This type of 'escape' was seen in the civil war in Afghanistan that followed the Soviet withdrawal, and in the ways in which these networks have continued to impact on other parts of the world.

Bin Laden argues that, regarding US assistance to the anti-Communist insurgency in Afghanistan:

When the interests of two sides coincide at times, this does not amount to co-operation. We regard them with animosity and there are statements going [at least 12 years] back with us calling for a boycott of American products, and even the necessity to attack American forces and America's economy. (Bin Laden 1998a)

Bin Laden was thus well aware that, despite US assistance to the Afghan insurgency, this netwar would leave open opportunities for anti-American action: the fluid could escape, and flow in a number of directions.

³⁵ Maktab al-Khidmat – literally the "Office of Services" – was a logistical organisation dealing with foreign volunteers who came to join the Afghan insurgency or do other (for example humanitarian) work with the Afghans (Bin Laden 1999; Burke 2004, 3 and 73). Although the organisation was founded by Abdallah Azzam, Bin Laden came to play an extremely prominent role (Burke 2004, 72-75).

Some Normative and Representational Aspects of Netwar

As shown above, common goals, interests and ideals were important in the Afghan netwar and networks: they played significant roles in the ways in which these fluids flowed and functioned. It will therefore be helpful to consider some normative aspects of networking, and how netwar can depend upon the construction of particular representational frameworks.

Virilio has generally taken a rather pessimistic view of the way that networks and network technologies have been able to accelerate the pace of politics. For Virilio, this acceleration means that there is no longer time for an ethico-political and therefore a human decision (Virilio 2002a, 43).

Virilio argues convincingly that the reduction of distances and times through network technologies “will have fateful consequences for the social being, for morality” (Virilio 2002a, 43). However, the political implications of network technologies and techniques are more ambiguous than in Virilio’s account. It will be shown below that the ‘fateful consequences’ of such networks are in part possible due to the systems of norms – the representational frameworks – that are intrinsic to these networks. These ‘fateful consequences’ will therefore have a distinct moral dimension, and need not be altogether negative.

Analysing (military) computer networks, Manuel De Landa demonstrates that, even with relatively simple networks (nowhere near as complex as human networks) there are distinctly normative elements (De Landa 1991, 107-108). The different agents in a network – as discussed above, De Landa calls them ‘demons’ – must function according to certain norms in order to work together effectively. The example that De Landa uses to illustrate this is that of computers playing out an iterated prisoner’s dilemma (De Landa 1991, 84-86).³⁶

³⁶ Developed by RAND Corporation in the 1950s, the prisoner’s dilemma played an important role in war gaming and in the development of game theory (De Landa 1991, 84-85). In this thought experiment, two people are arrested, charged with a joint crime and interrogated separately (De Landa 1991, 84; Tucker 1983, 228). If they both confess, each will be fined one unit; if only one confesses, they will receive a one unit reward while the other gets a two unit fine; if neither confesses, neither one is fined (De Landa 1991, 84; Tucker 1983, 228). If this dilemma is viewed as an isolated event, the ‘rational’ response of a self-interested actor would be to confess: this will always get them a better outcome (De Landa 1991, 85; Tucker 1983, 228).

In a single iteration of the prisoner's dilemma, the best individual outcome (if abstracted from any wider context) is invariably gained by betraying the other party (De Landa 1991, 85; Tucker 1983, 228). Betrayal will win an actor either additional gains or a reduced fine (Tucker 1983, 228).

When the dilemma is repeated a number of times, however, something more akin to a social context is developed. If a player has been betrayed in the past, s/he may be less likely to trust those players who betrayed him/her in future dilemmas (De Landa 1991, 85-86). It is therefore the case that "[i]n the long run the winning programs were the ones that...were not out to exploit other programs...they retaliated in kind after being betrayed; and they were willing to reestablish a relationship after retaliating" (De Landa 1991, 86). The most effective players thus acted according to certain norms, instead of pursuing narrow conceptions of their self-interest.

In order to regulate themselves, networks can thus impose consequences on those who breach their norms. Networks depend on a particular representational framework in order to maintain their structure and efficacy, and impose punishment on – make negative normative judgements about – those who disrupt these frameworks. Massoud provides an example of how a 'player' can lose by pursuing a narrow concept of their self-interest at the expense of the wider network.

Massoud lost considerable support in the Afghan networks of resistance when he agreed his 1983-1984 truce with Soviet forces (Coll 2004, 118-119; Hiro 2002, 233-235). The one year truce in Panjshir Valley did give Massoud military advantages, allowing him to extend his influence through concentrating his forces in other areas (Boyne 2004). However, this truce was widely seen as a betrayal and thus weakened Massoud's position in the insurgency: many insurgents and sympathisers switched their allegiance to other leaders (Coll 2004, 118-119). It also weakened his position in the competition for foreign funding and support (Coll 2004, 121).

Even when relatively influential, skilled and effective actors such as Massoud breach the norms of a network, this can still bring serious costs for these actors. Actors are thus pushed towards following certain norms, if they wish to prosper.

De Landa analyses the example of computer networks and systems which, once they have passed a (fairly low) level of complexity, need to move to a decentralised way of organising their resources in order to avoid serious problems with bottlenecks etc. (De Landa 1991, 17-20). Different components, different demons, must therefore work together in a system that – instead of relying on centralised control – functions according to certain norms.

One basic but helpful example of this is ‘black box’ software components. With such components, users are able to trust that a certain input (for example, a list of unsorted names) will lead to a certain output (for example, a list of names in alphabetical order).³⁷

Many black box components are thus, as in the case of the sort function considered above, ‘good’ pieces of code. They fulfil a useful task in a predictable way, when called on to do so. Even in such very basic cases, proto-ethical issues can be raised – for example, a ‘bad’ sort algorithm such as Bubblesort might be especially inefficient and therefore take longer than necessary (Harrison). When one part of a computer system calls another function – even something as simple as a sort algorithm – certain assumptions must be made regarding the norms to which that function will comply.

The need for a networked system – which relies on norms embodied in different parts of the system forming a representational framework through which the whole system can function, instead of central control – becomes even more pressing when one is designing a military system. One can firstly note that the levels of complexity involved in war and netwar greatly exceed the complexity of a desktop computer, meaning that trying to pass all this information through a central point would cause considerable problems. Moreover, due to the relative robustness of decentralised networks and the potential of conflict to disrupt systems, it has been found that “to create a logistic

³⁷ Latour argues that “[t]he word black box is used by cyberneticians whenever a piece of machinery or a set of commands is too complex. In its place, they draw a little box about which they need to know nothing but its input and output” (Latour 1987, 2-3. *Emphasis in original*). However, the term ‘black box’ is now also used about components where those using them do not need or want to know what happens inside. For example, a correctly written component for sorting names into alphabetical order is likely to be simple enough for most people to understand. However, the relationship between its inputs and outputs will be predictable enough that there is no need for users to know the details of its internal functioning.

Sort algorithms are usually sufficiently predictable that relatively few people would need to know (or be interested in knowing) the details of how such a component functions. To view it as a ‘black box’ is therefore usually more useful than looking into the details of its workings.

network capable of withstanding the pressures of war, computers and programs must be allowed to make their own decisions, instead of being regulated by a central executive organ” (De Landa 1991, 108).

If control of a network is too centralised, disrupting (communications with) the central node could lead to the network grinding to a halt. This has obvious downsides in the case of military networks. However, if one node in a decentralised network is destroyed, the network can still continue to function (Dombrowski, Gholz et al. 2003, 6). As will be shown below, Al Qaeda offers an example of how this might work – they have lost (and, in suicide attacks, deliberately sacrificed) important nodes on a number of occasions. However, a network of Al Qaeda networks has nonetheless been able to continue functioning.

For such systems to work efficiently certain norms – regulating, for example, cooperation and competition – are necessary. In the case of the sort of function discussed above, most computer operating systems will provide norms governing how these functions work. For example, there will be rules laying out how functions should ‘release’ memory space when they no longer need this and how different pieces of software can ‘compete’ for memory space.

Norms also need to be used in order to limit, to an extent, the unpredictability of the outcomes from a military network. For example, in an attempt to avoid repeating the ‘friendly fire’ incidents of the 1991 Gulf War, a consideration of the ‘signatures’ of potential targets has been incorporated into the US military’s targeting processes (Oelrich, Blair et al. 1993, iii). This has involved agreeing some norms as to what ‘signatures’ US units give off in order to identify them as ‘friendly’ – agreeing a framework as to how ‘friendly’ is represented (Oelrich, Blair et al. 1993, 42).

Such strategies have clearly been less than completely effective: there have been post-1991 instances of ‘friendly fire’, and there will almost certainly continue to be such accidents for as long as the US is engaged in fighting wars (CBC News 2007; The American War Library 2007). Such representational frameworks do not – however much some actors would wish that they did – provide any guarantee of ‘safety’ or of a ‘successful’ outcome. These frameworks can, however, be extremely useful even though they are less than perfect

Even with networks that are much simpler than a military system – for example, the software and hardware required to run a modern nuclear power station – installing a sufficiently reliable framework to avoid the risk of accidents is a very serious challenge. Given the complexity of military networks, no representational framework will be failsafe: as Virilio argues, even as there is an increased use of technology in order to deal with any potential problems, the risk of the accident will remain within the system and will spread elsewhere (Der Derian 2002b, vii; Virilio 2002a, 127-129). Representational frameworks – such as those used to prevent friendly fire – can manage and/or redistribute such risks, but they cannot altogether eliminate them.

Things become more complex (and often more controversial) when deciding how to share limited resources between different parts of a network (of networks). For example, the move to sifting and prioritising packets of data on the Internet will mean that “packets deemed unprofitable will actually be deliberately ‘dropped’, leading to a dramatic deterioration in the electronic mobilities of marginalized users or non-prioritized services” (Graham 2005, 568).

This traffic shaping clearly brings both benefits and disbenefits. However, what is interesting here is that even such networks of computer networks depend on certain norms around, for example, what types of data should be prioritised. This traffic shaping will also work to punish those who do not conform to these norms (for example, those who use their connections for a substantial amount of peer-to-peer file-swapping) with slower access. As seen in the debates around traffic shaping the norms that are chosen, and how the network represents certain activities (high or low priority, for example) can themselves be a subject of political debate and action.

In military networks, choices about resource distribution can have serious – and sometimes fatal – consequences. For example, Sergeant Steve Roberts died in Iraq at least in part because of the way in which the British army distributed a limited supply of Enhanced Combat Body Armour (ECBA) (Muir 2006). As a tank commander, Roberts gave up his ECBA so that it could be used by colleagues (his regiment did not have enough armour to supply everyone) and was killed in part because of his lack of ECBA (Muir 2006). Unsurprisingly, such decisions around resource distribution will be controversial.

As shown above, during the anti-Communist insurgency there were large quantities of money and weapons flowing into Afghanistan from outside. There was also disagreement about how these resources were distributed among the networks of insurgent fighters. As will be shown below, CIA and ISI funding tended to favour the most radical Islamic fighters (Bergen 2002, 67-68). The CIA viewed these groups as the most effective fighters, and therefore able to make the 'best' use of their arms and money (Coll 2004, 120; Gibbs 2002). Massoud was very critical of such a distribution, arguing that

the modern weapons at first were sent to Hekmatyar's commanders, and it was Hekmatyar who was able to use these weapons. Hekmatyar first got the Stinger missiles, and his commanders received modern artillery. It was a unilateral distribution of arms, and Hekmatyar also wanted to exterminate other parties and other people so as to avoid problems in the future (Massoud 2001a).

It was therefore the case that the 'traffic' in arms and resources to Afghan insurgents was shaped in particular ways. Moreover, this 'traffic shaping' was controversial.

Because of the tensions and controversies discussed above, such networking is ethically and politically ambiguous. The outcomes are not necessarily negative and networks may lead to the introduction of, or even carry within them, a number of positive norms (De Landa 1991, 122). However, this uncertainty also does not allow one to take a definitively positive stance.

Merely because networks depend on maintaining certain norms, on holding together a certain representational framework, this does not mean that a network in which these norms hold firm cannot have very negative effects. To 'outsiders', the norms on which a network depends may be wholly repellent. For example, 'good' sort algorithms will work relatively efficiently to sort anything – whether this is a food supply, or a list of politically suspect individuals to be killed. Systems with 'good', robust frameworks can and do act in remarkably unethical ways, and are likely to do so more efficiently than systems with 'bad', less robust frameworks.

For example, the CIA may have been (at least partially) correct in their beliefs that the radical Islamism of Hekmatyar's networks made them 'better', more robust networks. However, as will be shown below, these 'good' norms allowed Hekmatyar's networks to achieve a number of goals that many would view as undesirable (leading, for example, to the State Department designating Hekmatyar as a terrorist) (Boucher 2003).

Trying to take on the (imaginary) role of a machine historian De Landa explicitly takes a machine-centred point of view, using this to draw out the similarities between non-human and human networks (De Landa 1991, 2-10). These networks all require a certain type of representational framework to regulate their function. For example, as shown above, particular norms motivated different networks of resistance fighters in Afghanistan – ranging from a universalistic interpretation of Islam to a more particularistic nationalism.³⁸ There were also some wider norms governing the interaction of these networks of fighters (for example, anti-Soviet and anti-Communist political positions) (Coll 2004, 58-60; Gibbs 2002).

The context in which actors in these networks make decisions thus works to push them into following certain norms. This echoes the way that, in an iterated prisoner's dilemma, those who seek to maximise their success will be pushed towards adopting certain ways of behaving. Such networks thus depend upon on their members sharing certain norms – accepting a common representational framework – in order for them to hold together and form complex interconnections. If this shared framework is lost, or if members adopt incompatible norms, these interconnections allow such networks to be pulled apart very violently and quickly.

³⁸ For example, Bin Laden saw events in Afghanistan as an opportunity to spread the "effect of jihad...at the level of the Muslim nation in the whole world" (Bin Laden 1997, 3). Hekmatyar took a somewhat more nuanced stance: for him, it was only after the 'success' of the Afghan insurgency that this jihad could be broadened into a clash of or "war between the civilizations [which] has indeed begun, and...will continue forever" (Hekmatyar 2003). Massoud was focused on the situation in Afghanistan (and how international events would impact on this) rather than more international issues. For example, in his final interview Massoud was much more concerned with how international aid had assisted the Taliban than with the broader international implications of the situation (Massoud 2001b).

The Unpredictability of Netwar

As shown above, the US involvement in the Afghan anti-Communist insurgency played a significant role in developing netwar techniques in particular directions, and helped to demonstrate that netwar is an effective force multiplier. The US almost seemed close, on occasion, to viewing Afghan networks of resistance as black boxes. Money (and other resources) was input via ISI, and the output was attacks on Soviet and Communist forces. The 'black box' between input and output was the combination of ISI and the insurgents, who achieved the desired effect of killing 'enemy' forces using techniques of their own choosing (Coll 2004, 57-58). However, these were particularly unpredictable 'black boxes': the representational frameworks deployed meant that they were capable of producing unexpected and undesirable outputs.

Some prominent US prominent actors insist that they did not see blowback as a possibility. For example Charles G. Cogan (chief of the CIA's Near East and Asia operations from 1979-84) states that, due to a focus on the USSR, the "hypothesis that the mujaheddin would come to the United States and commit terrorist actions did not enter into our universe of thinking at the time" (Reeve 1999). However, even if initially naive, the US military and security services clearly did become aware of the potential for this force multiplier to be used against them.

There was public concern in the 1980s about the risks of blowback from Afghanistan: for example, the Democrats worried that US Stinger missiles given to the insurgents might be used against US forces and/or interests (Lieven 1986; MacNeil and Lehrer 1989; Thomas 1986). Moreover, US military research into this type of war should have given them a sense of the possible outcomes and of US weaknesses and strengths when dealing with netwar (Office of Force Transformation 2005, 3-4; Arquilla 2003; Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1997b, 6; Gray 1997, Chapter 7-8; Toffler and Toffler 1997, 1-3, 19).

After the insurgents' 'victory' in Afghanistan, the US used a number of techniques to try to manage and limit Bin Laden's violence. They pressured the Sudan to remove him then, when Bin Laden moved to Afghanistan, attempted to use the Pakistani state to limit the freedom of Islamist networks in Afghanistan and Pakistan to act against US interests (U.S. Embassy (Islamabad) 1997a, 1; U.S. Department of State c. 1996, 1-2; Burke 2003, 154-157). The US issued an

indictment against Bin Laden, and tried to capture and/or kill him (Alexander and Swetnam 2001, Appendix 3; Coll 2004, 376-379; Gillan 2001, 9; Hiro 2002, 273). There were attempts to limit Al Qaeda's freedom to act (for example, classifying it as a terrorist group and working to prevent it from raising and moving funds) (U.S. Department of State 2001, 68; Clarke 2004, 193). As will be shown below, Bin Laden's networks were able to find ways around these measures.

Netwar is a creative process: for example, the netwar in Afghanistan was able to build new anti-Communist struggles and new representational frameworks. Moreover, netwar works as an effective force multiplier. These networks can therefore dramatically increase the effects (both positive and negative) of the forces that they create, as seen in the striking 'success' of the Afghan insurgency. These networks thus engage in 'bootstrapping': they are able to 'pull themselves up by their bootstraps' in order to move from a low starting point, create new forces, and then multiply these forces in order to move into "useful operating state[s]" (Howe 1995).³⁹

It should thus be emphasised that netwar can generate substantial production as well as spectacular destruction. For example, during the anti-Communist insurgency in Afghanistan the opium trade prospered greatly because all sides used poppies for funding; this market developed until Afghanistan supplied more than half of all heroin reaching the US (Adams 1989; Cooley 2000, 130). The 2000/1 Taliban ban on opium production in Afghanistan did significantly reduce Afghanistan's production (albeit causing significant hardship in the process) (Jelsma 2005).

The post-Taliban disorder in Afghanistan – and what will be analysed in Chapter 3 as a return to netwar there – has allowed opium production there to grow at an extremely impressive rate. In 2005, Afghanistan was therefore able to supply over 85% of the world's opiates (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2006a). Many may have ethical objections to the growth of the opium industry. However, the dramatic post-Taliban increase in Afghan opiate

³⁹ The metaphor of 'bootstrapping' is taken from the programme that loads when computers are turned on. As Denis Howe puts it, a bootstrap loader was a "short program...which read in a more complex program to which it gave control....Thus, in successive steps, the computer 'pulled itself up by its bootstraps' to a useful operating state" (Howe 1995).

production should at least serve to give a sense of how successfully netwar can be used as a force multiplier in productive (and not just destructive) processes.

The advantages of a network form can thus lead to a great deal of destruction and to significant production. These will often be linked, and can return to impact upon those who utilise netwar. Some of the ways in which the netwar in Afghanistan went on to impact upon the US will be analysed below.

Dealing with the Effects of Netwar

As shown above, by supporting the use of netwar techniques in Afghanistan, the US opened up certain political possibilities. These included the possibilities created by the development of Al Qaeda.

When these networks were predominantly used to attack the Communist enemies of the US, their activities were largely seen as positive. For example, some in the US government went so far as to see these as liberation struggles, struggles for the end of what Reagan called the “brutal [Soviet] occupation of Afghanistan” (Coll 2004, 70; McEwan 1987).

Many people, including many within the US state, did see this netwar as bearing potentially significant risks (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1997b, 3; Clarke 2004, 50-54; Fletcher 1991b; Thomas 1986). However, even those who saw these risks as serious often viewed them as manageable when compared to the threat from the Soviet superpower (Clarke 2004, 51; Coll 2004, 57-59 and 169).

For example, following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 the George H W Bush administration chose to continue US aid to the Mujahedin (Thomas 1989). This was justified by arguing that “the potential and risk of Soviet activity is very much alive. If the Administration took the policy decision to cut off aid because of Soviet good behaviour, it would be hard to get started again if the Soviets start up again” (Thomas 1989).

As these networks were turned increasingly against the US, though, the risks were viewed as more serious. These risks began to be viewed as especially ‘alarming’ when most insurgent groups in Afghanistan supported Iraq in the 1991 Gulf War (Fletcher 1991b). However, the US was not able to adequately manage the outputs of the netwar in Afghanistan.

Events in Afghanistan thus allowed new forces to come into being. Moreover, relatively small and poorly armed groups of fighters were able to

utilise netwar as a force multiplier in order to have much more impact than would otherwise have been possible: they defeated the Soviet superpower (Clarke 2004, 54). These techniques were then turned against the US. In terms of this thesis, the development and actions of Al Qaeda represent a particularly significant example of netwar. These will therefore be analysed below.

Al Qaeda's Pre-2001 Development, and US-led Responses

Al Qaeda's Development

The term 'Al Qaeda' has a range of meanings. It "comes from the Arabic root *qaf-ayn-dal*. It can mean a base...or a foundation...It can mean a pedestal that supports a column. It can also mean a precept, rule, principle, maxim, formula, method, model... pattern" or network (Burke 2003, 7; Doniach, Khulusi et al. 1982, 254).⁴⁰ The name 'Al Qaeda' was in use among those fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan as early as the 1980s, especially among the more radical elements who wanted the struggle to continue beyond Soviet withdrawal (Burke 2003, 7; Whittaker 2001, 42).

At this point in the 1980s, 'Al Qaeda' remained more like a "vanguard" – a way of working – than any straightforward organisation (Burke 2003, 8). Operating along these lines between 1988 and 1989, Bin Laden and his associates began work in Peshawar (in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province) (Burke 2001a, 15; Burke 2003, 8). Their aim was to broaden the Islamist struggle, following their defeat of the Soviets in Afghanistan (Burke 2001a, 15; Burke 2003, 8). It is unclear whether the name 'Al Qaeda' was in use at this point, or if the work they did was just seen as linked to Maktab al-Khidmat and Bin Laden himself (Burke 2003, 9).

Bin Laden, who objected to the divisions caused by ethnic and national differences among volunteer anti-Communist fighters, attempted to ameliorate such problems (Burke 2003, 8-9). Disappointed by the lack of professionalism he found when he went to Afghanistan to join the insurgency, Bin Laden worked to improve the functioning of their networks (Jacquard 2002, 22-23). He improved their communications, infrastructure, recruitment procedures and

⁴⁰ Former Foreign Secretary Robin Cook offers an interesting etymology of 'Al Qaeda', although there is minimal supporting evidence for this in the public domain. Cook argues that 'Al Qaeda' literally meant "the database": a computer file containing details of the Mujahedin involved in the Afghan insurgency (Cook 2005).

logistics (Jacquard 2002, 22-23). It was therefore the case that, during the Afghan insurgency, a network was being built up through which different aspects of the insurgency could work with one another.

Most of the non-Afghans who played substantial roles in the Afghan insurgency did so through work “in humanitarian organisations, in political or media offices or as medics” (Burke 2003, 68). They were thus involved in constructing a certain type of representational framework through which the insurgency could function as ‘humanitarian’, as a ‘liberation struggle’, etc. Bin Laden was particularly involved in shaping how this logistical network worked through dealing with significant amounts of incoming funds (as well as contributing his own funds) (Burke 2003, 58). The Afghan insurgency also gave him the opportunity to build up a group that would later form much of the “hardcore” membership of Al Qaeda (Burke 2003, 64).

After the defeat of the Soviet forces Bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia. He vocally disagreed with many of the political positions of the Saudi government, and in particular their decision to allow US troops to be stationed on Saudi territory during and after the 1990 Gulf Crisis (US Saudi bases served as a significant motivating factor in Bin Laden’s jihad) (Bin Laden 1998b; Hiro 2002, 160). Bin Laden was therefore under effective house arrest by 1991 (Burke 2003, 129).

Bin Laden moved to the Sudan in 1992, invited by the Islamist government in Khartoum (Burke 2003, 129-130; Hiro 2002, 165-166). He had substantial ‘legitimate’ business interests in the Sudan, but also contributed to the training of Islamist militants there (Benjamin and Simon 2003, 112-113; Burke 2003, 145-146; Coll 2004, 267-275).

It was, however, only when Bin Laden moved from the Sudan to Afghanistan in 1996 that he was able to begin building what looked more like the infrastructure of a terrorist organisation (Burke 2003, 10; Coll 2004, 338-345). Working with a relatively small number of close colleagues (in the dozens, not hundreds) Bin Laden established himself in Afghanistan, drawing militants to him through offering a number of valuable resources (The House of Representatives 2001, 123; Burke 2003, 12-13; Fisk 1997, 1; Kemp 1996). His base in Afghanistan allowed Bin Laden to not just offer militants his money and expertise, but to expand his ‘services’ to include a safe haven, training camps and

weapons (The House of Representatives 2001, 123; Burke 2003, 12-13; Fisk 1997, 1).⁴¹

In the course of its development, Al Qaeda released what might be interpreted as ‘position statements’. For example, on 23rd August 1996 Bin Laden released the (in)famous Fatwah calling for jihad “against the Americans occupying the land of the two holy places [Saudi Arabia]” (Bin Laden 2001b; Burke 2003, 146).⁴² The Fatwah advocates the need to “lift the iniquity that had been imposed on the Ummah by the Zionist-Crusader alliance” (Bin Laden 2001b, 2). Such statements worked to further develop a representational framework for the Al Qaeda network.

Al Qaeda was able to develop as a network around such statements, but working more as a hub for terrorist organisation than a ‘conventional’ terrorist group (Burke 2003, 10). One can get a sense of the importance of normative and representational issues in this network from the way that one Al Qaeda training manual – when describing the qualifications necessary for a member – prioritises the religion and ideology of the would-be member above their broader abilities (Al Qaeda, 16).

In the years prior to September 11, Afghanistan was a key base for Bin Laden and Al Qaeda. The Taliban allowed Bin Laden to use areas under its control for training and bases (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 9). They were prepared to host Bin Laden despite this putting them in breach of

⁴¹ These Afghan camps were substantial organisations. Vincent Cannistraro, former chief of CIA counterterrorism, describes Bin Laden’s training camps in Afghanistan as offering a range of different types of military training to up to 10,000 students who passed through them (The House of Representatives 2001, 123). Speaking in 1998, Bin Laden claims that more than 15,000 men had trained in his camps (Bin Laden 1998a). Bin Laden’s military presence in Afghanistan reportedly incorporated not ‘just’ training camps but also tanks, missiles and weapon stores (Goldenberg 1998).

⁴² ‘Jihad’ has been interpreted in a number of different ways. For example, the term can refer to effort or “struggles in the way of God” and an “exertion against one’s desires” (Gould 2005, 15; Halliday 2002). As its broadest, ‘jihad’ can mean trying to live a good life: devoting one’s efforts to following the “path of Allah” through, for example, committing time to religious duties (Metcalf 2002, 59). However, ‘jihad’ can also mean a violent holy war (Gould 2005).

Even when interpreted as holy war, ‘jihad’ can have a number of different meanings. It can be “understood as a defensive, collective duty” (Mamdani 2005, 154). However, in what Mahmood Mamdani views as a relatively recent reinterpretation of Islam, ‘jihad’ can also be used to refer to an individual duty to engage in an offensive struggle against ‘the West’ (Mamdani 2005, 154).

Bin Laden has a particular (and contestable) conception of ‘jihad’. For example, in a 1999 interview with Time magazine Bin Laden argues that his jihad incorporates the violent struggle to ‘liberate’ Afghanistan and the bombing of US embassies (Bin Laden 1999). He suggests that Muslims who disagree with this type of violence do not have a correct understanding of their religion (Federal Bureau of Investigation 2005).

UN Security Council resolution 1267, and despite Clinton issuing an Executive Order blocking Taliban property and banning transactions with them (United Nations Security Council 1999a, 1; International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 9; Clinton 2001; Moran 1998). Although Al Qaeda was a distinctly international organisation, its Afghanistan base and refuge – and the support of the Taliban – played a major role in its operations (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 9; Coll 2004, 379-380; Harding 2000, 16).

For Burke, “Al-Qaeda can be seen as a venture capitalist firm, sponsoring projects submitted by a variety of groups or individuals in the hope that they prove profitable” (Burke 2003, 16). As argued by Ettlinger and Bosco, it is therefore the case that the flexibility of the “new business paradigm is suggestive of the dynamics of Al-Qaeda” (Ettlinger and Bosco 2004).

The decentralised nature of the Al Qaeda network leads James Meek to argue that it offers an example of the kind of ‘spaghetti organisation’ which the innovative Danish company Oticon tried to construct (Ettlinger and Bosco 2004, 265-266; Meek 2001). In such organisations, no-one is tied to a particular ‘desk’ or project and there are ‘co-ordinators’ instead of conventional managers (Meek 2001). Using this type of structure, Bin Laden “has found a way to mingle the spontaneity of chaos with the efficiency of precise planning” (Meek 2001).

One example of this lies in Al Qaeda’s relation to Khalid Sheikh Mohammed who, working with Al Qaeda, played a central role in the planning of the September 11 attacks. Sheikh Mohammed “presents himself as an entrepreneur seeking venture capital and people” and “applied his imagination, technical aptitude, and managerial skills to hatching and planning an extraordinary array of terrorist schemes” (Kean, Hamilton et al., 154 and 145).

Jenkins’ argument that Al Qaeda’s structure bears most resemblance to that of a multinational corporation can therefore be improved on (Jenkins 2001, 11-12). Because of its fluid entrepreneurship and the ways it works with a wide range of groups and individuals, the analogy of a venture capital firm fits Al Qaeda better (Burke 2003, 16; Kean, Hamilton et al., 154). Operatives like Sheikh Mohammed perform rather like ‘roaming coordinators’: instead of being tied to particular desks or projects, they bring their energies to those areas where they can have most impact.

Like a venture capital firm, Al Qaeda is prepared to work with those outside of the firm – Sheikh Mohammed did not ‘officially’ join Al Qaeda by making a formal oath of loyalty to Bin Laden – so long as they act in accord with certain norms and thus fit into the organisation’s representational framework (Kean, Hamilton et al. 2004d, 150). Certain acts of violence could be integrated into the Al Qaeda network even “ex post facto” (Jacquard 2002, 2).

Actors were able to link their actions to Al Qaeda by claiming allegiance to the organisation, and gaining Bin Laden’s approval, *after* engaging in certain types of violence (Jacquard 2002, 2). Once again, the advantages of the flexibility of a network form become clear: the Al Qaeda network could work with those who were neither quite inside nor quite outside of it, and could absorb certain acts after the event.

Al Qaeda’s flexible, changing shape means that Burke prefers to speak of a “loose ‘network of networks’” instead of an ‘Al Qaeda network’ (Burke 2003, 16). As he argues, it is important not to be misled by the term ‘Al Qaeda’ into reducing this network to a stable, conventionally organised group which can be dealt with as such (Burke 2003, 11-12). These points are well taken. However, I do still consider it acceptable to refer to an ‘Al Qaeda network’. This is because I would conceptualise network structures as allowing networks to be made up of a number of sub-networks interrelating in complex ways.

Effective communication links can allow very different nodes and sub-networks to work as part of what can still be called a network (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 67). Networks can therefore themselves be made up of networks of sub-networks, and an “overlay network” can serve to order numerous underlying networks (Kahin 1996, 10-11). To clarify how such networks might work, it will be useful to look at the now-commonplace example of computers working as part of Virtual Private Networks.

Microsoft describes a Virtual Private Network (VPN) as

the extension of a private network that encompasses links across shared or public networks like the Internet. A VPN enables you to send data between two computers across a shared or public internetwork in a manner that emulates the properties of a point-to-point private link (Microsoft 2001).



A VPN can thus be overlaid onto the network of networks constituted by the Internet, assuming that certain standards are maintained. Similarly, Al Qaeda's network can be overlaid onto other networks of networks, assuming that these networks follow certain norms.

One example of this can be found in the way that Al Qaeda's European network incorporated Zacharias Moussaoui (now sentenced to life in prison for his involvement in the 9/11 attacks) (Corbin 2002, 191-194; Hafetz 2006). Moussaoui's entry into Al Qaeda's network came, not through direct membership, but through his involvement in the networks of North African and British Islamists. Notably, Moussaoui had links to the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and Finsbury Park Mosque; these contributed to his radicalisation, and to his making the appropriate contacts (Barling 2006; Corbin 2002, 193-194; McKenna and Moussaoui 2004).

Al Qaeda's network was thus able overlay these other networks, in order to incorporate a useful member of other networks into an Al Qaeda attack. Likewise, Bin Laden's network was able to overlay some of the networks of insurgents in Afghanistan: as shown above, this overlay network was what later developed into Al Qaeda.

Such an overlay network can serve to give a degree of organisation to a whole cluster of different movements. An array of different forces working in different directions can thus be conceptualised as an organisation which some might choose to support or oppose. This allows what might otherwise just seem to be a jumble of random events to become *something* that can be supported or opposed.

This makes it easier to win support for this array of forces, as such overlay networks give the sense that there is something there to win support for (maintaining what Chapter 3 will analyse, after Mackinlay, as apparent cohesion) (Mackinlay 2005, 31-32). Such an overlay also allows others to view a network as a something that can be targeted, whereas such a complex array of forces and contingencies might call for different responses (Ettlinger and Bosco 2004, 252).

The US did have serious problems in dealing with the array of forces that constitutes the Al Qaeda network. For example, as will be shown below, both

military and non-military attempts to engage with Al Qaeda have proved less than entirely successful.

Non-Military Attempts to Disrupt Al Qaeda

US (and Saudi) political pressure did play an important part in getting Bin Laden to leave the Sudan for Afghanistan in 1996 (Corbin 2002, 59-61; Lake 2002, 5). However, continued US attempts to persuade the Taliban to extradite Bin Laden (approaching them directly, and through Pakistan) prior to the events of September 11 failed to achieve more than some positive statements and perhaps some pressure on Al Qaeda (U.S. Embassy (Islamabad) 1998b, 1; U.S. Embassy (Islamabad) 1998c, 1; Clarke 2004, 225; Coll 2004, 537). Bin Laden was therefore able to continue to operate in Afghanistan (The Independent on Sunday 1999, 19). The Al Qaeda network may have been disrupted on occasions (for example, when parts of the network were forced to relocate from the Sudan to Afghanistan), but its structure was robust enough to survive such disruptions.

Al Qaeda's decentralised structure is important here. When Al Qaeda were putting together their most spectacular attack, Bin Laden did not need to have direct operational involvement in some important aspects of the organisation of the 9/11 hijackings. For example, he only learned of the day on which the attack was to take place on September 6 2001, although the hijackers began buying tickets on August 26 (Aust and Schnibben 2002, xii). It is therefore the case that, although Bin Laden played a significant role in developing the Al Qaeda network through which the hijackings took place and in planning the September 11 attack, he was "not its executioner" (Aust and Schnibben 2002, 202; Bin Laden 2001a; Smith 2002b, 49).

As Burke argues, "Bin Laden does not have the power to issue the orders that are instantly obeyed" (Burke 2003, 17). He does not, however, need this power: he is a node in a network, rather than the commander of a conventional hierarchical army (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 10; Burke 2003, 17; Dombrowski, Gholz et al. 2003, 6).

One sign of the efficacy of such networks is the fact that Al Qaeda, or at least networks linked to the name, could 'successfully' engage in anti-US violence between the end of the Cold War and the events of September 11 2001. It is therefore worth outlining some of this (alleged) violence below.

US Deaths in Somalia

Some of those who fought the Soviets in Afghanistan were involved in killing a number of US troops in Somalia from 1992-3, and in the famous shooting down of two Black Hawk US helicopters there (Bergen 2002, 84-85; Kean, Hamilton et al., 341). Al Qaeda is often believed to have been involved in these events.

In 1996 Bin Laden linked these events to the Afghan insurgency, stating that “[t]he only non-Somali group which fought the Americans are the Arab mujahedin...who were in Afghanistan” (The Guardian 1996, 13). In 1997 Bin Laden made claims which could be read as a boast of his involvement in these killings: he stated that Arab Mujahedin from Afghanistan worked with to help those fighting the Americans in Somalia (Bergen 2002, 84; Bin Laden 1997, 6). In a 1999 interview, Bin Laden also makes remarks that could be interpreted as a claim of responsibility, stating that:

The U.S. alleges that I am fully responsible for the killing of its soldiers in Somalia. God knows that we have been pleased at the killing of American soldiers. This was achieved by the grace of God and the efforts of the mujahedin from among the Somali brothers and other Arab mujahedin who had been in Afghanistan before that (Bin Laden 1999).

The US interpreted these statements as claims of responsibility for attacks on US forces in Somalia, and viewed them as credible (Alexander and Swetnam 2001, Appendix 3, 3; Bergen 2002, 84). In its 1998 indictment of Bin Laden, the Justice Department accuses Bin Laden of involvement in these killings (Alexander and Swetnam 2001, Appendix 3, 3; Weaver 2000). However, these claims of responsibility are not entirely convincing.

As Burke argues, while expertise gained in Afghanistan did help the anti-US fighters in Somalia, so many people were involved in fighting the Soviets there that this expertise need not have come via Bin Laden (Burke 2003, 123). Bin Laden’s own statement – that Mujahedin from Afghanistan contributed to the violence in Somalia – is hardly an explicit claim of personal responsibility.

Non-Somalis did assist anti-American fighters in Somalia. It is thought that “the skills involved in shooting down those [Black Hawk] helicopters were not skills that the Somalis could have learned on their own” (Bergen 2002, 85). Somali militants were trained by Arab fighters who had fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan (and thus gained experience of attacking helicopters using Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs)) (Bergen 2002, 85). However, it does not follow that these fighters were part of Bin Laden’s network (Burke 2004, 148-149)

The attribution of events in Somalia to Al Qaeda can therefore best be read as an example of movements and events becoming linked to Al Qaeda ex post facto. Bin Laden and Al Qaeda’s involvement in the events may have been fairly remote. Those who fought with them in Afghanistan were involved, but were not necessarily affiliated to Al Qaeda. However, Al Qaeda involvement in these actions was constructed after the event. A virtual Al Qaeda network overlaid events retrospectively, incorporating them into that network, notwithstanding the fact that Bin Laden and Al Qaeda’s links to these events were tenuous.

The US linked Bin Laden to attacks in Somalia, and Bin Laden also seemed happy to accept an ex post facto attribution of these events to his network: this allowed Bin Laden to take ‘credit’ for these events. For example, as can be seen in the above quotes, he does rather hint towards his involvement and he also boasts about ‘achievements’ in Somalia and what Islamist and Al Qaeda fighters learnt from this (Fisk 1997). Bin Laden therefore boasts that “some of our mujahedin who fought here in Afghanistan also participated in operations against the Americans in Somalia – and they were surprised at the collapse of American morale. This convinced us that the Americans are a paper tiger” (Fisk 1997).

The 1998 Embassy Bombings, and US Responses

The 1998 Embassy Bombings have a more direct, unambiguous link to Al Qaeda. On August 7 1998 US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Tanzania were bombed by operatives linked to (but not all members of) Al Qaeda; at least 301 people were killed, and more than 5,000 injured (U.S. Department of State 2001; Hiro 2002, 267-269). Suicide bombers were used in these operations, although

one intended bomber of the Nairobi embassy failed to force his way into the embassy and then ran back to his hotel – escaping the bomb blast (Hiro 2002, 267-269).

Clinton sought intelligence on the attacks, and targeted Bin Laden in a missile strike (on the Al Badr training camp in Khost) on August 20 1998 (Burke 1998b, 3; Clinton 1998; Hiro 2002, 273-275). Bin Laden, however, was lucky enough to have left al Badr hours before the missiles hit (Hiro 2002, 275). Following this, Clinton did develop plans for the CIA to work with groups of Pakistani commandos and anti-Taliban Afghan fighters to capture or kill Bin Laden; Clinton was also considering bombing raids or the use of US special forces (Clarke 2004, 255; Gillan 2001, 9; Hiro 2002, 255). However, these plans never came to fruition (Clarke 2004, 204).

Also on August 20 1998, Clinton ordered for the Al Shifa pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum to be destroyed with Cruise missiles (Clinton 1998; Corbin 2002, 86-87; Hiro 2002, 276). Clinton and his advisers believed that Al Shifa was being used to produce chemical weapons; this attack was also, at least in part, a retaliation for the embassy bombings (Clinton 1998; Corbin 2002, 86-87; Hiro 2002, 276). However, the justifications given for the attack are unconvincing.

There was evidence that Al Qaeda in Sudan was trying to develop chemical weapons (Clinton 1998; Corbin 2002, 86-87; Hiro 2002, 276). The Clinton administration's belief that the factory was used to produce chemical weapons was based on:

1. A soil sample showing O-ethyl methylphosphonothioic acid (EMPTA), a precursor to VX gas, in the soil just outside the factory (Barletta 1998, 115; Weiner and Risen 1998).
2. Links between the factory's owner and Bin Laden (Weiner and Risen 1998).
3. A belief that pharmaceutical factory was not used to produce medicine (Barletta 1998, 118).

Point 3 is false: Al Shifa employed more than 300 workers in pharmaceutical production and produced numerous medicines, supplying “50 to

60 percent of Sudan's pharmaceutical needs, as well as exporting products abroad" (Barletta 1998, 118). Those who decided to attack Al Shifa were unaware of the pharmaceutical production there when they chose it as a target.⁴³

Point 2 is contested, and the US has failed to provide convincing evidence the alleged links between the factory's owner and Bin Laden. US intelligence did not know that Idris owned the factory at the time of the attack, but later claimed that he was a "front man" for Bin Laden (Barletta 1998, 121; Weiner and Risen 1998). Idris strenuously denies this and links between the two men were not proven; in 1999 the US Treasury unfroze Idris' US assets in response to a law suit from him (Barletta 1998, 120; Symon 1999; Weiner and Risen 1998).

Point 1 is the most credible. The CIA found EMPTA in soil samples from just outside Al Shifa: this precursor to VX gas has minimal 'practical' non-military use and "would have no role in Shifa's known legitimate medicinal production" (Barletta 1998, 124). However, the US has not disclosed sufficient information about how the sample was collected and transferred to the US for one to be confident that it was not contaminated (Barletta 1998, 123-126). This evidence is therefore not a 'smoking gun'. Following the attack, the Sudanese government wanted the UN Security Council to order an inspection of the site; however, the US blocked this (Barletta 1998, 128-130).

Senior US officials acknowledge that "their case for attacking the factory relied on inference as well as evidence that it produced chemical weapons for bin Laden's use" (Weiner and Risen 1998). As shown above, the US has failed to release sufficient evidence (if this is available) to make a convincing case in favour of the attack.

Direct US military responses to the embassy bombings were thus limited to the destruction of a Sudanese factory and the firing of missiles at Al Badr (as well as some attempts to capture or kill Bin Laden, which never came to fruition). The former, as shown above, was based on inaccurate information and may have just leveled a legitimate factory. The latter, while it did do some

⁴³ This lack of awareness re. medicine production at Al Shifa is despite the fact that "U.S. officials at the United Nations had approved the sale of medicines produced by Shifa" (Barletta 1998, 118). When discussing this misapprehension, "U.S. officials explained that intelligence officers searched commercial databases and Sudanese internet sites, including Shifa's, for information. Because they did not find any list of medicines for sale by the plant, they mistakenly concluded that it did not produce pharmaceuticals" (Barletta 1998, 120; Zill 2005).

damage to Al Qaeda's infrastructure, remained well within the capacity of the Al Qaeda network to absorb disruption.

As shown in these attacks, such networks are very difficult to target effectively. These difficulties can lead to inappropriate targets being attacked by mistake.

The Bombing of the USS Cole

Another attack on US interests came with the bombing of the USS Cole. On October 12 2000, Al Qaeda operatives used a small boat carrying explosives to blow a hole in the side of the Destroyer (Kean, Hamilton et al., 190). This attack killed 17 members of the crew, and wounded more than 40 (Kean, Hamilton et al., 190). The Pentagon viewed this as a sign of their vulnerability to terrorism and an indicator of the need to improve defences for their forces (Cohen 2001, 1).

This attack also illustrated one of the problems of dealing with suicide bombers. Although the US believed that Al Qaeda was behind the attack, with both bombers dead it took more than a year before the US could even name either of the bombers (Hiro 2002, 291). The failure to offer a quick, direct response may have given the wrong impression to Al Qaeda (Clark 2003, 117). By the time a response was prepared it was almost time for the Bush administration to take over, and they were slow to develop their own counterterrorism policy – causing further delays (Clark 2003, 117).

Afghanistan, Netwar and Blowback

September 11 and Blowback

As shown above, the US support for the anti-Marxist Afghan insurgency thus had a number of undesirable effects. In terms of this thesis, the most prominent example of 'blowback' from Afghanistan would be the links between those who fought the Soviets in Afghanistan and the Al Qaeda fighters who attacked the US on September 11 2001. Given that some have denied such links, it will be helpful to begin by providing additional evidence for them here (The State Department 2005; Miniter 2003).

In the intelligence field, the word 'blowback' originated as "the term used by spies to describe planted propaganda that filters back to confuse the country

that first set the story loose” (Coll 2004, 47; see also Johnson 2001). The term has been expanded to refer to the broader unintended consequences of covert operations, to what Scott refers to as the “unintended consequences at home of covert...programs designed for abroad” (Aldrich 2002; Beaumont 2002; Scott 2003, 28).

The fact that billions of dollars worth of arms and military funding flowed into Afghanistan (a significant proportion from the US) allowed an intensification of the civil war in the state (Coll 2004, 62 and 89). Moreover, by favouring certain factions in the networks of fighters in Afghanistan, the US and Saudi support both intensified the violence and helped to guide it in particular directions.

For example, as noted above, the CIA favoured Islamic fundamentalists lead by Hekmatyar because they were “the best fighters – the best organized fighters” (Coll 2004, 120). The CIA believed that resources which went to these fighters would therefore be used to inflict maximum damage on the ‘enemy’ (Coll 2004, 120). However, the CIA were well aware of the extremist positions taken and tactics used by such fighters, with Hekmatyar giving “chills” to the CIA agent who assessed his (considerable) abilities (Coll 2004, 120). CIA station chief William Piekney explicitly described his awareness of the risks of working with Hekmatyar: when they met “we’d hug...like brothers in combat...and you just knew that there was only one thing holding this team together and that was the Soviet Union” (Coll 2004, 120).⁴⁴

Because US and Saudi aid favoured such factions, the insurgency was pushed in certain directions. It should be emphasised that other factions with different goals could have become dominant instead: events could have moved in other directions. Perhaps the most prominent example is that the position of the warlord Massoud, who was comparatively tolerant and advanced a more moderate version of political Islam than Hekmatyar, was weakened by the larger share of foreign aid which went to rival factions (Coll 2004, 569). Because of foreign assistance, the networks that came to greatest prominence in Afghanistan leaned towards more radical Islamist positions – along with a stronger opposition

⁴⁴ In 2003, the State Department designated Hekmatyar as a global terrorist (Boucher 2003). They argue that he has “participated in and supported terrorist acts committed by al-Qa’ida and the Taliban” (Boucher 2003).

to US policy and ‘un-Islamic’ Arab states – than might otherwise have been the case.

The State Department claims that US funds going into Afghanistan only “supported the Afghans fighting for their country’s freedom”, and did not go directly to the Afghan Arab fighters or to Bin Laden (The State Department 2005). However, the fact that millions of US dollars were used to back the warlords such as the fundamentalist leader Hekmatyar – who was close to the Afghan Arabs – raises problems with this claim (The State Department 2005; Benjamin and Simon 2003, 100; Bergen 2002, 67-68; Corbin 2002, 19-20; Reeve 1999, 167).

To defend its position the State Department quotes Peter Bergen, who argues that “[w]hile the charges that the CIA was responsible for the rise of the Afghan Arabs might make good copy, they don’t make good history. The truth is more complicated, tinged with varying shades of gray” (The State Department 2005; Bergen 2002, 67). However (in sections of the same book not quoted by the State Department) Bergen argues that, when CIA funds were funnelled into Afghanistan via ISI, ISI chose – with CIA support – to concentrate spending on “the most Islamist and pro-Pakistan” factions (Bergen 2002, 67; Coll 2004, 120; Gibbs 2002). This meant that the funding tended to go to the factions that leaned most strongly towards Islamic fundamentalism; the Arab Afghan fighters fought alongside and together with these factions (Bergen 2002, 67-68).

Bin Laden certainly supported Hekmatyar during the anti-Communist insurgency, preferring his stance to the more pragmatic/moderate position of Massoud (Corbin 2002, 19-20). Also, as Bergen acknowledges, Hekmatyar’s organisation trained Islamist fighters from all over the world (Bergen 2002, 72-74). It was linked to Bin Laden in that it allowed Al Qaeda training camps to operate in territory under its control (Bergen 2002, 72-74).

The ‘shades of gray’ to which Bergen refers are thus much more apparent in his own work than in the State Department’s position. While it is possible to deny that US funds went directly to Bin Laden (almost all funds went through ISI) they did go to fund those who helped him, those that he supported and those who he fought with. It was no accident that “it was the Afghan factions whose beliefs were closest to those of the [Afghan] Arabs and who were marginal at the beginning of the war that were dominant by its end” (Burke 2003, 59). It was

these factions that were treated most favourably when foreign funding was distributed.

Contra-Bergen, there is evidence that at least some actors within the CIA knew which fighters the money was going to: in some cases, agents had even met these fighters (Coll 2004, 120). Moreover, while Bergen's point that most of the CIA funds were channelled through ISI is well taken, he does overstate his case when he argues that "[n]o Americans ever trained or had direct contact with the *mujahideen*, and no American official ever went inside Afghanistan" (Bergen 2002, 69. *Emphasis in original*). There are convincing reports of CIA agents entering Afghanistan, even though CIA funding was overwhelmingly channelled through ISI (Coll 2004, 54 and 120). Given the extent of CIA funding of the insurgency, it would have been very surprising had the CIA not had some agents 'on the ground'.

The funding of the insurgency in Afghanistan created a situation that was extremely congenial for Bin Laden's operations. As the 9/11 Commission puts it, "[t]he international environment for Bin Laden's efforts was ideal. Saudi Arabia and the United States supplied billions of dollars worth of secret assistance to rebel groups in Afghanistan fighting the Soviet occupation" (Kean, Hamilton et al., 56). Afghanistan did not spontaneously become the type of 'failed state' which allowed terrorist groups to operate within its borders: this process had significant external assistance (Kaplan 2004; Nelson 1989).

US funds went to organisations that fought alongside Bin Laden and his Maktab al-Khidmat, and which later formed a part of the Taliban regime (BBC News 2001b; Bergen 2002, 72-74; Corbin 2002, 19-20). However, one significant obstacle to determining the extent of the links between Bin Laden's work and the CIA is the degree of deniability built into the funding of the Afghan insurgency. For example, much funding to Maktab al-Khidmat was channelled through ISI (along with US funding to the region); these funds therefore reached the insurgents indirectly (Cold War International History Project 1980; Clarke 2004, 50-52; Coll 2004, 174 and 180; Cooley 2000, 4; Kaplan 2004; Moran 1998).

Bin Laden clearly did have his own financial resources, which are likely to have provided him with significantly more funding than state aid. The 9/11 Commission is quite correct to note that "Bin Ladin and his comrades had their

own sources of support and training” (Bovey 2001; Kean, Hamilton et al., 56). The 9/11 Commission’s claim that Bin Laden’s work “received little or no assistance from the United States” is, however, not sustainable (Kean, Hamilton et al., 56). It is possible that Bin Laden received little *direct* US assistance (both compared to his own resources and compared to the funding given to other groups of fighters in Afghanistan). However, it is not credible to argue that he received *no* US assistance, not even indirect assistance. It is also not correct that – as the 9/11 Commission claim – the assistance that Bin Laden received was only a “little” matter (Kean, Hamilton et al., 56).

Moreover, the destabilisation of Afghanistan caused by US funding for insurgents would in itself have been of significant help to Bin Laden. Had the Soviet troops or the Communist Afghan government had more control in the country, they would no doubt have liked to end Bin Laden’s activities and to capture and/or kill Bin Laden⁴⁵.

The Afghan insurgency also required funding and supplying far in excess of even Bin Laden’s considerable resources: as noted above, billions of dollars and large quantities of weapons went into this struggle. The US also provided insurgents with relatively advanced weapons such as Stinger missiles, which would otherwise have been difficult or impossible to access. It was because of the Taliban’s successful rise to power – made possible by the disorder following the withdrawal of Soviet troops and the overthrow of the Communist government – that Bin Laden was able to make a base in Afghanistan in 1996 (Jacquard 2002, 38).

Bin Laden himself claims that he and his “brothers” saw no evidence of US involvement in the Afghan insurgency (Fisk 1996). The aforementioned deniability made possible by the indirect supply of US aid to the Afghan insurgency therefore worked both ways (Fisk 1996). In a 1998 interview Bin Laden argues that his funding came from Arab states and that the Americans “were a burden on us and on the mujahideen in Afghanistan” (Bin Laden 1998a). However, neither of these claims is credible. A huge amount of US arms and funding went into Afghanistan (which was the largest single recipient of CIA aid during the Soviet occupation), and politicians such as George H W Bush

⁴⁵ The Marxist government of Afghanistan deliberately concentrated its anti-insurgency efforts on the more fundamentalist elements of the resistance (Hiro 2002, 216).

discussed this funding in public statements (Adams 1989; Fisk 1996; Thomas 1989).

Those fighting in the Afghan insurgency should therefore have had at least some awareness of this substantial US involvement. US assistance helped the Afghan insurgency to survive and, ultimately, to defeat the Soviet forces and Afghanistan's Communist government (Boyne 2004; Clarke 2004, 50; Fisk 1996). Moreover, in a later interview Bin Laden openly acknowledges the helpful role that the US played in supplying weapons to the Afghan resistance and in training insurgents (Hiro 2002, 218).

It is therefore correct to describe the events of September 11 2001 as 'blowback', if this is defined (as suggested above) as "unintended consequences at home of covert...programs designed for abroad" (Scott 2003, 28). As shown above, US support for the Afghan insurgency did assist in the development of Bin Laden's networks; these networks attacked US interests on a number of occasions. As will be outlined below, one significant output of these networks was the September 11 attacks.

As shown above, a number of those within the US were aware that their involvement in Afghanistan did run the risk of blowback. Moreover, the types of networks that they were using made such blowback, at best, rather likely.

In at least one conceptualisation of 'conventional' war it is the case that, as Michael Howard argues, "[w]ar...involves inherent constraints. It is carried out by men [sic]...obedient to hierarchical commands. Orders can be given to spare as well as to destroy" (Howard 1992, 33). This is not the case with netwar: instead, as shown in this chapter and Chapter 3, the creativity and productivity which is part of netwar means that it always has the potential to escape and exceed any type of constraint.

To echo Der Derian (and his reading of Virilio and Chertoff), one can thus argue that the possibility of accidents and catastrophes is integral to netwar conflicts (Der Derian 2005). The US was not able to control what anti-Communist insurgents in Afghanistan did following the Soviet withdrawal, and it would appear that there was no actor capable of giving the order to spare Afghanistan and the Afghan population from a prolonged civil war or to prevent this violence from spreading.

This raises the broader question of whether this type of involvement with networks and netwar inevitably leads to blowback. I would answer ‘no’, for two main reasons. Firstly, the unpredictability of networks such as the insurgencies in Afghanistan means that there is always the possibility that these unpredictable outputs will be surprisingly beneficial. These networks could produce and multiply some very desirable outputs: when engaging in an unpredictable process, sometimes one will be lucky. Secondly, the development of alternative netwar strategies would, at least, create possibilities to ameliorate the likelihood of negative outputs from netwar actors. This second point will be discussed in Chapter 3, focusing on the ‘war on terror’ and the possibilities for future strategies that might avoid the type of netwar failures which the US and other states have recently been involved in. However, it is worth going into the first point at more length here.

As shown above, networks with a ‘good’, efficient representational framework can be used to generate a range of outputs. As the complexity of these networks increases, it becomes impractical to develop sufficient knowledge of these networks to reliably predict these outputs. However, as shown above, and as will also be discussed in Chapter 3, networks such as those that fought the Soviets in Afghanistan can be very productive, as well as destructive. The Afghan opium industry, and its very impressive growth rate since the overthrow of the Taliban, provides an excellent example of how a netwar and networks might be used to generate beneficial outputs.

While this productivity is, in the context of the current ‘war on drugs’, causing significant problems, this will not necessarily remain the case. The productivity of Afghan networks could feasibly be turned in other directions – for example, used in the production of ‘legitimate’ crops – or could be used to produce opium for more ‘legitimate’ uses.

Networks and netwar are therefore inherently unpredictable, carrying within them the risk of both damaging blowback and lucky, beneficial accidents. This unpredictability means that one cannot be certain that blowback will be an outcome of interventions that use and/or develop netwar techniques.

The Ummah and Spatial Boundaries

Concepts of the Ummah have played a significant role in Bin Laden's netwar and in the netwars in and emerging from Afghanistan. It will therefore be useful to discuss different meanings of this concept, and how these meanings have functioned in international politics, here. Bin Laden's (ab)use of the concept of Ummah will also be a helpful example of how ideas can be used as effective 'weapons' in netwar conflicts.

Religious texts and concepts typically invite numerous differing readings; 'Ummah' is no exception. This is not a Theology thesis, and I certainly do not seek to describe what Ummah 'really' means. Instead, it is the political constructions and (ab)uses of 'Ummah' – especially in conflict – which are of interest here.

The Ummah may be restricted to a community of those who are, or say that they are, Muslim (Ibrahim 1991, 306). This community can become relatively narrow (for example, referring only to those who share a specific, fundamentalist interpretation of Islam) and the idea of this community can thus be used as a political weapon (Bin Laden 2005, 4-12; Mamdani 2005, 154). The Ummah can also be cited as a site of resistance to certain policies: for example, the Organization of Islamic Conferences argues that the Ummah will oppose any US-led military action against Iran (Pak Tribune 2005).

Political violence can be carried out in the name of the Ummah, even if most Muslims would disagree with the tactics used (Mamdani 2005, 154). Bin Laden, for example, justifies his violence in the name of the Ummah; however, he responds to a question about Muslims who disagree with his tactics by implying that said Muslims have failed to understand Islam (Bin Laden 1999). Bin Laden argues that the Ummah imposes certain duties on the governments of Islamic states (in particular, Saudi Arabia) (Bin Laden 2005, 4-5). However, it is worth noting that 'Ummah' can also be used more 'progressively' to refer to an "intellectual pluralism as consonant with the spirit of the Islamic tradition", to "an interactive model, a means of relating to others in dialogue" (Ibrahim 1991, 307).

The Ummah is thus a community that cuts across spatial boundaries. It is interesting to note that, in Bin Laden's account of the Ummah, there is a

somewhat ambiguous relation to territorial states. Bin Laden is clearly very critical of the ways in which certain state governments, such as the Saudi government, behave; he explicitly advocates political action against such governments (Bin Laden 2005, 15-19).

However, Bin Laden's incitement of the Ummah to revolution differs from many other – for example, Marxist or anarchist – calls for revolt in that Bin Laden does not speak directly against states *as such*. While Bin Laden clearly does seek to remove certain governments, and does believe that religious principles and the community of the Ummah can circumscribe and overlay the actions of states, this position *would* be compatible with the continued existence of territorial states.

As will be shown below, there is thus not any straightforward dichotomy between networks and (territorial) boundaries. Instead, networks – such as that of the (perceived) community of the Ummah – can overlay territory and boundary discourses. Networks can find the discourses of territorial states extremely useful.

For example, Bin Laden views it as important for a “state of Islam” to be established in order to defend the Ummah from its perceived enemies (Bin Laden 2005, 85). In the same interview, Bin Laden argues that “[t]here is a duty on Muslims to acquire” Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), in order to ‘defend’ themselves from the Israeli and Christian states which possess nuclear weapons (Bin Laden 2005, 72). What we see in Bin Laden's utilisation of the Ummah is thus an example of how network discourses can both cause problems for territorial states, while also using and overlaying such states. In the following two sections I will move on from and expand on this example, in order to offer a more detailed analysis of Al Qaeda's overlaying of territorial states.

Al Qaeda, Netwar and Spatial Boundaries

It is argued above that netwar works by defying spatial boundaries and operating in the grey areas of the world (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 13). This makes it harder for states – insofar as they remain caught within their territorial boundaries – to deal with netwar actors. The events of September 11 demonstrated that “no state, not even a superpower, has impermeable

borders...or enjoys anything even remotely like a 'sovereign' monopoly of the means of coercion at home" (Mansbach 2004, 20).⁴⁶

Networks such as Al Qaeda can thus pose a challenge to the functioning of territorial states. The logic of the Al Qaeda network (and of the concept of the Ummah, on which Al Qaeda draws) is a hard one for territorial discourses to either accommodate or deal with. This challenge would have been made more serious by Bin Laden's experience in Afghanistan: his "success may have come as a surprise to him that lent plausibility to future projects relying on similar tactics" (Falk 2003a, xx).

As well as 'practical' issues around Bin Laden's previous successes in projecting force across state borders, the challenge posed by Al Qaeda is enhanced by their moral positions, by the type of representational framework built by their network. Campbell argues that, in the 1991 Gulf War, the Iraq-Kuwait border took on the role of an ethical border: it was seen as unethical for Iraq to cross this border (Campbell 1993, 32). Al Qaeda and Bin Laden's political projects explicitly refuse to accept the ethical value of such borders: as noted above, they draw on alternative 'principles' such as the defence of the Ummah. Networks have thus developed that not only transgress these 'ethical' borders, but which make a virtue of doing so. At the same time as Bin Laden's networks were working around and across these borders, they were thus constructing and using a representational framework that challenged said borders.

One can first note that the 1996 Fatwah against the American presence in Saudi Arabia refers, not to the Saudi state, but to "the land of the two holy places" (Bin Laden 2001b). In an attack on the Saudi government which does not explicitly refer to the state as such, Bin Laden argues that "[w]e bemoan [events in the Kingdom] and can only say: 'No power and power acquiring except through Allah'" (Bin Laden 2001b, 2). Writing from a new base in Afghanistan, Bin Laden does not refer to his presence in the state but instead to his "safe base...in the high Hindukush mountains in Khurasan...where by the

⁴⁶ As Elden argues, "[t]erritorial integrity has long been asserted as a stabilising factor"; however, the workings of these networks can make clear the limits of this 'stabilising' factor (Elden 2005b, 10). The violence of these networks forms a part of "the collapse of the sovereign fiction that states have a monopoly of legitimate violence within their territory" (Elden 2005b, 26-27).

Grace of Allah the largest infidel military force of the world was destroyed” (Bin Laden 2001b, 2).

States and national bodies clearly do feature in Bin Laden’s discourse – for example, he does refer to states such as Afghanistan and Bosnia (Bin Laden 2001b, 14 and 19). While often referring to Americans as part of a “Zionist-Crusaders alliance”, Bin Laden does of course also refer to Americans and to the US (Bin Laden 1998a; Bin Laden 1999; Bin Laden 2001b, 1, 14 and 19). However, for Bin Laden such states play a somewhat secondary role. Instead, the Ummah is central both in the way it suffers the iniquities “imposed...by the Zionist-Crusader alliance” and the way that it constitutes a body to “prepare and instigate against the enemy” (Bin Laden 2001b, 2 and 8). There is a “duty...to motivate our *umma* to *jihad* for the sake of God against America and Israel and their allies” (Bin Laden 2005, 69. Emphasis in original).

The 1998 Fatwah broadens out this struggle even further: it provides a wider survey of the alleged crimes of Americans and Zionists, and calls “on every Muslim who believes in God and wishes to be rewarded to comply with God’s order to kill the Americans and plunder their money wherever and whenever they find it” (Bin Laden 1998b). Perceived wrongs to the Ummah perpetrated by America and Americans thus lead Bin Laden to advocate violence that goes beyond what one would see in ‘conventional’ wars.

For Bin Laden, “[w]hen it becomes apparent that it would be impossible to repel these Americans without assaulting them, even if this involved [sic] the killing of Muslims, this is permissible under Islam” (Bin Laden 1998a). God is therefore thought to have given “permission...to kill the Americans and seize their money wherever and whenever they find them” (Bin Laden 2005, 61). There is an Islamic duty to fight the American “soldiers of Satan...and whichever devil’s supporters are allied with them” (Bin Laden 2005, 61).

This violence is thus almost literally boundless: Bin Laden argues that non-Muslim Americans, and if necessary Muslims (or, presumably, any other Americans), can be killed anywhere (Bin Laden 1998a). This violence – in theory, if not always in practice – thus exceeds any concept of bounded states and bounded space.

After the events of September 11 Bin Laden seeks to further emphasise the broadness of this violence, arguing that “[t]his battle is not between al Qaeda

and the U.S. This is a battle of Muslims against the global crusaders” (Bin Laden and Alouni 2001). This violence thus crosses state borders, and is linked to a discourse that challenges the normative value attributed to such borders. In a direct challenge to the normative status of these borders, Al Qaeda offers a boundless violence that is tied to – and draws upon – a very different set of norms.

Al Qaeda’s discourse is thus a challenge to (certain conceptions of) the state. In particular, one might note Michael Mann’s development of Weber’s work. Mann argues that that a key element of statehood is that “[o]nly the state is inherently centralized over a delimited territory over which it has authoritative power” (Mann 2003, 60). For Mann, a state needs to be able to “regulate, normatively and by force, a given set of social and territorial relations, and to erect boundaries against the outside” (Mann 2003, 62. *Emphasis modified*). Al Qaeda explicitly challenges this authoritative power and normative regulation through laying out alternative representational frameworks.

Moreover in some cases – for example, in the Afghan insurgency – Bin Laden was able to both challenge and exceed the ability of a state to impose regulation by force. Bin Laden’s networks could offer these challenges through spreading across state boundaries and also through developing and using “communication networks among segments of a state’s population” (Mann 2003, 60).

Joe Painter advocates a move beyond the network-territory dichotomy, arguing that we should consider “that territory-thinking and networking-thinking do not reflect distinctively different underlying realities, but are, rather, different conceptualizations of a single reality” (Painter, 30). Along similar lines, Al Qaeda’s discourse is not entirely different to or separate from territorial discourses. Instead, its network discourse can once again be read as an overlay network. Al Qaeda’s discourse is one which overlays territorial discourses: a network that functions across and over territorial discourses.

It is clear that criticisms of states and calls for territorial change do play a part in Al Qaeda’s discourse. Al Qaeda also utilises some of the opportunities made available by state discourses: by relatively sympathetic states such as Afghanistan and the Sudan, which can serve as bases; by the misguided policies of states such as the Soviet Union, which provide fuel for propaganda and the

opportunity for military victories; and by states such as the US, Britain and Saudi Arabia, which assist these networks in order to achieve goals of their own. Therefore, Al Qaeda is able to take advantage of its interactions with territorial discourses in order to overlay said discourses.

One should thus not 'just' focus on the problems that territorial and network discourses face in coexisting. However, it should be noted that some territorial discourses have faced real problems in coexisting with network discourses. The "connection, flux and mobility" associated with networks means that the networks in question can move on when these problems become too disruptive for them to deal with, or the networks can build alternate connections (Painter, 1-2). This will, as discussed below, often cause serious problems for those territorial discourses that are used or overlaid in this way.

The Sudan and Afghanistan as Bases for Al Qaeda

Through engaging effectively with territorial discourses, Al Qaeda has been able to use a number of states as bases for its operations: Afghanistan and the Sudan are the most prominent examples. However, as shown above and as will be discussed at more length below, the logics through which Al Qaeda works cannot easily be accommodated by territorial states.

In the Sudan, there were considerable tensions between Bin Laden and the government (Burke 2003, 141). The way that Al Qaeda's violence spread internationally meant that Bin Laden's presence in the Sudan caused problems with the state's relations with other countries: for example, in 1993 the US listed Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism (U.S. Department of State 2001, 31; Burke 2003, 141; Kemp 1996).

The Sudan could not control Bin Laden's violence and enterprises sufficiently to ensure that these conformed to its goals. For example, when those linked to Bin Laden's networks murdered a young boy due to the suspicion that he collaborated with Egyptian intelligence, the Sudanese intelligence services strongly objected (Burke 2003, 141). Benjamin and Simon report a Sudanese expert stating that, when Bin Laden's influence within Sudan was growing to a worrying extent, "Sudan...unlike the Taliban...was not about to let the parasite kill the host" (Benjamin and Simon 2003, 135).

When the US was pressuring the Sudan to remove Bin Laden in 1996, the Sudan offered to extradite him to Saudi Arabia (Burke 2003, 141). However, in another example of the problems that such networks can cause for states, Saudi Arabia refused to take him (Burke 2003, 141; Gillan 2001, 9). They feared that the presence of Bin Laden – and associated networks – could cause domestic unrest (Burke 2003, 141). The US also did not want custody of Bin Laden: they did not believe that they had sufficient evidence on which to hold him (Burke 2003, 141).⁴⁷ Under pressure to remove Bin Laden, the Sudan pushed him to return to Afghanistan – which he did in 1996 (Burke 2003, 142; Evans 1996, 13; Kemp 1996).

Afghanistan was a particularly suitable state for Bin Laden to make his base in. The Taliban regime's ideology was relatively close to Bin Laden's own: the Taliban and Al Qaeda both favoured a fundamentalist and politically radical interpretation of Sunni Islam ('Ma'soum Afghani' 1997; Bin Laden and Alouni 2001; Bin Laden and Miller 1998; Coll 2004, 340). On moving to Kandahar under the Taliban, Bin Laden reportedly felt "back home" (Coll 2004, 340).

Moreover, the Taliban was itself run along distinctly networked lines. The boundaries between who was in and who was fighting against the Taliban regime were extremely porous. For example, Hekmatyar's Hizbe-e Islami faction fought against the Taliban and with the Northern Alliance, but also shared some aspects of the Taliban's ideology and assisted the Taliban's military campaign against some of Hizbe-e Islami's supposed allies (Hiro 2002, 263). The Taliban government's military efforts were also assisted by Bin Laden's network. Bin Laden was able to offer both logistical support (such as trucks for transport) and Al Qaeda troops to fight alongside the Taliban (Halliday 2002, 41; Hiro 2002, 257 and 263).

Even when in government, the structure of the Taliban remained distinctly devolved and decentralised. There was ambiguity as to who was inside/outside of this network: for example, as noted above, Hekmatyar both fought against and assisted the Taliban. The Taliban also depended upon a network of supporters

⁴⁷ Bin Laden was apparently confident that the US lacked the evidence to charge him: there are reports that he had planned to attend a 1996 "Islamic rally" in London, and was prevented from doing so only by a last-minute Home Office ban (Evans 1996; Kemp 1996, 13). Bin Laden would presumably have been aware that the UK has an extradition treaty with the US, and that he would have been extradited on production of appropriate evidence.

including not just those fighting and/or working for the Taliban, but also Pashtun tribal elders, foreign fighters and workers who assisted the Taliban while they were in Afghanistan, and foreign donors of money and weapons (Humphrys and Vendrell 2001). As Francesc Vendrell (Head of the UN Special Mission to Afghanistan) argues, tensions and shifting relations between these different groups caused significant problems for Taliban attempts to govern Afghanistan (Humphrys and Vendrell 2001).

In Afghanistan, it was thus not so much a case of the Al Qaeda network 'needing to operate in the grey areas in and around states, but of a state itself being the grey area. Painter suggests the possibility "that what we think of as territories and territorial institutions are in fact composed of networks" (Painter 2005, 30). Afghanistan under the Taliban was one example of how a networked territory and government might function, and blend into other networks.

If Afghanistan is a networked state, this raises some questions around whether the Weberian account of the state is applicable here. While demands were made of 'Afghanistan' as if it was a 'conventional' state, Afghanistan was not a state in the Weberian sense of the term.

For Weber, "the state is that human community which (successfully) lays claim to the *monopoly of legitimate physical violence* within a certain territory" (Weber 1994b, 310-311. Emphasis in original). However, as shown above, the Taliban never had a monopoly of legitimate physical violence: a number of organisations, including Al Qaeda and the different groups making up the Northern Alliance, were also able to exert 'legitimate' force. It is therefore the case that – while demands were made on Afghanistan as if it was a 'conventional' Weberian state – the Taliban was never able to govern Afghanistan in such a 'conventional' way.

One might note, for example, Bush's 20 September 2001 demands. Bush insists that the Taliban should (among other things):

Deliver to United States authorities all the leaders of al Qaeda who hide in your land...Protect foreign journalists, diplomats and aid workers in your country. Close immediately and permanently every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan, and hand over every terrorist,

and every person in their support structure, to appropriate authorities (Bush 2001f).

As will be shown below, international forces in Afghanistan are currently unable to achieve these goals. Taliban forces – organised along network lines, and lacking a monopoly of legitimate force – would have been extremely unlikely to have been able to meet Bush’s demands. While Bush demands that the “Taliban must act, and act immediately”, it was extremely doubtful that they would have been able to act in this way, even if they had been entirely willing to do so (Bush 2001f). As Gregory puts it, there was thus “a performance of sovereignty through which the ruptured space of Afghanistan could be simulated as a coherent state” (Gregory 2004, 50).

Al Qaeda, Globalisation and Barnett

As shown above, Afghanistan’s networked structure – and the international networks that were active within Afghan territory – brought significant problems to the state. In its 2000 assessment of Afghanistan’s role in global terrorism, the State Department noted that it served as a base for Bin Laden despite international demands for his extradition; Al Qaeda’s presence in and overlaying of Afghanistan therefore lead to UN sanctions being imposed upon the state (United Nations Security Council 1999a; United Nations Security Council 2000; U.S. Department of State 2001, 8). As such, Afghanistan under the Taliban might seem to offer an example of the “Non-Integrating Gap” which, for Thomas Barnett, is the source of today’s threats to the US (Barnett 2004, 26).⁴⁸

For Barnett, “it is disconnectedness that defines danger. Disconnectedness allows bad actors to flourish by keeping entire societies detached from the global community and under their control” (Barnett 2004, 8). However, to view Afghanistan under the Taliban as a disconnected state would be a serious misinterpretation of the situation.

⁴⁸ While I disagree with many of Barnett’s political positions – I will explicitly challenge a number of his arguments in the thesis, and I advocate political action that very much differs from what Barnett would want – I have found his work interesting, provocative and often productive. Barnett’s work has also been influential in military and policy circles (Jaffe 2004). It therefore does merit serious discussion in the thesis.

Barnett argues that the US military should focus on “which regions are *functioning* within globalization’s expanding web of connectivity and which remain *disconnected* from that process” (Barnett 2004, 121. Emphasis in original). For Barnett, it is “where globalization has spread” that stable governments will be found (Barnett 2004, 121-122). On the other hand, it is beyond globalisation’s “frontier [that] you will find the failed states that command our attention”, along with “rogue states” and “endemic conflicts” (Barnett 2004, 121-122). For Barnett, globalisation involves spreading a fairly minimal rule set – that of “a multicultural free-market economy” – across the entire world (Barnett 2004, 123).

As shown above, Afghanistan has been caught up in a range of complex, international networks for some time – including Pakistani, Saudi, Soviet and US interventions in the state, along with the involvement of Al Qaeda. Moreover, Afghanistan’s drug production and export enterprises have ensured that it remained very much connected to the international economy, albeit in somewhat unconventional ways. As demonstrated in the above account of netwar in Afghanistan and blowback from Afghanistan, and as will be discussed at more length in Chapter 3’s account of the opium trade, the ways in which the international community connected with Afghanistan have played a significant role in the political violence that emerged in and from the state.

It is thus the case that certain forms of (inter)connectedness can actually be powerful challenges to the types of integration that Barnett advocates. It is, as Barnett acknowledges, often highly interconnected networks like Al Qaeda which violently defy the notion that their ‘homelands’ should join “globalization’s Functioning Core” (Barnett 2004, 83). A web of connections between actors, along with “dense communications”, is important for those seeking to engage in netwar (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 20-21). This can thus help them to challenge certain aspects of the ‘progress’ of globalisation.

While I would disagree with much of Barnett’s work, he is clearly a capable theorist. This raises the question of why it seems almost ‘obvious’ to me that Afghanistan benefits or suffers from many connections with the international system, while Barnett appears to view it as ‘obvious’ that such states suffer from disconnectedness. What appear to be at issue between us are different concepts of ‘rule sets’ and ‘functioning’.

As noted above, Barnett does argue that the rules set which globalisation will spread across the world is a minimal one (Barnett 2004, 123). However, he fails to take account of exactly how minimal this rule set can be. Barnett appears to view 'black-market' economic activity such as the trade in illegal drugs as a contravention of the rule set of globalisation (Barnett 2004, 351). However, Chapter 3 will demonstrate that – on the contrary – activities such as the drug trade represent an example of globalisation functioning particularly efficiently and effectively.

The assumption that certain 'black-market' activities are not a 'genuine' part of globalisation's interconnectedness appears to be implicit – rather than explicitly argued – in Barnett's work. He fails to justify why the intense interconnectedness of such a substantial part of the international economy should be excluded from analyses of the connections which globalisation forms.

For Barnett, a country or a region is "functioning" as part of globalisation if it can deal with "content flows" associated with economic integration, and if it works to bring "its internal rule sets [into line with] the emerging global rule of democracy, rule of law, and free markets" (Barnett 2004, 125-127). In terms of these three global rules, Barnett argues that "we would like to see all three occurring at once, but significant movement on any front is more important than the lack of progress in the other two" (Barnett 2004, 127).

As will be shown in Chapter 3, since the overthrow of the Taliban Afghanistan's booming drugs trade has very much been moving towards a free market (it is now free from Taliban attempts to, for example, restrict certain aspects of the trade or manage the price) (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2006b; Jelsma 2005). Afghanistan has, over a long period, dealt very effectively with and also added to the content flows associated with globalisation. As well as the aforementioned drug production and export business, Afghanistan's extremely effective anti-Soviet insurgency was only possible because of skilled management of such flows. It is therefore the case that countries which Barnett would place in the Gap, and therefore view as non-functioning, can actually function effectively as part of globalisation – even in Barnett's own terms.

For Barnett, life in the Gap is nasty, short, and brutal (Barnett 2004, 162-164). This may be a good description of life for many (though far from all)

people living in unstable states such as Afghanistan. However, as argued above and as will be shown at more length in Chapter 3, these living conditions are generated at least as much by the 'successful' participation of these states in globalisation as they are by a failure of states to become sufficiently connected. An excess of certain aspects of globalisation can be at least as 'successful' at making life nasty, short and brutal as can an insufficient engagement with the networks of globalisation.

The efficacy with which Afghanistan functioned within globalisation allowed certain networks linked to and emerging from it to impact on the US in 2001. This will therefore be a good point to move to my analysis of the preparation for, and execution of, the events of September 11 2001.

Netwar: The Events of September 11 2001

Preparation for the Events of September 11

The 'Hamburg Cell' operatives who worked as pilots on the hijacked flights received their initial training in Afghanistan, as did other key hijackers (Aust and Schnibben 2002, 177; Kean, Hamilton et al., 156-157 and 165-157). Working online in Germany, Mohamed Atta (the suicide pilot of flight American 11) researched flying schools in the US (Der Derian 2003a; Kean, Hamilton et al., 88). While the hijackers were in the US, Al Qaeda funded almost all their living and training costs (as well as their travel costs to get there); money was sent largely through wire transfers and by being transported as cash by Sheikh Mohammed (Aust and Schnibben 2002, 15-16 and 195; Der Derian 2002c; Der Derian 2003a; Kean, Hamilton et al., 169-172).

The suicide pilots were able to learn to fly during nine months of living in the US, despite suspicions that terrorists were using US flight schools (Aust and Schnibben 2002, 10-18; Ridgeway 2002). Other preparations included an analysis of US airport security: Atta was able to closely observe security at Logan Airport in Boston without attracting undesirable attention (Ridgeway 2005a, 30-31). Moreover, in one trial run, operatives were sent through security carrying box cutters (Kean, Hamilton et al., 158-159). In this trial run, an Al Qaeda operative was allowed to board a flight with a box cutter in their toiletry bag (Kean, Hamilton et al., 158-159). This was found when they were searched, but the person doing the search simply looked at in the bag and then allowed

them to take the box cutter on the flight with them (Kean, Hamilton et al., 158-159).

September 11 2001

Despite the comparatively well-resourced nature of the US security infrastructure, it failed to deal effectively with the Al Qaeda's network.⁴⁹ As the 9/11 Commission puts it, by 8am on 11 September 2001 the 19 hijackers "had defeated all the security layers that America's civil aviation security then had in place to prevent a hijacking" (Kean, Hamilton et al., 4).

On the morning of September 11, the hijackers boarded their flights. While a number of them were selected by a pre-screening programme at airport security, this just meant that their bags were not loaded onto the planes until after they had boarded and that one bag was screened for explosives (Kean, Hamilton et al., 1-4). Two of the hijackers at Washington set off the security alarm and were therefore 'wanded' with a handheld metal detector (Kean, Hamilton et al., 3). However, this was done inadequately and failed to determine what had set off the security alarm (Kean, Hamilton et al., 3).⁵⁰

The hijackings began on flight American 11, at around 0815 (Kean, Hamilton et al., 4-5). The hijackers stabbed two of the cabin crew and moved into the cockpit (Kean, Hamilton et al., 4-5). They took control of the plane, using pepper spray (or a similar substance) to force passengers to the back (Kean, Hamilton et al., 5).

The Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) learnt of the problems on the flight because flight attendant Betty Ong was able to contact American Airlines (AA) and because the hijackers had mistakenly broadcast a message intended for the passengers to air traffic control (Kean, Hamilton et al., 5-6). Flight attendants Ong and Madeline Sweeney kept AA up-to-date on events using a phone on the plane, with their account of events cutting off as they said that the plane was

⁴⁹ The September 11 plot is thought to have cost 'just' \$400,000-\$500,000 and Al Qaeda's total annual expenditure is estimated at about \$30m (Kean, Hamilton et al. 2004d, 17, 169-170). This is clearly dwarfed by the budgets available to US agencies – for example, the 2003 budget for the FBI alone was \$4.298bn (Federal Bureau of Investigation). Bin Laden boasts that "al-Qaeda spent \$500,000 on the September 11 attacks, while America lost more than \$500 billion, at the lowest estimate, in the event and its aftermath" (Bin Laden 2005, 242).

⁵⁰ CCTV footage showed that Hazmi – one of the hijackers who set off the alarm – had an unidentified item clipped to his back pocket (Kean, Hamilton et al. 2004d, 3).

flying much too low (Kean, Hamilton et al., 6-7). Shortly afterwards, the plane hit the World Trade Center's North Tower at 0846 (1; Kean, Hamilton et al., 6-7).

United 175 was hijacked at about 0845, using Mace, knives and the threat of a bomb, with the pilots being killed in the hijacking (Kean, Hamilton et al., 7). From 0846 its transponder code began changing, meaning that the FAA could no longer use this effective to track the plane (FAA 2001c, 13). At 0852 Lee Hanson – one of the passengers – asked his son over a mobile phone to tell the airline what was happening, and a flight attendant called United Airlines (UA) using a phone on the plane (Kean, Hamilton et al., 7). At about 0902 or 0903 the plane hit the South Tower of the World Trade Center (FAA, 1; Kean, Hamilton et al., 8).

American 77 was hijacked shortly before 0845, using knives and box cutters (Kean, Hamilton et al., 8). At 0854 the plane broke from its planned path, turning South; the transponder was turned off shortly afterwards, and even radar tracking of the plane was lost (Kean, Hamilton et al., 9). American Airlines grounded all flights not yet in the air on learning what had happened to their planes and United 175 (Kean, Hamilton et al., 9). At 0937, American 77 hit the Western side of the Pentagon (Hiro 2002, 303; Kean, Hamilton et al., 10).

When United 93 left Newark at 0842 (delayed from the planned 0800 take-off) the crew were not aware of any hijackings (Kean, Hamilton et al., 10). The FAA had viewed it as the responsibility of individual air carriers to warn their plane crews of any problems (Kean, Hamilton et al., 11). At 0924 United issued a warning to its planes (including Flight 93) to beware of intrusions into the cockpit; the hijackers attacked at 0928, using knives and claiming to have a bomb on the plane (Kean, Hamilton et al., 11-13).

Shortly after the hijacking of United 93, the passengers used the plane's phone and their mobile phones to speak to family and friends (the hijackers allowed this); this let passengers learn about the two planes that had already hit the World Trade Center (Kean, Hamilton et al., 12). The passengers decided to retake the plane and thus forced the hijackers to crash the plane into an empty field rather than, as intended, Washington (the Capitol and the White House were likely targets) (Kean, Hamilton et al., 13-14 and 45). At 0950 the FAA shut

down all US airports and ordered all aircraft that were in the air to land (Hiro 2002, 303).

The hijackers were able to kill at least 2,948 people, including those who died at the World Trade Center and Pentagon and all the passengers and crew on the four planes (the hijackers also died in the attacks) (September 11, 2001 Victims 2005; Hiro 2002, 303-304; Hirschkom 2003). Two towers of the World Trade Center were collapsed (with a third falling due to damage from debris, after it had been evacuated) and the Pentagon was damaged (September 11, 2001 Victims 2005; Hiro 2002, 303-304; Hirschkom 2003; Sunder 2005, xxxvii-xxxviii).

The Territorial Trap

As shown above, a handful of relatively poorly resourced hijackers were thus able to effectively strike in the heart of the US. As will be shown below, particular concepts of territory – and the US security infrastructure being caught in what John Agnew describes as the “territorial trap” – played an important role in making these attacks possible (Agnew 1994, 53-54). It will therefore be useful to discuss Agnew’s account of this trap, before moving on to analyse the effects that it had in September 2001.

An important problem with US security measures was the assumption that territorial boundaries would continue to be a key factor in determining risk. This is an important aspect of Agnew’s territorial trap: there is a move from the belief that states have firm control of their boundaries to the belief in a clear domestic/foreign opposition (Agnew 1994, 53-54; Brenner, Jessop et al. 2003, 2).

This can seriously limit the ability of states to deal with netwar attacks: it will be shown below that the US belief that it could control its boundaries, and the maintenance of a domestic/foreign opposition, did not have a ‘rational’ basis. The assumption that any attack would come from outside made it much easier for Al Qaeda to attack from inside.⁵¹

⁵¹ After the events of September 11, Wolfowitz argued that the US must now move beyond this foreign/domestic split in at least some areas: “[g]lobal terrorism now forces domestic and foreign intelligence systems to link together in order to prevent the enemy from finding a hiding place in the seam between these disciplines” (Wolfowitz 2002, 4).

When deciding how much priority to give domestic airport security, it was assumed that any aircraft used in an attack would originate from outside of the US (Kean, Hamilton et al., 17). Moreover, The North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) was very much ‘outwards looking’: it focused on defending against attacks coming into the US and Canada from outside (Hebert 2002).

US borders are relatively porous: for example, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) estimates that there were seven million unauthorised immigrants in the US in the year 2000 (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 2003). Jeoffrey Passel argues convincingly that, by 2004, the number of unauthorised immigrants in the US had grown to over ten million (Passel 2005, 3). The assumption that those wishing to attack the US from outside could not get into the country was (and is) therefore unjustified.

Given the high level of unauthorised immigration, the well-known weaknesses in airport security in the US (which will be discussed at more length below), and the porous nature of US borders, it was misguided to act upon the assumption that attacks would not come from inside the US. Even if one makes the unjustified assumption that no US citizen would engage in a terrorist attack on the state, a very large number of non-citizens can and do enter the country without authorisation.

Moreover, there was intelligence dating from at least 1998 that terrorists inside the US could pose “a threat to commercial aviation” (FAA 2001b; 9/11 Commission Staff 2004, 62; Lichtblau 2004; Ridgeway 2005a, 34). The FAA was also aware that terrorists might specifically target domestic US flights, while the FBI knew that Al Qaeda terrorists were training as pilots in the US (Branagin and Dwyer 2006; Ridgeway 2005a, 35). Despite this, the US security infrastructure – caught in a territorial trap – largely focused on threats coming from outside of US territory.

Problems with US Aviation Security

In part because many fell into this ‘territorial trap’, there were well-known problems with airport security in the US prior to September 11; these security problems were especially pronounced with domestic flights (Ridgeway 2005a, 35). For example, undercover agents testing airport security were able to walk

“through airport checkpoints toting machine guns on their backs and bombs stashed in their carry-on luggage” (Ridgeway 2005b). When a ‘Red Team’ of undercover agents carried out pre-9/11 tests on airport security, they found a 90% failure rate in blocking simulated terrorist attacks (Ridgeway 2005a, 22-23).

Such gaps in US security measures left opportunities open for Al Qaeda operations. This is perhaps most obvious in terms of the aforementioned (lack of) security when boarding domestic flights. As well as the problems noted above, there was a failure to carry out the mandated random bag searches; moreover, computerised screening was only applied to passengers who were checking in bags (9/11 Commission Staff 2004; Kean, Hamilton et al., 84; Ridgeway 2005b, 5).

These were clear failures in FAA security; however, even if things had worked as designed, the FAA was not prepared to deal with suicide attackers using small knives to achieve their goals (Aust and Schnibben 2002, 35-36; Ridgeway 2005a, 59). The aforementioned policy of holding bags off the planes until the ‘suspicious’ passengers had boarded made unjustified assumptions. It was presumed that a terrorist attack would come through bombs on planes and that the terrorists would not be prepared to commit suicide in the course of their attacks (9/11 Commission Staff 2004, 2-3; Kean, Hamilton et al., 1-4). Moreover as James May, president/CEO of the Air Transport Association of America, notes:

Under pre-9/11 FAA regulations only ‘knives with blades four inches long or longer and/or knives considered illegal under local law’ were prohibited [on planes]. Under a non-regulatory Checkpoint Operations Guide...box cutting devices were considered a restricted item posing a potential danger. This meant that if such a device was identified, it could be kept off the aircraft. The FAA mandated metal-detection walk-through systems, however, were designed and tested to detect metallic items about the size of a small handgun or larger. The pre-9/11 screening system was not designed to detect or prohibit these types of small items (May 2003).

The Al Qaeda network very effectively found ways through the gaps that these errors left (Kean, Hamilton et al., 1-4). The attacks thus demonstrated that network actors such as Al Qaeda were able to pass into and through the more hierarchical infrastructure that constituted the US state security apparatus.

Technology and the Hijackings

One development since the Afghan anti-Communist insurgency – a development that helped Al Qaeda to pass through the US state security apparatus, and contributed to the efficacy of their netwar – was the increased availability of communications technologies. Al Qaeda took advantage of this: they used these technologies alongside much more traditional network techniques like *hawala* money transfer.⁵²

E-mail was used to make a number of international arrangements and to communicate with actors in different parts of the world (Delpech 2004, 48; Der Derian 2003a; Kean, Hamilton et al., 168). This included encrypted e-mails, and e-mails that used stenography to hide messages in e-mailed pictures (Der Derian). In an interesting echo of the military use of war games, the hijackers received part of their training through playing flight simulators and watching movies about hijacking (Der Derian; Kean, Hamilton et al., 157-158).

Part of the money required by the hijackers was sent to them by wire transfer, and *hawala* informal money transfer networks were also used (Delpech 2004, 48; Der Derian; Der Derian 2002c; Kean, Hamilton et al., 172). These virtual technologies allowed Al Qaeda to work particularly quickly: moving money and sending messages nearly instantly, with the type of fluidity that, as argued above, is associated with network forms (Mansbach 2004, 28). Al Qaeda operatives could also work and communicate with those a considerable physical distance away, with their communications (and, in some cases, their money) able to pass over state borders relatively smoothly (Mansbach 2004, 28).

Whereas Al Qaeda were able to use a combination of new and old technologies to help in their attacks, the (substantially more advanced)

⁵² In *hawala* networks, brokers use a system based on trust and reputation (and without a conventional audit trail) to transfer funds both domestically and internationally (De Goede 2003b, 515-517). They are able to do so quickly and efficiently (De Goede 2003b, 515-517). However, as an informal means of money transfer *hawala* networks “escape the formal accounting procedures of national governments and international institutions” (De Goede 2003b, 514).

technology available to the US security services did not allow them to mount an effective defence. Moreover, in some cases a reliance on technology actually worsened the position of the US in dealing with the attacks. For example, because US air traffic control relied on radio transponders to track planes, the hijackers of the planes were able to avoid some tracking by simply switching these transponders off or changing the code emitted by their transponder (FAA 2001c, 13; Kean, Hamilton et al., 16).

Fairly basic problems with surveillance and ‘command and control’ rendered much US technology useless. For example, there are limited gains to be had from using metal detectors to scan passengers at airports if the security staff do not properly investigate what triggers these scanners when they do go off or knowingly allow passengers to carry box cutters onto planes (Kean, Hamilton et al., 3 and 158-159).

Failures of interoperability – with human elements of the security system not working at all well with other elements of the system – thus caused significant problems. As Clarke rather bluntly puts it, having “minimum-wage rent-a-cops doing screening of passengers and carry-on” seriously limited what could be done to maintain aviation security (Clarke 2004, 28).

Tools as simple and cheap as box cutters were used to overcome the wide range of high-cost and high-tech tools available to the US: the hijackers thus demonstrated the US vulnerability to “rustic means of war” (Delpech 2004, 48. *Emphasis modified*). Urry eloquently expresses the surprise caused by this means of attack. He notes that:

Unlike predictions of cyber-terrorism or bio-terrorism, this event involved fairly old technologies...Using modest communication devices, 20 men, supported it seems by an extensive network, unleashed a unique ‘war’ against the US (Urry 2002, 63-64).

Instead of relying on expensive and/or hard to obtain technology, “[t]he awesome power of the terrorist act stemmed...from the linking together of people, objects and technologies in a deadly non-failing network” (Urry 2002, 63). As Der Derian argues, the terrorists therefore did not need to use ‘high-tech’

means of attack: instead, their “unholy network” served as an effective force multiplier (Der Derian 2002a, 186).

US Communications and Surveillance

In contrast to the efficacy of Al Qaeda’s network (as described above) the more hierarchical US communications and surveillance infrastructure suffered from a number of inefficiencies and bottlenecks. One can begin by noting that the FAA had just 12 terrorist suspects on their ‘no fly’ list, while other government watchlists contained thousands of names; a number of those who hijacked the planes were already known to be working with Al Qaeda, but werenot on the FAA list (Clarke 2004, 13; Kean, Hamilton et al., 83).⁵³ Other agencies failed to tell the FAA the names on their watchlists, and there was no common database of names (9/11 Commission Staff 2004, 68-69; Clarke 2004, 13; Kean, Hamilton et al., 83; Lehman 2004). The FAA did not seek out this information, and Cathal Flynn (former head of FAA’s Aviation Security) claimed not to know that the State Department’s TIPOFF list of suspected terrorists existed (9/11 Commission Staff 2004, 69).

The FAA did receive CSG intelligence warning of a heightened terrorist threat in July 2001, and issued Information Circulars warning of this increased threat (FAA 2001b; 9/11 Commission Staff 2004, 56-57). However, these circulars did not circulate terribly well: senior members of the FAA, and airline operations executives, claim to have been unaware of this threat (9/11 Commission Staff 2004, 57). A number of commercial pilots also contacted the 9/11 Commission stating that they had not been made aware of this threat, and arguing that they should have been (9/11 Commission Staff 2004, 57).

The relatively hierarchical US security system suffered a number of communications bottlenecks that very much contrast with the speed of Al Qaeda’s netwar. An initial problem was that, to obtain military assistance, the FAA needed to notify multiple levels of NORAD and apply for high-level government approval; this meant that such assistance was activated far more slowly than Al Qaeda worked (Kean, Hamilton et al. 2004d, 17). Once again,

⁵³ Clarke reports the shock of CSG members when – in an emergency meeting on 11 September 2001 – they saw the names on the passenger lists of the hijacked planes. Clarke recognised some of the names as known members of Al Qaeda, and responded by asking “[h]ow the fuck did they get on board then?” (Clarke 2004, 13).

this verifies Arquilla and Ronfeldt's argument that network forces will usually be able to manoeuvre faster than the more hierarchical forces they are fighting (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 11).

Further problems were caused because the agencies that needed to coordinate a response to the attacks (once it was realised that they were attacks) could not keep pace with Al Qaeda's network. Although a multi-agency teleconference was quickly organised, this did not include the right officials until 10am and therefore could not co-ordinate responses properly until after all the planes had been crashed (Kean, Hamilton et al., 17, 36). Other potential targets for terrorist attack were evacuated relatively slowly – for example, it took until 0955 to evacuate the White House (Hiro 2002, 304).⁵⁴

Ridgeway largely blames poor FAA communications for the fact that "top national leaders learned that American Airlines Flight 11 had hit the World Trade Center as most Americans did – from CNN" (Ridgeway 2005a, 62). This is, to an extent, correct: the FAA was too slow in passing on its knowledge of the hijacking.⁵⁵ However, Ridgeway is almost too generous to the FAA. He omits to mention that the FAA's tracking of the plane was sufficiently limited that the FAA also learnt of its hitting the tower from CNN (and, in the immediate aftermath of the crash, needed to take notes from CNN's coverage of the situation) (FAA 2001a, 1).⁵⁶ FAA surveillance and communications were therefore both unsatisfactory.

The relative slowness and inefficiency of US security communications was also apparent in the way that Bush could not satisfactorily keep in touch with events. The communications between Bush and the White House Shelter

⁵⁴ Bush was not in the White House at this time (at 0955, he was on Air Force One when it took off from Florida) (Aust and Schnibben 2002, 136). Due to what was seen as a credible threat against the plane (although this intelligence later proved to be incorrect) it was not until twelve hours after the attacks that Bush returned to the White House (Aust and Schnibben 2002, 136 and 152; Frum 2005, 119).

⁵⁵ The FAA failure to promptly inform other agencies that the first plane to hit the World Trade Center was hijacked may also have hampered rescue attempts (Ridgeway 2005a, 48). Only the North Tower of the World Trade Center was initially evacuated; however, had rescuers known that this was a deliberate attack they might have acted differently and got more people out of the South Tower prior to its collapse (Aust and Schnibben 2002, 69-70; Ridgeway 2005a, 48).

⁵⁶ It is also worth noting that the F-15 pilots who NORAD sent to New York only learned that the towers had been hit when they got near enough to the city to see the smoke. As Major Dan Nash (one of the pilots) puts it: "anybody watching CNN had a better idea of what was going on. We were not told anything. It was to the point where we were flying supersonic towards New York and the controller came on and said, 'A second airplane has hit the World Trade Center.' ... My first thought was 'What happened to American 11?'" (Bronner 2005).

conference room failed to work reliably, preventing Bush from communicating effectively with those handling the situation (Clarke 2004, 19; Kean, Hamilton et al., 17, 40). Bush was therefore left somewhat ‘out of the loop’ on crucial decisions. This led to Cheney playing an unusually prominent role in events that day. Despite lacking a place in the military Chain of Command, it was Cheney who first gave the order that commercial planes could be shot down (Ridgeway 2005a, 68).⁵⁷

NORAD needed clearance from the Bush administration before they could shoot down suspect commercial planes. Problems in communications were also apparent in the length of time it took for NORAD to get this clearance, once it was realised that an attack on US territory was taking place (Kean, Hamilton et al., 17 and 43-14). Moreover, this order became overly ambiguous as it filtered down through the US hierarchy – to the extent that the order would not have permitted such planes to be shot down (Kean, Hamilton et al., 44-45).

The 9/11 Commission therefore argues that, had the passengers of United 93 not caused the plane to crash themselves, it would not have been fired upon (Kean, Hamilton et al., 44-45). The US security infrastructure, in contrast to networked structures such as Al Qaeda, was thus unable to reach important decisions in a timely fashion when it was deprived of effective control and communications from central points.

By far the greatest success of American communications on September 11 therefore took place when the passengers of United 93 decided to retake/crash the plane. However, this was not organised from any central point or using government infrastructure, and largely relied on technology as basic as mobile phones and airphones. Passengers gained the information they needed through telephone conversations with their friends and family (Aust and Schnibben 2002, 102-104; Kean, Hamilton et al., 12-14). Information was incomplete – for example, they were told that a plane had hit the World Trade Center, but not that it was a passenger plane – but they had enough information to act (Aust and Schnibben 2002, 102).

Based on this limited information the passengers themselves, independent of any central control, “decided, and acted” (Kean, Hamilton et al., 13). While

⁵⁷ Viewing the hijackings as a ‘domestic’ issue, Donald Rumsfeld was willing to leave most of the immediate decision-making to others (Ridgeway 2005a, 73).

Al Qaeda was able to “manoeuvre well within the decision-making cycle” of the US security infrastructure, the passengers of United 93 could keep pace with Al Qaeda’s network when they “decided, and acted” to resist the hijackers (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 11; Kean, Hamilton et al., 13)

This could (as will be argued in the Conclusions) be interpreted as the type of political act described in Chapter 4. Acting without any clear position in our symbolic reality (without knowing what their situation was, or the effects of their actions) the passengers decided to reciprocate violence in kind. In doing so, they successfully altered our political reality and very likely reduced the damage that was done by the September 11 attacks.

FAA and NORAD Responses to the Attacks

While the passengers of United 93 were able to act relatively effectively against Al Qaeda, the FAA and NORAD responses were rather less successful. In 2001, the FAA was responsible for the security of civil aviation in the US while NORAD was responsible for air defence (The White House 2001a, 1; Farmer, Kara et al. 2004, 1-2). All the hijackings were within NORAD’s North-East Air Defense Sector (NEADS) (Kean, Hamilton et al. 2004d, 17).

At the time of the hijacking NEADS had access to two alert bases (Otis base in Cape Cod and Langley base in Hampton) (Kean, Hamilton et al. 2004d, 17). Each base had two pairs of alert fighters (Kean, Hamilton et al. 2004d, 17). Because of this domestic/foreign divide between the agencies, information about problems on civil flights – as on September 11 – would reach the FAA before NORAD. However, the FAA failed to communicate information about the attacks to NORAD in a timely fashion.

As noted above, the hijackers turned off/changed the transponders on their flights. This caused serious problems with finding and tracking the planes. Air Traffic Control had to search through the flights showing on its primary radar system, which featured basic information about the positions of flights but not the more detailed transponder data, in order to find the hijacked planes (FAA 2001c, 3; Farmer, Kara et al. 2004, 2, 6 10-12, 15, 17).

NORAD’s radar coverage was ‘outward looking’: the radar and its operators were focused on detecting ‘foreign’ threats entering the US from outside its borders, instead of threats already inside (Hebert 2002). Major

Douglas Martin at NORAD describes this outwards-looking ring of radar coverage as “like a doughnut”: with good coverage round the outside, but not in the middle (Popular Mechanics 2005). NORAD’s radar therefore did not help to track the hijacked planes – the FAA had to handle this task – and they did not learn about problems until they were informed of them by the FAA (Hebert 2002).

The limited US ability to track internal flights meant that the hijackers were able to significantly deviate from their planes’ planned routes within domestic US airspace, without effective US government action against them. As Ridgeway observes:

It is important to remember that all four of the planes hijacked on 9/11 were Transcontinental flights. To head for their intended targets, they had to veer well off course – in some cases, making complete U-turns. Flight 11 turned toward New York about 20 minutes before it hit the World Trade Center (Ridgeway 2005a, 47).

These planes were thus able to deviate significantly from their routes without being detected and stopped. As both Ridgeway and the 9/11 Commission argue, weaknesses in US domestic security allowed the planes to avoid any effective action from US forces (Kean, Hamilton et al. 2004d; Ridgeway 2005a, Chapter 1). The planes were not adequately tracked, and (as noted above) NORAD did not receive a clear order that would have allowed them to shoot down the planes (Kean, Hamilton et al. 2004d; Ridgeway 2005a, Chapter 1).

Given the potential for multiple hijackings, NORAD’s facilities were clearly sub-ideal.⁵⁸ There was only one pair of alert fighters in NEADS for every two planes that Al Qaeda hijacked there. Moreover, a terrorist group seeking to hijack more than four planes would have had a high probability of successfully

⁵⁸ It is likely that additional hijackings were planned for September 11: Moussaoui was apparently planning an additional hijacking, and there are reports that other suspicious flights and passengers were found with box cutters (Smith 2002b, 52-53). Given FAA security failings, it is quite conceivable that more than four simultaneous hijackings could have been carried out (Ridgeway 2005a, 59).

taking a number of them (Ridgeway 2005a, 22-23). NEADS was therefore not well placed to deal with potential hijackings.

However, slow communications meant that – even if NORAD had had more, better placed planes available – they would have been very unlikely to have had enough time to respond to the hijackings (Kean, Hamilton et al. 2004d, 18-31; Ridgeway 2005a, 84). FAA communications gave “the NEADS air defenders...nine minutes notice on the first hijacked plane, no advance notice on the second, no advance notice on the third, and no advance notice on the fourth” (9/11 Commission Staff 2004, 52; Kean, Hamilton et al. 2004d, 31). The speed of Al Qaeda’s netwar thus meant that a lack of fighter planes – and their placement in locations designed to deal with external rather than internal threats – was relegated to a secondary issue compared to the failure of the FAA and the Bush administration to keep pace with this netwar (Hebert 2002).

Difficulties in Dealing with Netwar Attacks

The US response to the September 11 attacks was thus hampered by FAA and NORAD failures; however, a number of features of netwar also make netwar attacks extremely hard to defend against using ‘conventional’ military techniques. As Burke argues, the threat from Al Qaeda and related movements is “complex, diverse, dynamic and protean and profoundly difficult to characterise” (Burke 2003, 7). This complex, networked threat was able to find ways around the more hierarchical US security infrastructure.

An initial advantage of the netwar techniques employed by Al Qaeda was that they ensured that there was minimal fixed organisational infrastructure to be disrupted – instead using a more flexible and robust network. While Al Qaeda was able to strike at the ‘centre’ of the US, its own network lacked the type of centre that could be easily targeted or disrupted (Delpech 2004, 48). The individual nodes in this network were comparatively expendable from the perspective of the network as a whole. As Dombroski et al explain (apropos of a military network), “[t]he loss of a network node need not be crippling: in a robust network its functions can and will be assumed by other nodes” (Dombrowski, Gholz et al. 2003, 6). For example, the September 11 attacks were able to proceed despite Moussaoui’s imprisonment.

As shown above, communication bottlenecks between different aspects of the US state caused serious problems with their attempts to deal with the hijackers. In contrast, it is almost certain that the Al Qaeda leadership did not keep in touch with the hijackers during the hijacking. However, the networked nature of the organisation meant this was not necessary and the hijackers could instead work effectively without guidance from any central commander. Members of such a network can “be ‘all of one mind’ even if they are dispersed and devoted to different tasks” (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 10).

Decentralised, self-organising networks can continue to function even after a number of nodes and communications pathways have been destroyed, and when a number of communications pathways are out of use (De Landa 1991, 117-120). For example, even though Bin Laden has been forced to move and to go into hiding on a number of occasions, a number of well-trained operatives died in the course of the September 11 attacks, and much or most of Al Qaeda’s infrastructure in Afghanistan has been destroyed, the Al Qaeda network has been able to continue to function.

The relatively centralised nature of the US system meant that – when the Bush administration made what were, at best, retrospectively regrettable decisions – these decisions limited the ability of the wider system to deal with the terrorist threat (Clarke 2004, 38; Ridgeway 2005a, 62). In particular, the Bush administration’s decision to view the August 6 2001 memo which outlined Osama Bin Laden’s plans to attack the US as merely “historical”, and to ask the NSC to focus on alleged Iraqi terrorism rather than Al Qaeda, were unhelpful (BBC 2001; Clarke 2004, 231; Kean, Hamilton et al., 17, 260; Ridgeway 2005a, 119). The FAA failure to respond effectively to the aforementioned warnings of heightened risk also caused serious problems with US civil air defence (Ridgeway 2005a, 34).

In contrast, the decentralised nature of Al Qaeda’s network can be seen in the way that Sheikh Mohammed worked with Al Qaeda rather along the lines of an “entrepreneur” (Kean, Hamilton et al., 17, 145). Sheikh Mohammed’s role in planning the events of September 11 was such that the 9/11 Commission describe him as “the principal architect of the 9/11 attacks”, but his links to Al Qaeda were relatively loose and flexible (Kean, Hamilton et al., 17, 145).

Working with the Al Qaeda network, Sheikh Mohammed “applied his imagination, technical aptitude, and managerial skills to hatching and planning an extraordinary array of terrorist schemes” (Kean, Hamilton et al., 17, 145). Rather than following a presidential model, Sheikh Mohammed “presents himself as an entrepreneur seeking venture capital and people” (Kean, Hamilton et al., 17, 154).

This had the ‘benefits’ of allowing Al Qaeda’s network to innovate comparatively quickly (it developed the idea of planes-as-weapons and took this seriously before the US security infrastructure did) (Kean, Hamilton et al., 17, 154). It also allowed Al Qaeda to absorb and, bluntly, ignore some of Sheikh Mohammed’s less practicable ideas. Al Qaeda quickly moved beyond Sheikh Mohammed’s much grander and less feasible plan to hijack ten planes, and for him to land the tenth plane himself and give a speech (Kean, Hamilton et al., 17, 154). Al Qaeda was thus much more effective than the US at absorbing ‘bad’ (impractical) ideas from its senior members.

The September 11 attacks are thus an example of some of the advantages of netwar, as outlined earlier in the chapter. Moreover, the inefficiency of the US infrastructure – in communicating information about the attacks and in responding to the attacks – offers a compelling example of the ways in which bottlenecks can effect relatively centralised systems (De Landa 1991, 17-20 and 108). As shown above, there were serious bottlenecks in communications between the FAA, the Bush administration and NORAD.⁵⁹ These severely hampered the US response to these attacks.

Al Qaeda demonstrated how networks can outperform more hierarchical structures. Members were ‘all of one mind’, working within a common framework, and could therefore work fairly independently. The types of bottlenecks that the US infrastructure suffered were largely not an issue for Al Qaeda. Because its communications could travel through a range of channels and did not need to pass through a central point (for example, as noted above, Bin Laden only learned some details of the planned attacks after tickets had been

⁵⁹ A particularly striking example of such a bottleneck is that, when Air Traffic Control saw United 175 exhibiting signs of a hijacking, this information traveled unnecessarily slowly up the hierarchy. This was because regional managers could not be disturbed while they were discussing the hijacking of American 11 (Ridgeway 2005a, 46).

bought) there was not the same risk of bottlenecks being caused by problems with communications to the 'centre' (Aust and Schnibben 2002, xii).

This raises the question of whether the September 11 attacks were made possible by US failings, or by Al Qaeda's efficacy. Firstly, as shown in this chapter, there were significant US failings. Terrorists have, for some time, sought to take advantage of the opportunities presented by such gaps in security. For example, as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) put it after their failed attempt to kill the Conservative Cabinet in Brighton, "[t]oday we were unlucky, but remember we have only to be lucky once; you will have to be lucky always" (BBC).

As is also shown in this chapter (and as will be shown at greater length in Chapter 3) Al Qaeda and related networks have been able to operate particularly effectively. This has allowed them to do a very good job of taking advantage of the failures of their enemies: finding these failures quickly and then (as will be shown in Chapter 3) changing their tactics more quickly than these enemies can adapt.

To an extent, Al Qaeda has thus been able to make its own 'luck'. In their attacks on 'modern' bureaucratic states, netwar actors such as Al Qaeda are able to innovate – and find ways around state defences – particularly quickly. This poses a significant problem, because it is not clear how such states can respond to these 'enemy' innovations.

As the 9/11 Commission puts it, "[i]magination is not a gift usually associated with bureaucracies" (Kean, Hamilton et al. 2004d, 344). The Commission goes on to argue that "[i]t is therefore crucial to find a way of routinizing, even bureaucratizing, the exercise of imagination" (Kean, Hamilton et al. 2004d, 344). However, the Commission fails to specify how this 'crucial' bureaucratisation of imagination might take place. Even if this did prove possible, the speed at which networks can react to the tactics of their enemies (as will be shown at more length in Chapter 3) will allow the development of new imaginations – not yet, or not so easily, bureaucratized.

The speed of these networks also allows them to create their own luck in other ways. If an hierarchical opponent of a netwar actor is unlucky once, they may not 'just' be punished by a single terrible attack. Instead (as has become something of a hallmark for Al Qaeda) the network can execute multiple, often

near-simultaneous, attacks. Damage can thus also be multiplied through creating an apparent imperative for states to impose harmful restrictions on trade, movement etc. in the aftermath of attacks. False warnings or rumours of attack can then be used to cause additional disruption. On the other hand, if the network makes mistakes and/or is unlucky (as appeared to have happened with at least one planned September 11 hijacking) it is robust enough to suffer the loss of a node or two.

A few men with box cutters were thus able to – not ‘just’ inflict a single attack on the US – but hijack four planes, hit three targets, and then bring much of the US economy (movement across borders, flights etc.) to a halt. The damage done by the US being unlucky once was thus multiplied considerably.

Moreover, as argued above and in Chapter 3, networks such as Al Qaeda create particular difficulties for states that try to deal with them and/or accommodate them. Such networks are able to (ab)use the connectedness of globalisation in order to spread across the world, spread through the gaps that states leave open, and overlay state discourses.

This chapter has looked, following Urry, at the fluidity of the networks that fought the Soviets and the government in Afghanistan. It is worth quoting Urry at more length here: he argues that

global fluids travel along various routes but may escape...Such fluids act on local information, but where local actions are – through countless iterations – captured, moved, represented, marketed and generalized, often impacting chaotically upon hugely distant places and peoples (Urry 2002, 65).

As shown above, Al Qaeda operatives were able to act on local information, independent of any rigid central control. For example, surveillance of the security measures at particular airports and on particular flights allowed these operatives to flow through certain gaps in aviation security. Clearly, though, the actions of this handful of men with knives spread to have a very broad impact.

The events of September 11 thus showed the terrible speed and efficacy with which a network can attack a more hierarchical opponent (Arquilla and

Ronfeldt 1996, 11). As Der Derian puts it, “networks – from television primetime to internet realtime – delivered events with an alacrity and celerity that left not only viewers but decision-makers racing to keep up” (Der Derian 2001a). Unfortunately, Al Qaeda’s network was able to deliver events with devastating speed, with a pace and unpredictability that decision-makers could not keep up with and could not effectively counter.

Conclusions

With its analysis of events in Afghanistan, the chapter has shown that the US has assisted the development of netwar techniques. However, by analysing Al Qaeda’s netwar I have also shown that the US is not (or, at least, is no longer) a world leader in such techniques. The US has been unable to effectively defend itself from Al Qaeda’s netwar: the events of September 11 2001 were the most prominent consequence of this problem.

I have thus shown that certain ways of fighting developed during the anti-Soviet insurgency in Afghanistan, and that these techniques (along with some of those who previously fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan) were turned against US interests in a number of violent acts. Alongside this account of the ‘practical’ effects of netwar, I have begun to deal with the ‘theoretical’ issues that accompany it: I emphasise the importance of networked structures, and the significant role that representational issues play in maintaining such structures.

De Landa argues that states will be forced to intensify the networking and decentralising of their war machines in order to deal with the type of contingencies analysed above (De Landa 1991, 178). Such moves will bring unpredictable and (for some actors) undesirable consequences: Chapter 3 will look at the extent to which this is taking place in Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom: I will argue that the cracks which became apparent in certain netwar failures were a necessary corollary of the use of cyberwar techniques to obtain a number of military ‘successes’. Chapter 4 will continue the analysis of how these war machines are working, but focus more on the opportunities for political action that open up with these new cracks and fissures.

Chapter 3 – Cyberwar ‘Successes’ and Netwar Failures in Afghanistan and Iraq

Introduction

The chapter will begin by analysing the ‘major combat operations’ phases of Operation Enduring Freedom (in Afghanistan) and Operation Iraqi Freedom. I will demonstrate that these operations show how the US military has developed the ability to dominate cyberwar conflicts. However, I will then consider the attempts of US-led and international forces to respond to netwar techniques – focusing on the insurgencies that followed Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. I will demonstrate that, notwithstanding the US military’s dominance in cyberwar conflicts, it is much less successful at fighting netwar opponents. While the US has been able to achieve ‘success’ in its cyberwar operations, this has therefore been followed by failure in the netwar conflicts that resulted from these ‘successes’.

Expanding on Chapter 2’s account of the role of representational and normative factors in conflict, I will show that the US is engaging in a normative struggle with its netwar opponents.⁶⁰ I will argue that, unless there are significant changes to the ways in which the US conducts interventions, any future cyberwar ‘successes’ that the US achieves are once again likely to be followed by netwar failures. Conflict today has thus reached a point where – despite the impressive cyberwar capacity of the US – netwar opponents could prevent the US from achieving any major long-term cyberwar successes for the foreseeable future.

I will also use this chapter to emphasise the importance of ethical issues in conflict today. I will demonstrate that – due to the way that opponents of the US are now utilising netwar techniques – representational issues play a major role in conflict. An ethical engagement with others is needed if there is to be any significant chance of cyberwar ‘successes’ that do not generate netwar responses

⁶⁰ On the US side of this representational conflict, one could argue that Neoliberalism plays a particularly important role (Smith 2006a, 3-5). While I would broadly follow such arguments, space limitations prevent me from engaging with the complexities of (neo)liberalism here.

which will lead to failure in the longer term. There are, then, both pragmatic and ethical reasons why finding better ways of engaging with others is now necessary.

Cyberwar and Netwar

The terms ‘cyberwar’ and ‘netwar’ have been discussed in the Introduction; however, it will be useful to recap their definition(s) here, before moving to discuss more substantive issues of how they played out in Iraq and Afghanistan. Arquilla and Ronfeldt use the terms ‘cyberwar’ and ‘netwar’ to

offer a distinction between what we call ‘netwar’ – societal-level ideational conflicts waged in part through internetted modes of communication – and ‘cyberwar’ at the military level...While both netwar and cyberwar revolve around information and communications matters, at a deeper level they are forms of war about ‘knowledge’ – about who knows what, when, where, and why (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1997a, 27).

‘Cyberwar’ refers to the higher intensity military conflicts associated with ‘major combat operations’, whereas netwar is more often a lower intensity societal conflict (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 4; Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1997b, 7). Netwar will tend to involve more non-state actors than cyberwar (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 3).

As argued in the Introduction, cyberwar involves relatively high intensity and high-tech conflict (for example, the violence of the 1991 Gulf War, as analysed in Chapter 1). However, cyberwar is clearly not isolated from its broader societal effects – and cyberwar campaigns can influence the political situation in such a way that netwar conflicts become considerably more likely.

The Introduction notes that the ‘Battle for Seattle’ (an event which was not a direct response to military conflict) is one example of how the societal aspects of netwar can function. However, netwar can also be a more direct corollary of cyberwar conflict. In this chapter, I will therefore argue that the ongoing netwar failures in Afghanistan and Iraq are corollaries of the cyberwar ‘successes’ of Operation Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. I will thus demonstrate

that the use of cyberwar techniques can provoke and enable the move to various other kinds of conflict. We are currently seeing examples of this in the netwars that are generally referred to as Afghan and Iraqi insurgencies, and the sectarian violence that is currently taking place in Iraq.

The Idea of a 'War on Terror'

After the events of September 11, the interpretation of and response to these events was undetermined. Even if one assumes that a 'proportionate' response to such attacks was appropriate, it was not clear at the time whether these events should be viewed as a military or criminal matter. However, from the time that he was informed about the attacks Bush did respond by viewing them as requiring a military response.⁶¹ This allowed – and was incorporated into – the move to cyberwar and netwar.

Analysing the idea of a war on terror is not new to this thesis: this has been discussed at length by other authors. For example, regarding the 'war on terror', the chapter draws substantially on Shaw's work on "the *idea* of war against terrorism" (Shaw 2005, 24. Emphasis in original).

One should also note that ideational factors have played a relatively similar role in previous conflicts. For example, Michael Gold-Biss offers a compelling account of Cold War discourses on terror, which also constitute something like a representational framework in an earlier (cold) 'war on terror' (Gold-Biss 1994). Richard Jackson finds links between today's 'war on terror' and the discourses of the Reagan administration (Jackson 2006). However, while this idea of a war on terror is not new, it plays a sufficiently important role in today's 'war and terror' – and the development and deployment of cyberwar and netwar techniques therein – that it is worth discussing here.

Bush's first remarks on hearing about the September 11 attacks were reportedly to order that his wife and children should be protected; shortly following that, though, he insisted that "[s]omebody is going to pay" (Woodward 2003, 16-17). On the afternoon of September 11, Bush told the then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld that "we will clean up the mess and then the ball will

⁶¹ It should be noted that this is not necessarily a novel response to such attacks: the US has previously tended to reply to perceived threats and/or aggressions with a military response. Chapter 1 looks at this type of US response to an earlier perceived Iraqi threat to their interests, while Chapter 2 discusses US military responses to pre-2001 Al Qaeda terrorism.

be in your court” (Woodward 2003, 19). Once the ‘domestic’ emergency was resolved, Bush thus planned to mount a military response to the attacks: he intended to let the Department of Defense handle the response, rather than – for example – the State Department taking the lead.

Even after it had been decided that the events of September 11 called for a military response, the attacks themselves did not determine who should be targeted – or how they should be targeted – in response. One of Baudrillard’s statements on the attacks is therefore particularly interesting:

Global power was humiliated on September 11 because the terrorists inflicted something the global system cannot give back. Military reprisals were only means of physical response. But, on September 11, global power was symbolically defeated. War is a response to an aggression, but not to a symbolic challenge (Baudrillard 2003).

Baudrillard’s argument that “[w]ar is a response to an aggression, but not to a symbolic challenge” – and that the ‘war on terror’ therefore cannot be an effective response to the events of September 11 – is problematic (Baudrillard 2003). The way that the attacks targeted the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon (with United 93 probably targeting another symbolic building in Washington) indicate that the attacks did indeed have a symbolic dimension. However, the attacks were also an act of aggression. The events of September 11 included, for example, not ‘just’ the spectacular images of the planes hitting the towers but also the real trauma of the bodies damaged and destroyed by this aggression.

Žižek’s reading of these events will be useful here. For Žižek, what we saw with the September 11 attacks was “not that reality entered our image: the image entered and shattered our reality” (Žižek 2002b, 16). What we saw on September 11 2001 was not so much symbolic violence taking the place of aggression but a merging of, or blurring of boundaries between, the two. Aggression – bringing down the two towers, and hitting the Pentagon – was blended with symbolic challenge, with the spectacular nature of the attack (in Lacanian terms, the attacks had both a symbolic and a real dimension).

War cannot offer a complete response to this combination. However, it is precisely this blending of aggression and symbolic challenge that allows the US to 'justify' a military response to what is (as noted above) a broad range of challenges. These military responses can 'successfully' be sent: as will be argued below, Lacan's work shows us that such messages – letters, in Lacan and Poe's terms – will always reach their destination (Derrida 1987; Lacan 1972; Poe 1845). However, in reaching their destination these 'letters' will fail to offer a complete response to the challenges that the US faces.

Lacan uses The Purloined Letter as a starting point for a discussion of how we relate to and communicate with others: a discussion of how our intersubjective reality is constructed. It will be helpful to analyse this aspect of Lacan's work here: it is applicable to some US-led responses to the events of September 11.

For Lacan "the sender, we tell you, receives from the receiver his own message in reverse form. Thus...what the 'purloined letter'...means is that a letter always arrives at its destination" (Lacan 1972). Žižek extends and clarifies this, by applying his emphasis on negativity and failure to Lacan's account of the purloined letter (Žižek 2006b). For Žižek, the letter may go missing, get lost or never be sent at all: however, what is certain is that the letter and the discourse will, in a sense, fail (Žižek 2006b).

What Žižek makes explicit in his reading of Lacan is thus: a) the certainty that the letter will reach its destination and b) the certainty that this communication will fail. While the purloined letter will reach its destination, it is only possible for us to be sure of this because of a failure of communication that prevents the letter from doing what one might expect a letter to do when it arrives. As shown in Chapter 1, our discursive reality – the Lacanian symbolic – is always incomplete and always, in a sense, fails. Instead of being a 'complete' piece of communication with an other, this Lacanian letter thus fails to achieve such communication and instead gives back our own message in its reversed form.

Despite my criticisms, I would therefore largely follow Baudrillard's argument that "the terrorists inflicted something the global system cannot give back" (Baudrillard 2003). At least, the terrorists inflicted something that the global system will fail to give back completely: instead of the US 'letter'

reaching 'the terrorists', this 'communication' failed and the US got back their own message in different forms.

On September 11 2001 it was not at all clear what 'the system' could or should give back, or to whom it should be given. Moreover, this response could not be complete. The idea of a war on terrorism therefore needed to be constructed before there could be such a 'war'.

It should be emphasised that the failure of the US to offer a 'complete' response to the events of September 11 is not, in itself, a bad thing. Following Lacan, I would argue that our symbolic reality will always fail to attain completion and it is this very lack and failure that allows politics to keep moving. Anything which came close to a 'complete' response to the events of September 11 would have been horrific: for example, using nuclear weapons to rid the Earth of all or nearly all human life might have been a move towards a 'complete' retaliation against those implicated in the attacks. Unsurprisingly, I would not advocate this type of 'complete' response.

However, the way in which the US response to the events of September 11 was incomplete has had some interesting and disturbing consequences. The 'war on drugs' will be a useful analogy here: the 'war on drugs' has been strikingly ineffective – even counterproductive – if assessed in terms of its role in preventing the production of and trade in drugs.⁶² However, it is *because* of the manifest failures of the 'war on drugs' to curtail the production of and trade in illegal drugs that this 'war' has been able to serve as a framework to justify a wide range of political actions. Had the 'drug problem' been quickly and effectively dealt with, the 'war on drugs' could not have been used to achieve as much as it has (for example, could not have influenced US foreign policy for such a prolonged period).

Likewise, if the 'war on terror' had been able to do a better job of dealing with some of the factors involved in the September 11 2001 attacks then this 'war' would not have been able to serve as a framework to justify as much as it has done. For example, it is not inconceivable that 9/11 could have been followed by the capture or killing of most senior Al Qaeda leadership while the

⁶² For example, despite or because of US efforts in the 'war on drugs' the price of heroin in the US has fallen significantly since 1981 while purity has increased (The White House 2004, 19 and 22).

US supported Afghanistan in a transition to a better government: the declaration of, and failure to 'win', a broader 'war on terror' was certainly not inevitable. However, the numerous failures of the 'war on terror' – as discussed below – mean that this 'war' is likely to continue (in some form) for a long time.

Drawing on Lacan's thought, one can read this as an example of how the lack – the failure of our political reality to attain completion – works to keep things moving. It is precisely because the 'war on terror' has failed, and is still failing, that it will be able to serve as a framework through which a whole range of actions can be justified – for years or decades to come. While there are of course numerous losers as a result of these failures, many will also profit greatly from the prolongation of this 'war'.

As noted above, I would very much counsel against seeking the 'completion' of US foreign policy. However, I would also emphasise that the incompleteness of the US responses to the events of September 11 shows that they could have responded otherwise: they could have acted in such a way that their actions would, at least, have failed better.

As many have noted, the idea of a war on an abstract concept like 'terror' is rather odd in itself (Al Jazeera 2003; Castelli 2005; Lakoff and Verini; Wheeler and Glenberg 2002). 'Terror' is not the type of thing that can be targeted in the same way as, for example, a city.⁶³ Perhaps echoing and/or drawing on the discourse of the 'war on drugs', 'terror' needed to be constructed as something that one could build a war around.⁶⁴ However, 'drugs' at least have a fairly tangible existence (although 'drug' is a "term of varied usage" and 'drugs' are not a 'conventional' military opponent) (World Health Organization 1994; Tree 2005).

'Terror', however, is even more elusive. The 'terror' being fought here needed to be discursively constructed as something that could be attacked before there could be a war against it. The 'war on terror' was thus a 'war' on a symbolic construct.

⁶³ The comedian Jon Stewart has both emphasised and mocked this problem particularly effectively: he jokes that "[w]e declared war on terror. We declared war on terror – it's not even a noun, so, good luck. After we defeat it, I'm sure we'll take on that bastard ennui" (Stewart 2004).

⁶⁴ The National Security Strategy of the US explicitly links terrorism and drugs, as do US anti-drug campaigns (The White House 2001c, 10; Levant).

Having such an indeterminate target has ensured that ideational factors were central to the ‘war on terror’ from the start: a considerable amount of effort had to be put into incorporating certain potential targets in this ‘terror’ and excluding others. This flexibility and uncertainty around what ‘terror’ is and how one might fight it allows the ‘war on terror’ to move in a number of different directions.

After the events of September 11, it was unclear whether the (first) ‘actual’ enemy would be Iraq or Afghanistan (and there may have been other alternatives) (Clarke 2004, xviii; Ridgeway 2005a, 155 and 173). ‘Terror’ was constructed as the target of the ‘war on terror’, and this allowed a range of other targets to be attacked under the same rubric. It may still be possible for further ‘regime change’ to be carried out under the rubric of the ‘war on terror’.

Shaw therefore argues that “Global War was not so much a war as a *political and ideological framework* that would legitimate any specific war upon which US political leaders wished to embark” (Shaw 2005, 24. Emphasis in original). Shaw may have been slightly too pessimistic here, as there have been powerful attempts to challenge the inclusion of Afghanistan and – in particular – Iraq in the ‘war on terror’ (Bennis, Leaver et al. 2005, 7; Falk 2003a; Kellner 2003b, 2). However, Shaw does argue convincingly that this ‘war’ was used as an ideological framework that legitimated a wide range of actions.

We therefore face this odd ‘war’ against the symbolic construct of ‘terror’: a ‘war’ that is attacking something which cannot be defeated in war and that is failing to address significant aspects of the attacks to which it is claimed to be a response. This ‘war’ became even stranger when, as will be shown below, there was a relatively arbitrary move to incorporate Operation Iraqi Freedom into the framework of the ‘war on terror’ – despite Iraq not having any significant involvement in the events of September 11, or links to international terrorism.

Drawing on the above account of Lacan’s work on the purloined letter, I will make two arguments regarding the military response to the events of 9/11. Firstly, by treating the events of September 11 as a military matter, the Bush administration was able to offer a response to the events: it was able to give something back. Secondly, it will also be argued that this returned gift failed to match or reciprocate what Al Qaeda gave the US: this response was therefore incomplete and, in a sense, failed.

As noted in the above, Lacan argues that “the sender...receives from the receiver his own message in reverse form...a letter always arrives at its destination” (Lacan 1972). Žižek applies his emphasis on negativity and failure to Lacan’s account of the purloined letter (Žižek 2006b). Žižek acknowledges that the letter may go missing, get lost, never be sent at all: what is certain is that the letter and the discourse will – in a sense – fail (Žižek 2006b).

Žižek moves from this position to argue that wherever the letter ends its journey is retrospectively constructed as its destination (Žižek 2006b). Likewise, the gift returned to Al Qaeda through the ‘war on terror’ was retrospectively constructed as having arrived at its destination. For example, the violence in Afghanistan (from which, as will be shown below, most senior Al Qaeda members escaped) was constructed as a response to an Al Qaeda attack. Even more tenuously, so was the invasion of Iraq.

These discursive constructs will fail: as shown in Chapter 1, our discursive reality will always (fail to) contain a real lack. Although the ‘war on terror’ might be constructed as an appropriate way of returning Al Qaeda’s ‘gift’, it cannot adequately contain what Chapter 4 will analyse as real trauma that exceeds discourse. The ‘gift’ therefore both reaches its destination – ‘we’ receive back the message in reversed form – but, in reaching its destination, fails to completely reach it. The ‘war on terror’ has thus failed to offer a complete response to the events of September 11, but is nonetheless constructed as a response to these events – as a letter that both reaches and fails to altogether reach its destination. I will therefore emphasise that the cyberwar ‘successes’ discussed below could not be completed.

Cyberwar ‘Successes’

Representational Frameworks and the ‘War on Terror’

Chapter 2 demonstrated that constructing an appropriate representational framework played an important role in the netwar of the anti-Soviet insurgents in Afghanistan, and in Al Qaeda’s struggle. It will be shown below that a significant aspect of the netwar that followed the end of ‘major operations’ in Iraq and Afghanistan was also a clash of networks, and of their respective representational frameworks. Doctrine is used by these netwar actors both in

order to allow networks to function and hold together, and as part of offensives against their opponents (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 47 and 51).

In the US-led aspects of the 'war on terror', normative issues were also important from the start and, as will be shown below, had significant practical implications in what will be read as a virtuous war. One can first note, though, that Bush has made the role of such norms in the 'war on terror' very explicit (Bush 2006a). For Bush, in the 'war on terror' "the enemy...they're not a nation state...we're dealing with ideologues. They have an ideology" (Bush 2006a). In opposition to this enemy ideology, Bush asserts that

freedom is universal. I believe liberty is a universal thought. It's not an American thought, it is a universal thought...you ought to take great comfort and joy in helping others realize the benefits of liberty...One of the greatest gifts of ...Almighty God is the desire for people to be free, is freedom. And therefore...this country and the world ought to say, how can we help you remain free? (Bush 2006a).

A particular representational framework (for Bush, often cast in religious terms) is in play here, and is an important part of Bush's politics (Guterman 2001; Rhodes 2004, 132). Blair's justification of UK foreign policy was more explicitly tied to globalisation, and less religious: he justified a more 'activist' foreign policy in terms of helping the politics of globalisation to mature through engaging in "a battle of values and progress" (Blair 2006). However, this representational framework appears to be very compatible with Bush's more explicitly religious position.

As argued in Chapter 2 it has been – and increasingly will be – necessary for organisations involved in conflict to move towards networked structures, if they wish to survive and to achieve their aims. Representational frameworks such as the 'war on terror' are a necessary part of these networks: as shown in Chapter 2, they are a prerequisite for these networks to work effectively. Those fighting the 'war on terror' have been aware of the importance of such representational issues (although, as will be shown below, they have not been altogether successful in their attempts to engage with them).

One can first note that, in developing post-September 11 Joint Operating Concepts (JOC), the US military has been very aware of the importance of normative and representational factors when engaging in ‘new’ wars. For example they argue that, with regards to ‘stability operations’, it is important to “act from a position of legitimacy” (Joint Vision 2004a, iv). It follows from this that a position of legitimacy must first be constructed or, as the JOC document puts it, “[a]ttainment of political objectives requires the application of all elements of government action in a coherent campaign supported by a sophisticated information operations campaign” (Joint Vision 2004a, 2).

In the UK, Blair also emphasised the role of normative and representational factors in UK foreign policy. He argued that Britain today is “justifying our actions, even if not always successfully, at least as much by reference to values as interests” (Blair 2006). Defending these values will be an important part of ‘our’ foreign policy in the future (Blair 2006). The ‘war on terror’ is thus very much part of a value struggle.

The use of cyberwar techniques – which the Introduction and Chapter 1 discuss in terms of techniques and technologies of control – thus depends not ‘just’ on technological progress. It is also necessary to construct and draw on particular representational frameworks in order to (try to) control how events proceed and to hold together networks and coalitions. Internetted communications are used, not just in combat, but also to construct and maintain the representational framework of the ‘war on terror’.

As Mulligan argues, questions of legitimacy were important around Operation Iraqi Freedom – both in terms of whether military action was legitimate without an additional UN Security Council resolution, and also how (il)legitimate Saddam’s regime was (Mulligan 2005, 350-351).⁶⁵ This was not just a ‘theoretical’ concern: the ‘practical’ side of Operation Iraqi Freedom was made more difficult by its perceived lack of legitimacy.

For example, the US had more problems securing Forward Operating Locations for its forces in this operation than it did in Operation Enduring Freedom (which was more easily seen as a justifiable response to the events of

⁶⁵ Philippe Sands offers a compelling account of the (il)legal status of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and how this impacted on the political debates around this Operation (Sands 2006, chapter 8 and 12).

September 11) (Lynch, Drew et al. 2005, 51-52). Some states promised the US this type of support in Operation Iraqi Freedom but did not deliver it, while others did provide this support but wanted to ensure that it was not made public (Lynch, Drew et al. 2005, 51-52).

The Turkish parliament's rejection of their government's proposal to give the US a Forward Operating Location on Turkish territory had a particularly significant effect upon operations (BBC News 2003; Lynch, Drew et al. 2005, 52). The US "[n]ot being able to attack from the north changed the battlespace and forced the Air Force to use tankers and conduct longer missions, creating additional support burdens" (Kampfner 2003, 279-280; Lynch, Drew et al. 2005, 52).

For obvious reasons, when states offer support to the US on condition that this is not made public it is rather difficult to go into detail as to what this support is and has been. However, one example that has come to public attention is the network of 'black sites' to which the CIA transfers prisoners for interrogation and – it seems likely – torture as part of the 'war on terror' (Amnesty International 2006; United Nations Committee Against Torture 2006, 3-6; Hirsh, Hosenball et al. 2005). Moreover, after September 11 the US established a number of military bases – or base-like facilities – while relying on agreements that bind the US and host governments not to discuss these facilities in public (Arkin 2002; Magdoff, Foster et al. 2002).

Operation Enduring Freedom – Major Combat Operations

These representational frameworks and normative positions are clearly not 'just' abstract constructs: they have very real effects. Operation Enduring Freedom was one of the early military deployments of the representational framework of a 'war on terror'.

After the events of September 11, the US sought to end Bin Laden and Al Qaeda's sanctuary in Afghanistan. Unlike other aspects of the 'war on terror', Afghanistan and the Taliban regime were connected to the events of September 11. There were links between the Taliban and Al Qaeda, and an initial focus on Afghanistan was determined when Bush named Bin Laden as prime suspect for organising the attacks (Clarke 2004, 31; Hiro 2002, 312).

When the events of September 11 were viewed as something requiring a military response, Afghanistan was thus one of the more obvious targets. However, this did not mean that war with Afghanistan was in any sense inevitable: as shown above, the events of September 11 did not need to be viewed as calling for a military response. Had Bin Laden, Al Qaeda and Afghanistan been dealt with differently, different outcomes may have been attained.

Even in attempts to target 'Afghanistan', there were already questions as to what was being targeted. While the Taliban was the most powerful of the factions in Afghanistan, it certainly was not in control of all the country's territory. As discussed in Chapters 2, the Taliban lacked Weber's monopoly of legitimate force within Afghan territory: this 'government' would have been very unlikely to have been able to meet the demands made of them, even had they been entirely willing to do so (Weber 1994b, 310-311).

On the contrary, the Taliban was engaged in violent conflict (and, at times, negotiations) with the Northern Alliance and other factions, and these other factions controlled significant parts of Afghan territory (U.S. Embassy (Islamabad) 1998c; Coll 2004, 569). Moreover, many of those who fought 'on the side' of the Taliban were not entirely under its control. For example, Hekmatyar sometimes fought on the Taliban side and against the Northern Alliance, and Bin Laden's organisation also helped the Taliban to achieve some of their goals (Hiro 2002, 263). However, this does not mean that the Taliban always controlled these sometime allies: for example, Hekmatyar sometimes fought on the Northern Alliance side (Hiro 2002, 263).

Not only was Afghanistan not a 'conventional' state to target, but it should also be noted that there were a number of other potential targets that the US chose to engage with using very different means: the US decision to view both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia as allies rather than enemies would be a significant example here (Clarke 2004, 280-282; Hiro 2002, 314-318). Although Afghanistan may have been constructed as the destination for the military 'letter' that the US was sending, it was also the case that, in reaching its destination, this 'letter' failed to exhaust the possible means and destinations of delivery.

Partly because of links between the Taliban and Al Qaeda, as well as international sympathy following the events of September 11, the US was

relatively successful in representing Operation Iraqi Freedom as a response to the events of September 11. The US was able to build a broad base of support – with the UN and NATO largely onside, and with widespread international backing (including the support of Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia) (Hiro 2002, 328-335).

The legal justification for the action in Afghanistan was under Article 51 of the UN Charter, which acknowledges the right of individual or collective self-defence (United Nations 1945, 13). The US justified its action based on links between its Al Qaeda attackers and the Taliban, and the contestable claim that Operation Enduring Freedom could be classed as self-defence (as opposed to, for example, retaliation) (Negroponte 2001).⁶⁶ The UK participation in this action was justified as part of the right of states to collective self-defence, and as a response to the threat that Al Qaeda pose to the UK (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 10; Blair 2001). This Operation was thus constructed as virtuous through a justification under international law (although not through an explicit UN Security Council Resolution) and through a coalition of supporters giving the impression of multilateral action.

Only the US and UK were directly militarily involved in the start of Operation Enduring Freedom: despite the broad international support for the Operation, it was therefore very much US-led and the offensive initially included only two major participating states (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 26-27; Hiro 2002, 337). The other NATO countries, however, provided general assistance – especially in terms of enhanced information-sharing and allowing the necessary flight clearances (making Article 5 of the Washington Treaty operational) (NATO 1949; International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 29; United States Central Command 2003). Later in the Operation, Australia and Canada provided significant military support while numerous other states also offered their help (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 31; United States Central Command 2003; DND/CF 2006; Kopp 2006; Tripp, Lynch et al. 2004, 27).

⁶⁶ On 12 September 2001, the UN Security Council issued Resolution 1368. This resolution “[c]alls on all States to work together urgently to bring to justice the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of these terrorist attacks and stresses that those responsible for aiding, supporting or harbouring the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of these acts will be held accountable” (United Nations Security Council 2001. *Emphasis modified*; Hiro 2002, 307). However, the US government did not even mention this resolution in its official justifications for Operation Enduring Freedom (Hiro 2002, 307; Negroponte 2001).

After the Taliban were repeatedly asked to take action against Al Qaeda, but did not do so, Operation Enduring Freedom began with air strikes (involving US and UK planes) on 7 October 2001 (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 9; Bush 2001a; Conetta 2002b; Hiro 2002, 337-338).⁶⁷ Between 7 October and 28 October there were about 1,000 air missions involving the dropping of over 3,000 bombs (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 17). The first phase of the bombing targeted Taliban air defences, airfields and command and control structures (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 17; Conetta 2002b; Hiro 2002, 345-346). Targets also included what were thought to be terrorist training camps around Jalalabad, near the border with Pakistan (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 18).

A second phase of attacks targeted Taliban armour and concentrations of Taliban and Al Qaeda troops; these attacks were aimed at assisting Northern Alliance forces (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 17; Conetta 2002b). Air-based psychological operations included the dropping of leaflets; radio broadcasts were also used (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 17).

One heavily criticised aspect of Operation Enduring Freedom was the relative reluctance to commit US ground troops: Wesley Clark, for example, argues that this damaged the campaign against terrorism and was done in order to hold troops back for use in a planned war in Iraq (Clark 2003, 137-138; Clarke 2004, 241).⁶⁸ Instead of using large numbers of US ground troops, support was given to Northern Alliance fighters, as well as other Afghan anti-Taliban factions, in order to enable them to overthrow the Taliban regime (Rogers 2004, 3). This assistance included air support and a substantial process of (re)arming the Northern Alliance (Rogers 2004, 27; Tripp, Lynch et al. 2004, 13). This may well have been partially motivated by the desire to keep back sufficient troops to allow a US-led invasion of Iraq. However, it can also be seen in part as an

⁶⁷ As shown in Chapter 2, the US had been pressuring the Taliban to take action against Bin Laden since the 1990s.

⁶⁸ Writing on the NATO intervention in Kosovo, Clark outlines some of the problems caused by not getting the commitment of ground troops that the military would have wanted (Clark 2001, Chapter 11). He also warns against relying too heavily on air power, and the assumption that air power can allow the US to know everything that is present and happening within the battlespace (Clark 2001, 436-437). For Clarke, it is likely that, on "future battlefields...we will need to place people on the ground to observe and listen. They may have to come close, even face-to-face, with those we oppose" (Clark 2001, 437).

attempt to respond in kind to the netwar tactics which were and are used by Al Qaeda and by Islamist fighters in Afghanistan (Clarke 2004, xiv-xiv).

This can be read as an attempt to fight the kind of 'new' war which organisations such as the Project for a New American Century – alongside many in and linked to the Pentagon – advocate (Donnelly, Kagan et al. 2001, iv; Frum and Perle 2003, 11; Gonzales, Johnson et al. 2005, 15-17; Kitfield 2004, 3-4).

As will be shown below, in the case of Iraq this limited use of ground troops proved to be an important and problematic aspect of Rumsfeld's version of NCW.

In Afghanistan, instead of fully committing its own – comparatively centralised – military structure to fighting networked opponents, the US helped a loose network of Northern Alliance and other fighters (including anti-Taliban elements from the South of Afghanistan) to fight their common enemies (Youngs 2001, 15). The groups of fighters that removed the Taliban might therefore, like Al Qaeda, be better conceived of as a function than a thing: a network that was used to fight a network.

Taliban forces are thought to have incorporated 35-50,000 soldiers, including 2-3,000 foreign troops directly controlled by Bin Laden (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 33; Rogers 2004, 47). On 8 October the Taliban decided to resist Operation Enduring Freedom (CBS 2001; International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 33).

In response to the air assault, the Taliban dispersed their troops and weapons more widely (a tactic also used by Serbian troops in Kosovo) (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 33-34; Hiro 2002, 346). By moving closer to the Northern Alliance frontlines the Taliban also made it harder to target their troops and increased the risk of Coalition planes hitting Northern Alliance positions by mistake (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 33-34; Hiro 2002, 346). Dispersing their troops like this, however, also had the effect of leaving the Taliban less able to defend against Northern Alliance offensives (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 33). Taliban attempts to evade attacks from the air were therefore hampered by the presence of substantial numbers of anti-Taliban ground troops.

About 100 US officers were sent to liaise with Northern Alliance troops, in order to reduce the odds of 'friendly fire' incidents and (in part at Pakistan's

urging) to discourage them from making an early move to capture Kabul (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 34). This became all-the-more necessary when the bombing was intensified in October/November, in order to target frontline Taliban forces and assist with a Northern Alliance offensive against the Taliban (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001, 11; Hiro 2002, 350). In early November the “modest” number of US troops in Afghanistan were reinforced, so about 2.5 times as many were there as was previously the case (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001, 12; PBS 2001a).

However, the Air Force still took on a considerable amount of responsibility for the US-led action in Afghanistan (Tripp, Lynch et al. 2004, xxii). They often took on larger roles than initially planned, because their mobility meant they were frequently able to reach targets and conflicts well before ground troops (and could also be used to move ground troops and other assets) (Tripp, Lynch et al. 2004, 13). Speed plays an important part in the control of cyberwar.

In Afghanistan, the US-led Coalition assumed that they had air superiority from the start: they almost immediately deployed the AC-130 plane – which flies relatively low and slowly and is therefore vulnerable to attack – to provide close air support (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 18). What did remain of the Taliban air defences was apparently not seen as a significant threat, and was destroyed at the start of the bombing (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 17; Hiro 2002, 345-346).

A significant number of Cruise missiles were used, especially at the start of the conflict: 83 of the missiles were fired in the first week, but their use then became more intermittent (for example, 5 of the missiles were fired in the second week of conflict, and those were all fired on a single day) (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 19-20; Hiro 2002, 353). Special Forces played an important part in the land war, attacking what were seen as key targets in Afghanistan (with the SAS participating in a similar role) and assisting in communications and targeting (Finlan 2003, 96-100; Oliver 2001; Stufflebeem and Holman 2001).

Overall, relatively few Coalition ground troops were initially involved in the ‘major operations’ – what Gen. Richard Myers referred to as a “very modest”

number, to be measured in “hundreds not thousands” (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001, 12 and 17-18; PBS 2001a). Moreover, the numbers of personnel and aircraft used meant that:

By some measures, [Operation Enduring Freedom] could be considered a small combat operation, given the number of aircraft and personnel deployed, the number of beddown locations employed, and the number of sorties flown, all of which are small compared with other recent Air Force operations (Tripp, Lynch et al. 2004, xviii).

As in the 1991 Gulf War, this conflict was asymmetrical. Echoing events in the Gulf War (as analysed in Chapter 1) the US used cyberwar technologies and techniques to fight a type of war in which their opponents could not engage. A ‘modest’ number of US troops were placed on the ground – where they were potentially vulnerable to attack – while the US predominantly engaged their opponents from the air. Planes and precision weapons were able to freely use and control the airspace – what Taliban air defences there were had been destroyed by bombing at the start of the conflict – and strike Taliban forces from positions of relative safety (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001a, 17-18; Hiro 2002, 345-346).

As in the 1991 Gulf War, this asymmetry lead to some peculiarities. Although the initial bombing targeted the Taliban’s command and control infrastructure this was, as Kellner notes, not “command or control in this sense is usually used by the contemporary military” (PBS 2001a; Clarke 2004, 31; Kellner 2003b, 91). Expensive, high-tech weapons were used to destroy (relatively effectively, but at great cost) quite rudimentary infrastructure (PBS 1995e; Hiro 2002, 353). There was a distinct lack of targets worth (in financial terms) anywhere near the more than \$1m cost of each Cruise missile fired at Afghanistan (PBS 1995e; Hiro 2002, 353).⁶⁹

From the beginning, Rumsfeld was clear that, in Afghanistan

⁶⁹ Even in the 1991 Gulf War the US took out a number of targets which would have cost substantially less than the weapons used to do this; the damage already done by decades of conflict in Afghanistan meant this was significantly more pronounced in the war there (Lemann 2001).

there are not a lot of high-value targets. I've pointed out that the Taliban and the al-Qaida do not have armies, navies and air forces...I've therefore characterized this conflict, this campaign, this so-called war, as being notably different from others (Rumsfeld 2001).⁷⁰

As the war progressed the Coalition was forced to seek out what Rumsfeld called "targets of opportunity" as they emerged (PBS 2001a). The hunt for targets had reached the stage where the Coalition needed to wait until new targets emerged in Afghanistan before they could find something to attack from the air. In October 2001 this situation lead Rumsfeld to make the (in)famous statement that "we're not running out of targets. Afghanistan is" (PBS 2001a).

Surveillance technology (with satellites and UAV playing a major role) was important, in order to any find these scarce targets as soon as they emerged (PBS 2001a; Office of Force Transformation, 18; Tripp, Lynch et al. 2004, 80).⁷¹ The fast processing of information and the use of precision weapons and planes allowed a rapid response: designating newly emerged targets as such, and then hitting them, extremely quickly (PBS 2001a; Tripp, Lynch et al. 2004, 4, 80 and 91). Responses were also accelerated because the Predator UAV was used to fire Hellfire air-to-ground missiles (except for Cruise missiles, "this was the first time in warfare that an unmanned aircraft had dropped bombs in combat") (O'Hanlon 2002; Tirpak 2002). 'State of the art' cyberwar technology and techniques were thus used in order to find targets effectively in a state that lacked much of the infrastructure and equipment that one would 'conventionally' target.

Networks – faster than possible before, and faster than in the 1991 Gulf War – were established between UAV, command centres, satellites and manned aircraft (Conetta 2002a; Conetta 2002b; O'Hanlon 2002). On occasion these networks were still relatively slow – especially when political guidance was needed regarding particular targets (O'Hanlon 2002). However, despite this issue, these enhanced capabilities still meant that the time between detecting and

⁷⁰ Clarke reports that, on September 12, "Rumsfeld complained that there were no decent targets for bombing in Afghanistan and that we should consider bombing Iraq, which, he said, had better targets. At first I thought Rumsfeld was joking. But he was serious" (Clarke 2004, 31).

⁷¹ Satellite surveillance – as well as the software for processing satellite images – had improved since the 1991 Gulf War (O'Hanlon 2002; Tirpak 2002).

destroying a target was reduced to less than 20 minutes (Conetta 2002a; O'Hanlon 2002).

A cyberwar approach was therefore used – in a sense, needed – to deal with an 'unconventional' enemy: to deal with the lack of targets in Afghanistan. The level of control associated with cyberwar was thus used in order to be able to respond, not to a 'strong' enemy, but to an enemy that had a relative lack of things to attack.

The US-led air war in Afghanistan was effective at changing the situation on the ground. Ten days of heavy bombing of frontline Taliban positions allowed the Northern Alliance to take Mazar-e-Sharif on 9 November; the Taliban began a disorderly retreat (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001, 130; Conetta 2002b). Between the 12-3 November the Taliban evacuated Kabul; despite giving assurances that they would not enter Kabul, the Northern Alliance did so on 13 November 2001 (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001, 130; Conetta 2002b; 2001). The lack of US ground troops may have been a factor here: relying largely on airpower, they lacked any means of blocking the Northern Alliance advance (short of bombing their allies).

The Northern Alliance were able to push East to take Jalalabad on 14 November (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001, 130). After a heavy bombardment, on 25 November the Northern Alliance pressured the Taliban and associated fighters in Kunduz into surrendering (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001, 130). After Northern Alliance advances and the fall of Kabul, most Taliban forces and their allies retreated to Kandahar and surrounding areas (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001, 15). Southern anti-Taliban factions put pressure on them, as did the establishment of a US Marines base nearby and the heavy bombing of the city; the bombing killed up to 10,000 Taliban fighters (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001, 15). Negotiations between the Taliban and Afghan fighters around the city on 6 December 2001 lead to the surrender of Taliban fighters there on 7 December (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001, 15-16).

One interesting thing about the initial tactics of the Taliban and those fighting with them is that they began by attempting to defend cities and fortified (and therefore rather static) positions (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001, 15). Because they were "caught in static defensive positions [the Taliban

fighters] could be bombarded from a safe distance by US air power” (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001, 15; Tripp, Lynch et al. 2004, 80-82). They were, to a devastating extent (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001, 15). Therefore, while direct assaults can be a response to – and a way to cause problems for – cyberwar attacks, the ‘enemy’ forces which survived this operation largely did so through escaping detection and attack from the air (Burke 2003, 3; Falk 2003a, 103-105; Norton-Taylor 2006).

After the Taliban had lost control of the cities, conflict continued between some Northern Alliance factions and a number of Taliban fighters who had escaped/retreated and remained militarily active (International Affairs and Defence Section 2001, 17; Rogers 2004, 30). It was through being able to “melt away...that Taliban units still had a capacity to engage in guerrilla warfare” and could therefore ensure that the conflict in Afghanistan was (and is) far from over (Rogers 2004, 30). This tactic was sufficiently successful that Rogers’ 2004 statement that conflict in Afghanistan is ‘far from over’ still – as will be shown in the section on netwar below – holds true today.

Many fighters – including Mullah Omar and probably including Bin Laden – retreated to the network of caves at Tora Bora (Burke 2001b; Kampfner 2003, 147-148). The US engaged in an intense bombing of this area; however, Pakistan was entrusted with sealing parts of the surrounding area and both Bin Laden and Omar were able to escape (Burke 2001b; Kampfner 2003, 148). The operations around Tora Bora thus failed to kill or capture any of Al Qaeda’s senior leadership; it appears that the overwhelming majority of Al Qaeda fighters trapped in the Tora Bora compound successfully escaped, with estimates suggesting that about 200 were killed while over 1,500 escaped (Kampfner 2003, 148; Rogers 2004, 46).

Even when the latest cyberwar technology is available, it is thus possible for inadequate interoperability of this technology with the humans on the ground to prevent it from achieving its goals. Despite US air dominance, surveillance, and precision weapons, Pakistani troops allowed most of the fighters in Tora Bora to escape and there were relatively few prisoners captured at the end of the operation. Burke summarises the situation rather bluntly, describing the prisoners as “mainly Afghans too poor or stupid to attempt escape” (Burke 2003, 3). The efficacy of cutting-edge military technology was – because of

inadequate interoperability with ground troops allied to the US – thus largely limited to capturing the poor and the stupid.

After the assault on Tora Bora, the Pentagon complained of “chasing shadows”: as will be argued below, the Taliban and Al Qaeda had returned to fighting netwar, to fighting what Chapter 2 refers to (after Coll) as ghost wars (Coll 2004; Kampfner 2003, 148-149). In Afghanistan, surviving fighters linked to Al Qaeda and the Taliban learned from their losses in the US-led Coalition’s air attacks – splitting up into smaller, inconspicuous groups in order to continue their operations (Clark 2003, 139-140).

While estimates vary as to the number of Taliban fighters killed, a significant proportion of the approximately 50,000 troops fighting for the Taliban remain unaccounted for (Conetta 2002a). This suggests that, as Rogers argues, while some have been killed a number of them “melted back into local communities, with their arms and munitions largely intact” (Conetta 2002a; Rogers 2004, 47).

Moreover, as the campaign in Afghanistan progressed Al Qaeda learnt to disguise their positions sufficiently effectively for them to be almost invisible from any safe distance or using any remote surveillance technology (Biddle 2002, 29). For example, by moving in small parties and dressing like local farmers Al Qaeda fighters were and are able to escape identification by any current (or likely near-future) remote surveillance technology (Biddle 2002, 29-31). Al Qaeda has been able to remain active in Afghanistan and across the world, even after the overthrow of the Taliban regime (Whittaker 2001, 44).

Operation Enduring Freedom ‘succeeded’ in a number of ways. The use of Coalition air power allowed the Taliban to be removed from power using relatively few Coalition ground troops and with minimal Coalition casualties (Collins 2006, 11).⁷² Much of the Taliban infrastructure was destroyed at quite startling speed: “[t]he initial Taliban threat to US aircraft – its integrated air defenses, fighters, and command-and-control systems – was eliminated...within the first 15 minutes or so” (Tirpak 2002).

The operation also allowed elections to be held in Afghanistan, and an elected government to come to (at least nominal) power. These elections were

⁷² In Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001, there were under 20 Coalition military casualties (CNN.com 2006; iCasualties.org 2006).

viewed as largely fair in Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan (FETA) and Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) reports, despite a number of problems with organisation and execution (Walsh 2005).

Despite delays to parliamentary elections, Afghanistan's elected parliament was able to begin meeting in December 2005 (The Telegraph 2005b; Walsh 2005). However, as will be shown below, the broader outcomes of the Operation remain uncertain. While the US was able to quickly remove the Taliban from Afghanistan, it has failed to deal effectively with the netwar that followed this. It will also be shown below that the elected government of Afghanistan is not a functioning 'conventional' government, and is not likely to become one in the foreseeable future.

This US involvement in the networks and netwar in Afghanistan was rather more direct than their actions against the Soviets. Without fearing the type of retaliation that could have resulted had they directly attacked Soviet and Afghan Communist troops, the US did take direct military action against Taliban fighters. Once again, however, the unpredictability that results from working with networks should be noted. As with the earlier US intervention in Afghanistan, undesirable outcomes have come – and are very likely to come – from US attempts to use netwar actors for their own ends.

Arquilla and Ronfeldt predict that "those who want to defend against netwar will, increasingly, have to adopt weapons, strategies, and organizational design like those of their adversaries" (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 82). As will be shown in the below section on netwar, this is what many of the surviving members of the Taliban and Al Qaeda did. They changed from a *de facto* government of Afghanistan to a network of networks more reminiscent of the Northern Alliance (or the earlier anti-Communist insurgents in Afghanistan).⁷³

⁷³ Lt. Gen. Paul Van Riper (who played the Red side in Pentagon war games) states that, when playing Red, "I would take advantage of places where America's technology doesn't work: in the cellars of buildings or in caves, where some of this technology can't see or identify me. So I would focus on how to reduce my signature and take away the Americans' ability to surveil and have reconnaissance on my positions" (Riper 2004). Opponents of the US should be expected to adapt: for example, to find ways around US surveillance technologies (Riper 2004). This type of move to avoid US-led surveillance is what we have seen in rural Afghanistan, and in other areas (for example, urban warfare in Iraq) (Graham 2004b, 15).

However, it should be noted that insurgents have also continued to cause problems for occupying forces by using more intensive and 'direct' violence against international forces. Lt. Gen. David Richards argues that British troops in Afghanistan in 2006 were being caught up in the heaviest combat they faced since the Korean War, or even World War II (Norton-Taylor 2006). Richards notes that UK troops were struggling to deal with "days and days of intense fighting, being woken up by yet another attack, and they haven't slept for 24 hours" (Norton-Taylor 2006).

Operation Iraqi Freedom – Major Combat Operations

As with Afghanistan, the US had a long and chequered history of engagement with Iraq. General Clark argues that the war with Iraq actually began in January 1991; as shown in Chapter 1, Baudrillard's argument that the violence of the 1991 Gulf War had an indefinite, interminable quality is thus compelling (Baudrillard 2001a, 231; Clark 2003, 1; Knights 2005, xi). In the inter-war years there were regular US flyovers above the no-fly zones in Southern and Northern Iraq (Clark 2003, 6; Knights 2005, 130-131). The situation escalated when, on Dec 15 1998, the US responded to Iraqi defiance of the no fly zones and of attempts to disarm it with Operation Desert Fox (Black 1998; Sharrock 1998).

The Operation lead to days of air attack (extending beyond the 'official' 48hrs of Operation Desert Fox) targeting Iraqi headquarters and sites suspected of being used in storage and production of WMD (Black 1998; Clark 2003, 7; Sharrock 1998). Although part of a policy of 'containment' rather than outright war, these attacks are still thought to have caused thousands of military casualties and an unknown number of civilian casualties, while also damaging Iraq's military further (Black 1998; Knights 2005, 206; Sharrock 1998).

After Operation Desert Fox, Saddam tried to challenge the no-fly zones with flights that went in and out too quickly for the Coalition forces to intercept (Clark 2003, 7). In retaliation, US and British planes began attacking any radar or related infrastructure that might threaten them; this lead to a substantial number of sorties against Iraq and a considerable quantity of munitions being dropped (Guardian Unlimited 1999; Clark 2003, 7). This military action means that the events of Operation Iraqi Freedom could be viewed as one part an

ongoing war: a prolonged period of ‘softening up’ Iraq preceded the ‘major operations’ phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom (Baudrillard 2001a, 233; Clark 2003, 1; Knights 2005, xii).

There has been considerable debate about the validity and legality of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I will not be able to offer a ‘definitive’ account of this here, or to engage with all the issues that are raised. However, I will address these arguments relatively briefly below: it will be helpful to discuss some of the justifications for war (in particular, an understanding of these issues is important to my arguments about the voluntary and proactive nature of Operation Iraqi Freedom). Rather than trying to analyse what causes ‘really’ lay behind Operation Iraqi Freedom, I will look at some of the attempts to construct it as valid and some of the ways in which these attempts have failed.

An important (albeit contested) legal justification for Saddam’s removal from power in 2003 was his failure to comply with UN resolution 1284 by not allowing UN weapons inspectors adequate access to Iraq (United Nations Security Council 1999b, 3; Kampfner 2003, 155; Keegan 2004, 106; Sands 2006, chapter 8 and 12). Resolution 1441 gave Iraq “a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations”, and reiterated that “the Council has repeatedly warned Iraq that it will face serious consequences as a result of its continued violations of its obligations” (United Nations Security Council 2002, 5; Kampfner 2003, 219-220; Keegan 2004, 106-107).

An international split then emerged over whether to go to war with Iraq or continue to pursue a policy of containment, and also over what type of action was sanctioned by resolution 1441 (Blair and Bush 2003a; Blair and Chirac 2003; Kampfner 2003, Chapter 12; Keegan 2004, 107-108).

Iraq’s declaration of the weapons it possessed – issued in response to 1441 – left a significant quantity of banned weapons that it was known to have possessed in the past unaccounted for (evidence of their destruction was not provided); United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection (UNMOVIC) were sent in to try to document the situation (Blix 2003b; Blix 2004, 161-166; Keegan 2004, 111-112). On 19 December 2002 Bush declared Iraq in “material breach” of 1441; however, on 7 March 2003 Blix testified that he had not found any major ‘smoking gun’, and that Iraq’s disclosure – although not complete –

was better than had previously been the case (Blix 2004, 177-178; Keegan 2004, 114 and 118).⁷⁴

With Chirac promising to veto Security Council resolutions against Iraq (as they were then drafted) and the apparent impossibility of getting a majority of the Council to vote for war, it became clear that such a resolution would not be passed (Blair and Chirac 2003; Kampfner 2003, 286-287; Keegan 2004, 120). The US (along with its 'coalition of the willing') therefore went to war without explicit UN backing, and in the face of considerable international and public opposition (Kampfner 2003, 285-326; Shawcross 2003, 125-155).

As argued above, Operation Enduring Freedom can be read as a direct response to (or at least retaliation for) the events of September 11; this is not the case with Operation Iraqi Freedom (Clarke 2004, 208 and 247; Kampfner 2003, 163-164). While the justifications for and (il)legality of the invasion has been analysed at length elsewhere – and I would not claim to offer any 'definitive' account here – it will be useful to outline why Operation Iraqi Freedom was a proactive rather than reactive war.⁷⁵

There were claims of links between Iraq and Al Qaeda (CNN 2003; The Project for a New American Century 2005, 71-73; Bush 2004a; Frum and Perle 2003, 46; Kampfner 2003, 163-164). Nevertheless, claims that Iraq had significant links to Al Qaeda have proven extremely weak.⁷⁶ The Senate Committee on Intelligence found that Bin Laden was seeking to exploit Iraq (Roberts, Rockefeller et al. 2006, 105). However, "Saddam Hussein was distrustful of al-Qa'ida and viewed Islamic extremists as a threat to his regime, refusing all requests from al-Qa'ida to provide material or operational support" (Roberts, Rockefeller et al. 2006, 105).

While some point out that there have been past contacts between Iraq and Al Qaeda, this is a long way from showing that Iraq had any significant involvement in Al Qaeda's terrorism (The Project for a New American Century

⁷⁴ More recently, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence has found that pre-war intelligence did not support US claims that Iraq possessed – or was near to acquiring – various types of WMD (Roberts, Rockefeller et al. 2006, 52-56).

⁷⁵ For more detailed analyses of and arguments regarding the justification and legality of Operation Iraqi Freedom, see for example (Ali 2003a; Clarke 2004; Cohen 2007; Elshtain 2003; Gregory 2004; Pauly Jr. and Lansford 2005; Roberts, Rockefeller et al. 2006; Sands 2006).

⁷⁶ The State Department's 2000 *Patterns of Global Terrorist* report acknowledges that "the [Saddam] regime has not attempted an anti-Western terrorist attack since its failed plot to assassinate former President Bush in 1993 in Kuwait" (U.S. Department of State 2001, 31).

2005, 71-73). The international nature of Al Qaeda's network means that its members have had contact with a number of governments; this does not necessarily mean that these governments currently support its actions (Clarke 2004, 59; Coll 2004, 213). The Senate Committee on Intelligence has found that both pre- and post-war intelligence assessments show that "there was no credible information that Iraq was complicit in or had foreknowledge of the September 11 attacks or any other al-Qa'ida strike" (Roberts, Rockefeller et al. 2006, 110).

It is therefore the case that the US-led invasion of Iraq was a proactive move rather than a direct reaction to the events of September 11. As Clarke argues, "[i]t *did not have* to be this way. We *did not have* to go after Iraq after September 11" (Clarke 2004, 247. Emphasis added; Kampfner 2003, 163).⁷⁷ It should however be noted that this does not necessarily mean, in itself, that Operation Iraqi Freedom was the wrong thing to do. The more convincing arguments for intervention emphasised an ethical imperative to remove Saddam's brutal regime, rather than struggling to maintain the rather dubious belief that a threat from Iraq necessitated an urgent move to war (Blair 2003a; Blair 2003h; Blair and Bush 2003a; Cohen 2004b, 106-108).

As noted above, the lack of international support did cause difficulties for the US-led Coalition. However, the 'major operations' phase of the conflict was still remarkably short: at least, it took only 21 days to capture Baghdad and effect regime change (Cebrowski 2004; Kampfner 2003, 326-327; Keegan 2004, 1). On 1 May 2003 Bush declared that "[m]ajor combat operations in Iraq have ended" (Bush 2003a).

In the course of Operation Iraqi Freedom a large proportion of the Iraqi army appeared to have "faded away" (Keegan 2004, 2; Cockburn 2006b, 52). Although there was significant resistance, many of the soldiers in the Iraqi army abandoned their positions (Cockburn 2006b, 52; Keegan 2004, 5). While the Coalition troops did make rapid progress into Iraq, there were however not the mass surrenders of Iraqi troops that many expected: the majority of troops appear to have put on civilian clothes in order to 'fade into the background' (Clark 2003, 35).

⁷⁷ In some of his statements, Bush acknowledges that there are distinctly proactive elements to the US-led action against Iraq: for example, in his 2003 State of the Union address he argues that war against Iraq is needed, not because of an imminent threat, but in order to ensure that the world does "not allow an even greater threat to rise up in Iraq" (Bush 2003b).

The US had planned to have Iraqi troops defect to their side during the combat; however, because the Iraqi army ‘faded away’, these troops were not available (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 105).⁷⁸ In a sense, this fading away of the Iraqi army was thus echoed by what was almost a fading away of the US troops that were available for the operation. While Gen. Franks thought that invading Iraq would need 285,000 troops, Rumsfeld “was not looking to just trim numbers, but to change the paradigm” (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 28). Due to this ‘paradigm shift’ – the move to a particular version of NCW – Rumsfeld reduced the number of US troops available for Operation Iraqi Freedom: he analysed troop requests “with the ruthless efficiency of a businessman for whom excess inventory was to be avoided at all costs” (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 95). Revised plans involved an initial deployment of under 90,000 US troops, which military staff doubted would be sufficient for effecting regime change and then securing post-Saddam Iraq (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 99-102).⁷⁹

The war began with an air campaign, coinciding with the ground assault on 20 March 2003 (Clark 2003, 27-29; Keegan 2004, 142). ‘Precision’ weapons used in the air campaign made up 68% of the total, as opposed to under 10% in the 1991 Gulf War; this was also a significant increase on the percentage used in Operation Enduring Freedom (Keegan 2004, 142; Lynch, Drew et al. 2005, 95-96).

Air strikes began by targeting the Iraqi government (the very first strike targeted a location where it was thought that Saddam could be found) communications infrastructure and air defences, before moving to target ground forces; Special Forces were sent to deal with Iraq’s Scud launchers (Clark 2003, 1 and 11). The very direct way in which air power was used appears to have assumed, correctly, that Iraq no longer had an effectively functioning Air Force

⁷⁸ This hope to be able to rely on post-invasion Iraqi support was also reflected in the limited numbers of civilian Coalition staff sent to Iraq after the invasion: for example, Wasit Province “Governance Team was small...to impose the will of the Coalition on the population while transition was effected” (Etherington 2005, 7). After the invasion the Coalition Provisional Authority “was never properly staffed, and few Governorate Teams ever reached full strength” (Etherington 2005, 238).

⁷⁹ Shortly after regime change Gen. Franks concluded that more troops were needed immediately, in order to deal with the security situation (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 474).

(Pilger 2003).⁸⁰ Iraq did, however, respond to the strikes by firing at least three missiles at Kuwait (Clark 2003, 28).

This beginning to the intervention showed a distinct cyberwar sensibility: the use of virtual technologies in order to limit the ways that one's opponent can utilise information, and as part of the assault on one's opponent (Arquilla 2003).⁸¹ Without an air force, and with their telephone infrastructure damaged to the extent that they needed to use radio for communications, what the Iraqis could know about the battlespace and how they could communicate with one another was extremely limited (Clark 2003, 82). Radio communications are easily overheard, which let the Coalition "seize the initiative and force the Iraqis to expose themselves to piecemeal destruction" (Clark 2003, 82).

Despite this, attempts to target members of Saddam's regime were strikingly unsuccessful: "[n]ot one of the top 200 figures in the regime was killed by an air strike" (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 177). The US ability to target Saddam's regime with precision weapons was thus held back by the limitations of US human intelligence (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 177).

A range of additional cyberwar technologies and techniques (often centred around improved communications) were utilised. Bandwidth available to the US military had increased substantially since Operation Enduring Freedom, allowing data feeds to be passed from Global Hawk and Predator aircraft to the continental United States for real time processing (Lynch, Drew et al. 2005, xxx-xxxi).

The air supremacy of the US-led Coalition gave them real time intelligence on Iraqi movements, including real time video (although, as noted above, human intelligence was relatively lacking) (Clark 2003, 82; Gordon and Trainor 2006, 203). The increased bandwidth allowed more data to be transmitted and utilised (Lynch, Drew et al. 2005, 92). For example, a link between Predator drones and the continental United States allowed targets to be identified and then matched with weapons to destroy them within a few minutes:

⁸⁰ Pilger vividly illustrates this situation using the example of a "British helicopter pilot who came to blows with an American who had almost shot him down. 'Don't you know the Iraqis don't have a fucking air force?' he shouted" (Pilger 2003).

⁸¹ An interesting limitation of the use of such technologies in warfare was also revealed. Networks are often intensely interlinked, and the use of networks in warfare can therefore risk 'collateral damage' in unlikely places. In the case of Iraq, this meant that US plans to launch a cyber attack on its financial computers were abandoned because such an attack would also have impacted upon the financial systems in use in France (Smith 2003a).

significantly faster than was the case in Operation Enduring Freedom (Lynch, Drew et al. 2005, 92).

Air power was thus used to ensure that Iraqi ground forces “could not deploy to defend without being attacked and destroyed from the air” (Clark 2003, 62). Although air power itself could not let the US-led Coalition hold territory, it could thus serve to make it extremely hard for the Iraqis to hold territory (Clark 2003, 63).

Despite or because of this technology, human-machine interactions caused a number of problems for the US-led Coalition. For example, Marines under Brigadier General Rich Natonski’s command came under attack from USAF A-10s (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 249-251). While Marine vehicles would traditionally have used fluorescent panels on their tops to make clear that they were ‘friendly’, these had been replaced “with state of the art thermal pads that were supposedly more easily identifiable by friendly aircraft, especially at night” (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 250). The A-10s, however, lacked the equipment to detect these ‘state of the art’ thermal pads (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 250). The Marines also failed to give the correct location of the forces in battle and had therefore “called the air strike on themselves” (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 251).

In another incident where US thermal imaging caused problems, the US fired on Iraqi tanks which had been abandoned after the 1991 Gulf War – because they had absorbed the sun’s heat in the day and were therefore visible on thermal sights (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 199-200). In an additional example of the possibilities for mishaps, leaving a microphone turned on lead to confusion as to which US Apache helicopter had been shot down: disrupting US attempts to rescue downed pilots before they were found by the Iraqis (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 274-277). On this occasion, incorrectly input coordinates also meant that the US was looking in the wrong place for the pilots (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 277).

It is therefore the case that cyberwar technology currently leaves substantial room for error. Using the technology incorrectly – or expecting it to reveal things that it is not designed to ‘see’ – can prevent it from working as intended. Moreover, errors such as calling for air strikes on the wrong location can mean that – as well as functioning as a force multiplier – cyberwar works to

multiply the damage caused by any errors (echoing Der Derian and Virilio's accounts of the dangers of the "networked accident") (Der Derian 1998, vii)

Coalition troops moved into the areas of Iraq still under Saddam's rule (as opposed to the relatively autonomous Kurdish region) at about the same time as the air war started, in part due to reports that Saddam was destroying key oilfields and in response to his launching of missiles (Clark 2003, 28). In fact, the 'destruction' of Iraq's oilfields was later found to be an attempt to "obscure the battlefield" (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 167). Believing "that the U.S. attack would be temporary and would stop short of Baghdad", Saddam and others in government did not want to destroy Iraq's infrastructure; however, the US did not find out that this was the case until after they had invaded (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 167).

There were two main thrusts of troops in Iraq: a US push for Baghdad, and a British advance to Basra (Clark 2003, 32-33; Keegan 2004, 145). The most substantial 'conventional' resistance to US troops outside of Baghdad came when the Americans tried to take Nasiriyah. Anti-Coalition fighters had entered the city in order to make it a focus for resistance; what success they had came not from a direct assault on US troops but from keeping a distance, firing and then seeking cover again (Clark 2003, 41-42; Keegan 2004, 149-153). From 23-4 March 2003 US Marines sealed the city so that no more fighters could get in and, in a heavy assault, took it from Iraqi control (Keegan 2004, 152-153).

However, while the massed units of the Iraqi army may have appeared to fade away, this did not mean that the US-led Coalition did not face resistance. Instead, Iraqi troops turned to "guerrilla tactics; they were not marshalled in conventional formations. They were trying to ambush the U.S. convoys as they headed north. And they were not surrendering but fighting tenaciously" (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 208). Even during the period of 'major operations', the US was therefore facing Iraqis using paramilitary/guerrilla tactics (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 206-213).

Because of the British army's experience with the IRA, it was seen as particularly well suited to combating paramilitary attacks (Keegan 2004, 175). From 23-31 March 2003 the British held a siege around Basra; by 31 March British troops such as snipers had infiltrated Basra and were having a

psychological impact (Keegan 2004, 179). A number of Warrior raids on the city were followed by a full assault on 6 April (Keegan 2004, 180).

Organising into battle groups, the British troops attacked the resistance in Basra on 6-7 April 2003, and by 8 April “began to adopt a postwar mode” to maintain order in the city; British troops were given “orders to smile, chat and restore the appearance of normality” (Keegan 2004, 181-182). This resonates with the US Joint Operating Concepts: in such ‘stability operations’, the aim is to join areas of work such as security, humanitarian assistance and psychological operations “into a coherent whole” (Joint Vision 2004a, 15).

Such presentational issues had taken on considerable importance. Immediately after an intensive armed repression of resistance, troops were ordered to smile in the hope that this would also help to quell resistance. This is part of a process outlined by Stech whereby “[t]he human face of our policies becomes part of our arsenal” (Stech 1994). The British thus wanted to avoid starving Basra or doing heavy damage to the city (as much as was possible in the context of the invasion) (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 455).

The Coalition advance was sufficiently rapid that, when the American troops reached Baghdad on 5 April, the Iraqi fighters there were unprepared (Clark 2003, 55-56; Keegan 2004, 194). It is possible that blowback of official Iraqi propaganda, along with the US-led managing of information on/in the battle, had lead them not to expect the Americans to have progressed as far as they had (Clark 2003, 55-56; Keegan 2004, 194). The cyberwar techniques that limited how the Iraqis could use information thus also allowed Iraqi troops in Baghdad to be caught unprepared by an overt Coalition ground invasion.

Moreover, Iraqi troops sought to mount a defence to the South of Baghdad (instead of withdrawing into the city) (Clark 2003, 61-63). This meant that US air power could be used to destroy these forces while they were left out in the open: which it did, with considerable effectiveness (Clark 2003, 61-63). The firepower available to the US meant that, although they wasted munitions on a number of incorrect targets, they were still able to do significant damage to Iraqi troops which massed in the open (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 199-200, 251).

Baghdad’s defences had been weakened because Saddam would not bring the Republican Guard into the city until the last possible minute (fearing a coup) (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 390-391) Moreover, a significant proportion of the

Iraqi forces that were in Baghdad when US forces reached the city – four Republican guard divisions numbering up to 10,000 each – stayed in groups with no or inadequate camouflage and cover (Clark 2003, 40-41). The US was therefore able to bring its aerial weapons to bear on them before moving in ground troops, and when the US planes attacked from high altitudes with precision weapons the Iraqi troops “had no defense” (Clark 2003, 41). Where Iraqi forces were grouped together, the US was also able to use ‘dumb’ munitions to kill everyone within a given area (Clark 2003, 44).

Chapter 1 shows that – in the 1991 Gulf War – the Iraqi army’s attempts to fight a ‘conventional’ war did not let them engage with the virtual war of the US-led Coalition. In Operation Iraqi Freedom, those Iraqi troops who massed together in the hope of fighting a ‘conventional’ war also largely failed to engage with what will be shown below to have been the cyberwar of the US-led Coalition.

However, a number of Iraqi fighters did survive – by seeking more effective cover/hiding places and/or breaking up into smaller groups – in order to resist the Coalition’s advance into Baghdad (Clark 2003, 41). US troops therefore did come under heavy fire while driving into Baghdad, and faced the threat of being overrun at one point (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 403-406).

Cyberwar will thus still run into stumbling blocks (as in the case of the faulty MICLIC discussed in the Introduction). This increases the need for interoperability between the humans involved in conflict and the cyberwar technology used: humans need to supplement failures in the technology.

Even when the technology ‘worked’ (the MICLIC charges referred to above did eventually render the mines safe) it was problematic when it did not work in such a way as to function well for its human users. The technology of cyberwar can therefore, on occasion, lead to a *loss* of control.

While the US had successfully disrupted Iraqi communications and surveillance – and thus worked to control the battlespace and Iraqi knowledge of the battlespace – the advance into Baghdad also revealed some limitations of US surveillance and intelligence, when deployed in urban warfare. US troops initially entered Baghdad without solid intelligence on Iraqi defences, and there was thought to be “virtual certainty that [the US] would lose soldiers” (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 378-379). US human intelligence on Iraq was relatively

limited: they had significant previous contacts in and knowledge of Afghanistan, but this was not the case in Iraq (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 203). Cyberwar technologies were not an adequate substitute for human intelligence.

There was heavy fighting in Baghdad, especially for the centre, until April 9 – when Saddam’s statue fell in the centre and Iraqi government buildings were occupied by the Coalition (PBS 2003b; Keegan 2004, 194-203). Even at this point, however, anti-US fighters were beginning to adapt to the vulnerabilities of US-led forces: for example, when they found that tanks were relatively invulnerable to their attacks, they targeted other vehicles (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 425). The control of cyberwar was thus already being challenged by a more flexible netwar: a netwar that was able to exploit what Chapter 2 discusses as “cracks and fissures [that] open in the war machine” (De Landa 1991, 178).

The pulling down of Saddam’s statue (along with the capture of government buildings in Baghdad) was widely seen signalling the end of his regime. However, there was not the mass of jubilant Iraqis that some expected to gather to celebrate the ‘liberation’ of Iraq; instead “a U.S. Marine hooked up a cable from his armoured vehicle and, with [relatively few] Iraqis standing nearby, pulled down the large statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad” (Clark 2003, ix).

This move was, nonetheless, seen to symbolise the overthrow of Saddam’s regime; this was in accordance with Gen. Franks’ expectation that the taking of Baghdad would be the “tipping point” of the Operation (Clark 2003, ix; Keegan 2004, 238-239). Combat in Iraq continued at a lower intensity, until on 1 May 2003 Bush felt confident enough to declare that “[m]ajor combat operations in Iraq have ended” (Bush 2003a; Clark 2003, 82-83).⁸²

Even when US cyberwar allowed them only a limited ability to ‘steer’ events on the ground – with cracks and fissures opening up in the Operation – this was thus still sufficient to let them effect regime change extremely quickly, and with low casualties. However, the longer-term consequences of the type of war fought in Iraq were – as will be shown below – much more problematic.

⁸² In the North of Iraq, the fighting had proceeded somewhat differently – with fewer American troops working with Kurdish fighters and considerable air support in order to push back the Iraqis (Clark 2003, 76).

As noted above, the US committed significantly fewer troops to Operation Iraqi Freedom than many wanted; however, compared to the overthrow of the Taliban regime the invasion of Iraq did involve committing a relatively large Coalition army (Lynch, Drew et al. 2005, 12). Moreover, despite the aforementioned US hope of being able to use the Iraqi army to assist them, the US was not able to rely nearly so much on proxy forces in Iraq as was the case in Afghanistan (Lynch, Drew et al. 2005, 12).

As in the 1991 Gulf War, the 'major operations' phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom demonstrated the efficacy of cyberwar tactics against an opponent that tries to fight these assaults in a relatively conventional way. In the years since 1991, and even since (and with lessons learned from) Operation Enduring Freedom, these cyberwar technologies had developed further (see Lynch, Drew et al. 2005; Tripp, Lynch et al. 2004).⁸³ However, as noted above, Iraqi opponents of the US-led forces had begun to move towards paramilitary tactics during the 'major operations' phase of the conflict. There was therefore a blurring of the cyberwar of the 'major operations' into what will be interpreted below as the netwar of the insurgency, and the netwar failures of US-led forces.

From the beginning, cyberwar was thus challenged by a move to irregular tactics – what one might view as a move to (proto)netwar. Moreover, the aforementioned problems with the invasion also indicated that human/machine interaction, human error, a lack of human intelligence and mechanical failures can all disrupt the implementation of cyberwar – leading to a certain loss of control.

Both in the ways that they used information in battle, and in the technologies used, the Coalition fought Operation Iraqi Freedom as a cyberwar. In the attempts to justify war by representing it as a necessity (a response to the threat posed by Iraq's alleged WMD or terrorism) and a defence of Iraqi human rights we saw, once again, "the linking of virtuous intentions with new technologies of killing" (Der Derian 2001b, 48). However, certain losses of control during the 'major operations' phase of the conflict prefigured what will

⁸³ One significant development was the use of more accurate munitions than in 1991; this meant that less could be used and therefore less needed to be transported (Lynch, Drew et al. 2005, 95). This was especially important given the aforementioned US difficulties with securing Forward Operating Locations.

be analysed below as the more extensive netwar failures that followed this cyberwar.

Netwar Failures

Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom thus demonstrated the efficacy with which the US could use cyberwar techniques. They also achieved a kind of virtue: as shown above, particular norms were an important part of the 'war on terror' and its deployment as a representational framework.

There was, however, a rather perplexing side effect of this virtuous war. US-led Coalitions were engaged in a competition for legitimacy with 'terrorist' violence (Shaw 2005, 131). However, as Shaw notes with surprise, the 'terrorist' violence – which did directly target civilians and did not share the same type of virtue – seems to be winning or (at least) holding its own (Shaw 2005, 131). An analysis of US-led netwar failures in Iraq and Afghanistan will help to show how this has come to be the case.

The cyberwar dominance of the US is forcing opponents to look for alternative means to fight; netwar is an important technique that they can use. The concept of netwar is discussed in the Introduction and Chapter 2; however, it will be useful to reiterate some aspects of what this involves. As argued in Chapter 2, netwar

tends to defy and cut across standard spatial boundaries, jurisdictions, and distinctions between state and society, public and private, war and crime, civilian and military, police and military, and legal and illegal. A netwar actor is likely to operate in the cracks and gray areas of the society (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 13).

This section will show that, after the cyberwar 'successes' of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom, netwar tactics were used to impose certain failures on these military interventions.

With insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq working in the grey areas of the world to challenge the cyberwar 'successes' of the US it is thus the case that, as Baudrillard predicted, war has moved underground in order to survive (Baudrillard 1995, 63). War – incorporating a contest, and bringing serious risks

for both sides – is still able to take place (see Baudrillard 1995). Echoing Chapter 1, one might argue that the netwar conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq is now – for many of those involved – becoming the ‘hardest place’.

Methodological Issues: Studying Complex Insurgencies

It is thus important to study the Afghan and Iraqi insurgencies. However, in part because of how these insurgencies are constructed and functioning, there are limits to what I can know about them. It will be argued below that these insurgencies are moving and changing extremely quickly, and that a number of disparate groups are forming complex interconnections (many of them fairly loose, and hidden in the ‘grey areas’ of the world). Unsurprisingly, insurgent groups also keep many of their activities secret: a great deal happens that is not (and may never be) in the public domain.

Col. McMaster offers an interesting account of the difficulties that troops ‘on the ground’ in Iraq have in knowing about the insurgency: “[t]he enemy we're fighting here is...a hybrid enemy. And what we've found is that over time, this decentralized hybrid insurgency has sort of coalesced and there have been some alliances of convenience made” (PBS 2006).

I would largely follow this description: a range of insurgent groups and supporters are (sometimes) cooperating, in order to form a hybrid network of networks. However, what is also clear from McMaster’s statement – from his description of how the “insurgency has sort of coalesced and there have been some alliances...made” – is that he is struggling to describe or determine what he is dealing with (PBS 2006). Even a base ‘on the ground’ in Iraq is inadequate, when it comes to understanding the insurgency there.

One way of approaching this will be to draw on analyses of the insurgencies that are in the public domain. Some of these (for example, John Mackinlay and Zaki Chehab’s work) rely on their original research, while others (for example, the International Crisis Group’s report) offer secondary analyses of the available information (International Crisis Group 2006b; Chehab 2006; Mackinlay 2005).

This does not allow me to find any real ‘truth’ behind the insurgencies. However, for the reasons given in Chapter 1, I will not look any such truth. Instead, I will analyse the surface of things – focusing in particular on how an

apparently relatively coherent and cohesive insurgency is simulated through and used to overlay numerous disparate groups and movement (Mackinlay 2005, 25-26). This account of these insurgencies will therefore focus, not on what the 'real' insurgencies are like, but on how netwar is used to build and to simulate particular insurgencies – the aforementioned 'hybrid' groups that 'sort of coalesce'.

As argued in Chapter 1, such analyses can offer a better account of the complexity of our political reality than attempts to find what 'really' underlies this reality. Despite the impressive material and intellectual resources available to the US military, it will be shown below that their attempts to describe how Baathists and/or Al Qaeda forces are 'really' behind the insurgency have been strikingly unsuccessful. They are left without even the means to measure success or failure (Rumsfeld 2003). While there are fewer resources available to me, an alternative type of analysis may allow me to offer a different and more nuanced reading of the insurgencies and the political situations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

This chapter will begin by analysing the ongoing violence in Afghanistan, and will draw comparisons – and describe links – between the Afghan and Iraqi insurgencies. However, the main focus will be on the insurgency in Iraq. The Iraqi insurgency is (at its current level of intensity) more established than the Afghan insurgency, and it is therefore more feasible to analyse the past – and potential future – situations in Iraq.

The Ongoing Conflict in Afghanistan

As suggested above, an early failure of 21st Century US-led cyberwar can be seen in the fact that the conflict in Afghanistan is still ongoing. While the US and the Northern Alliance had a common enemy in the Taliban government they were able to hold their alliance together to a good extent (despite some significant lapses, such as the Northern Alliance's aforementioned rush to take Kabul). As with the fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan, a common enemy allowed diverse networks to fight a common netwar relatively successfully. However (once again, echoing the situation in Afghanistan following the removal of Soviet forces) after the removal of their common enemy this network of networks began to come apart.

After the overthrow of the Taliban, Operation Enduring Freedom left a number of the Northern Alliance military leaders (often called ‘local leaders’ if seen as a positive influence, ‘warlords’ if not) in charge of different areas of the country (Walsh 2004). International and government forces have not, as yet, been able to integrate these networks of local leaders into anything like a ‘functioning’ state.

Despite Afghanistan having an elected government, Operation Enduring Freedom has therefore, to-date, failed to establish a fully functioning state – at least in the Weberian sense – in Afghanistan (Weber 1994b, 310-311). While the Afghan government may claim a monopoly of legitimate physical violence it has not – as I will show below – succeeded in enforcing this monopoly.

The level of insecurity in Afghanistan is such that one can follow Rogers in viewing the Operation as having pushed Afghanistan into “a new phase in its interminable civil war” (Rashid 2003; Rogers 2004, 23). There is good reason to believe Rogers’ prediction that “an apparent US victory...may, in reality, be just a further stage in a longer-term civil war in Afghanistan” (Rogers 2004, 33). Ongoing conflict means that the Afghan government lacks a monopoly over the legitimate use of force: non-governmental actors claim the right to use force, and do so rather effectively.

Despite having been elected, the Karzai government’s options are distinctly limited by the lack of coercive power in their hands (Mukarji 2003, 31). The situation is worsened by the limited efficacy and range of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops supposed to be helping with ‘state building’ in Afghanistan, and the extensive military and governmental structures currently controlled by local leaders (Mukarji 2003, 31; Walsh 2004). This has led to the coercive power of central government being limited away from Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif and Meymaneh (where ISAF troops are concentrated) (Bentham 2005; Rogers 2004, 92 and 199).

Although the US used Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) to try to strengthen the Karzai government, the weakness of this government was such that they still had to work with local leaders in order to get their work done (United States Institute of Peace 2005c, 6; United States Institute of Peace 2005a, 3; United States Institute of Peace 2005b, 12). As will be shown below, attempts to extend the reach of central government have been relatively unsuccessful.

President Karzai openly acknowledges that, in some cases, he felt he had no choice but to appoint certain warlords to official positions in local government because “he needed the existing military and social structures of the provinces to remain undisturbed while the war against terrorism continued” (Mukarji 2003, 31). On occasion, Karzai was forced to appoint warlords to cabinet positions in the government order to avoid them provoking outright civil war (Clark 2003, 157).

For example, Karzai felt he had no choice but to appoint warlord Bacha Khan Governor of Paktia because “he needed the existing military and social structures of the provinces to remain undisturbed while the war against terrorism continued” (Mukarji 2003, 31). US-led attempts to track down Taliban and Al Qaeda members have, in some cases, served to worsen the situation: local warlords and militias were strengthened by being given military and financial aid in order to enlist them in the ‘war on terror’ (Kellner 2003b, 254-255; Sedra 2003b, 9).

More recently, UK forces have played a significant role in attempts to fight insurgents in Afghanistan. It is not clear how this conflict will unfold, or what its longer-term consequences will be; however, these actions appear to have been less successful than expected and also, in some cases, to have worsened the situation. Then UK Defence Secretary Des Browne acknowledged that deploying 3,300 British troops “into the Taliban heartland of southern Helmand” – with the aim of bringing more ‘stability’ and ‘development’ to the region – actually “energised” the Taliban in the region (Wintour and Walsh 2006).

The Taliban forces in Afghanistan currently lack a conventional army and lack a monopoly of legitimate force. A number of their tactics thus depend on local civilians supporting – or at least tolerating – their actions. Civilians have helped with some of their activities (for example, supplying intelligence and helping to organise ambushes) (Wattie 2006). As one US PRT commander in Afghanistan puts it, Afghans are therefore

the ones who are going to decide the winner. They’re going to make a decision whether here’s an insurgent guy coming to our village, do we chase him out or do we bring him in as our brother

and house him and feed him...Or will I tell the local police, etc.?
(United States Institute of Peace 2005a, 16).

The Taliban's survival thus depends on Afghans making certain political decisions, and not others. For example, this type of insurgency relies upon civilians at least not telling government and ISAF forces who and where the insurgents are (Synovitz 2005; Wattie 2006). It is thus the case that, as Mackinlay argues, if the local population

decide to support the coalition forces, the counter-strategy begins to take effect and gain momentum; the insurgents will become increasingly cut off from their sources of support, boxed in by poor intelligence and an unsympathetic environment. However, if the coalition fails to win the population, they are themselves in a hostile environment and without intelligence. Winning the support of the host population is therefore a key military objective in the operational space (Mackinlay 2005, 16).

The battle for legitimacy in Afghanistan is therefore important, and constitutes part of the "vital ground" of this struggle (Mackinlay 2005, 16).

Afghanistan, Drugs and Dis/connectness

As shown above, one aspect of US failure in the period after the end of 'major combat operations' in Operation Enduring Freedom was the failure to establish a 'functioning' government that could successfully maintain the impression of legitimacy. The limitations to the powers of the Afghan government – and difficulties in controlling the 'vital ground' of the political struggle in Afghanistan – are especially clear with regards to the opiate trade. After the Taliban were removed, opium cultivation was multiplied by about 9-14 times (Conetta 2002b; Mukarji 2003, 17-19).

While the Afghan government is under pressure to reduce the quantities of this illegal crop, its coercive power is (as noted above) limited and it has struggled just to set up a police force (Guardian Unlimited 2004). It is therefore not in a position to deal with an illegal industry which has grown to such an

extent that the opium industry's turnover totals an estimated 30-60% of Afghanistan's Gross Domestic Product (Guardian Unlimited 2004; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2004, 4; CIA 2006; Mukarji 2003, 53).

The opium trade clearly plays a significant part in the Afghan economy (Guardian Unlimited 2004; Mukarji 2003, 53). Acting to remove the livelihood of a large number of people, in a country in which jobs and 'legitimate' ways of raising money are scarce while arms are relatively easily available, would be likely to significantly intensify anti-ISAF and anti-government violence.⁸⁴ This was acknowledged by the contingent of British troops recently deployed to the more 'lawless' areas of Afghanistan (BBC News 2006c; Brownell 2006). Although these troops wished to enforce the Afghan government's decision to ban the opium trade, they did not plan to go in too hard for fear of generating an extremely violent response (BBC News 2006c; Brownell 2006).

While the structures of government in Afghanistan remain relatively weak, there is thus a powerful and expanding network of organised crime already in place: further undermining government attempts to install the 'rule of law', and sufficiently important for Afghanistan's economy that international forces are reluctant to target it (BBC News 2006c; Brownell 2006; Mukarji 2003, 53). The networks that the US supported to overthrow the Taliban have, therefore, not been unable to establish a fully functioning 'conventional' state in Afghanistan; in a number of cases, they are actively preventing this (United States Institute of Peace 2005a, 10; Conetta 2002b, 9; Sedra 2003b).

Once again, supporting networks of fighters in Afghanistan has gained the US unanticipated results (which remain unpredictable today) (Conetta 2002b). As with the insurgent networks that defeated the Soviets in Afghanistan (as discussed in Chapter 2) these fluids have been able to flow in a range of directions (see Urry 2002, 64). Even those actors who were not actively hostile to the new regime took ambiguous political positions. After the removal of a common enemy, some factions consolidated their local power, some tried to

⁸⁴ As noted in Chapter 2, large quantities of arms flowed into Afghanistan during the anti-Marxist insurgency there; most of this was never recovered (Lynch, Drew et al. 2005, 95). Moreover, after the events of 9/11 large quantities of arms went to Northern Alliance troops – with little accountability and almost no hope of getting them back (Amnesty 2001; Coll 2004, chapter 19). Afghanistan is also a hard place for many people to earn a 'legitimate' living: unemployment in the country has been estimated at c.40%, while in 2003 more than half of the population lived below the poverty line (CIA 2006).

work with and through the national government, while others profited through enterprises such as the drugs trade and extortion (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2006b; Clark 2003, 157; Mukarji 2003, 31; Walsh 2004). Despite the election of a central government, Afghanistan therefore remains a type of network state, as described in Chapter 2.

The US and UK governments generally see this situation as negative, as calling for ‘development’ and an engagement with the ‘reactionary’ elements that are supposedly trying to prevent Afghanistan from engaging with a globalised world (The White House 2002d; Blair 2006).⁸⁵ However, one could also read the current situation in precisely the opposite way.

It would be better to view Afghanistan as the ‘ideal’ networked state of globalisation: government (if you can call it that) is by necessity devolved and works with a light touch: for example, much agriculture and trade takes place without state interference (see SAPRIN 2002, 112; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2006b). The export of a cash crop plays a key part in the Afghanistan’s economy, and the businesses trading in this crop are very influential in the way that the country is governed.

The Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network (SAPRIN) advocates trade liberalisation as a means to “achievement of efficiency in the traded-goods sector...and encouragement of growth and diversification of non-traditional exports” (SAPRIN 2002, 29). The opium industry in Afghanistan has been extremely successful in achieving these goals, especially after the removal of the Taliban government and the resulting liberalisation of Afghanistan’s economy (United States Institute of Peace 2005c, 12; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2006b).

Moreover, Afghanistan’s networks of warlords and of the opium trade offer an example of how the “free markets and collective security schemes” that Barnett sees as key to globalisation can work effectively (achieving, for example, considerable growth in international trade) (Barnett 2004, 270). Large amounts of this cash crop can spread throughout the world largely without (effective)

⁸⁵ Part of the ‘development’ of Afghanistan is the building of a lengthy highway – linking Kabul, Kandahar and Herat (The White House 2002b; Bush and Karzai 2005). It is thus the case that the US is seeking to encourage certain types of connections to form; however, this is at the same time as struggling to shut down significant aspects of Afghanistan’s connectedness.

government regulation or interference, offering a compelling example of the power of 'free' trade.

In many ways, as a participant in the globalised world Afghanistan puts more 'conventional' states such as the US to shame. As the 9/11 Commission puts it – describing the US prior to the events of 9/11 – “[t]o us, Afghanistan seemed very far away. To members of al Qaeda, America seemed very close. In a sense, they were more globalized than we were” (Kean, Hamilton et al. 2004d, 340). ‘They’ – using the term in a broader sense, incorporating the citizens of the grey areas of the world – still are more globalised than the US.

Looking at the trade in drugs in more detail will be a useful way to illustrate how globalised ‘they’ have become. Chapter 2 considers De Goede’s work on the connections formed by *hawala* finance. For De Goede, “it can be argued that what hawala is vilified for (speed, trust, paperlessness, global reach, fluidity) are precisely the attributes that modern globalising investment banking aspires to” (De Goede 2003b). Like *hawala* finance, the global trade in illegal drugs – while often represented as ‘underground’ or as somehow opposed to ‘legitimate’ globalisation – has achieved a number of the attributes viewed as benefits of globalisation.

The drugs trade incorporates numerous connections that allow products and funds to be moved across the world – passing over national borders with relative ease – and there is no effective state regulation of production or sale. This trade often offers excellent examples of the “speed, trust, paperlessness, global reach [and] fluidity” of globalisation (De Goede 2003b).

The ‘legitimate’ drugs trade provides an interesting point of comparison here: it is quite disconnected compared to the trade in illegal drugs, compared to the connectivity that the grey areas of the world can achieve. Companies participating in the international trade in ‘legitimate’ drugs such as anti-retroviral treatments for HIV/AIDS often struggle to limit the connections that can be made, to check the movements of globalisation (Human Rights News 2001; Havlir and Hammer 2005). In doing so, they are supported by state and suprastate bodies.

Through international agreements such as the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) treaty signed under World Trade Organization (WTO) auspices, potential connections are closed off and there are

serious efforts to prevent new connections from forming (World Trade Organization 1994). TRIPs – through maintaining intellectual property ‘rights’ – seriously restricts the distribution of ‘legitimate’ drugs (Human Rights News 2001; Havlir and Hammer 2005).

In the ‘black market’ drug trade, in contrast, there are far fewer limits to the connections that form as these drugs are traded around the world. Drugs pass through both grey areas and more ‘conventional’ states. Connections readily cross state borders and are altogether unimpeded by concerns such as patents, quotas or tariffs.

As Richard Doyle has noted, this has allowed such drugs to not only spread across the world, but for new – ‘better’ – strains and formulations to be developed extremely rapidly and for new and creative techniques to be used to accelerate the flows of the drugs trade (Doyle 2004). All of these ideals of globalisation – free trade, innovation and speed – are thus part of the illegal drugs trade and can be seen in the development and growth of the Afghan opiate trade.

While ‘conventional’ states may try to rein in some of the processes of globalisation, it is thus the citizens of the grey areas of the world and the traders in ‘black markets’ who are already living in a more globalised world. ‘They’ – those living and working in the grey areas of the world – are thus able to use networked and netwar techniques to great effect, successfully forming and using a number of global and globalising connections. Globalisation is not – contra Barnett – a problem for such netwar actors; rather, the states that are fighting them are struggling to keep up with the pace of ‘their’ globalisation.

Chapter 4 will utilise Negri’s account of constituted/constituent power (Negri 1999). It is worth anticipating this by noting that these dense, productive networks in the grey areas of the world could be interpreted as a constituent power, underlying, driving and inseparable from the constituted power of the more ‘legitimate’ globalisation that Barnett advocates (Buckley, Hardt et al. 1999, vii; Negri 2003b, 126).

The Iraqi Insurgency

There are both similarities and links between the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan. For example, there are reports that “young paramilitaries from Afghanistan now travel to Iraq where they are able to spend several months in training camps” and then take what they have learned back to Afghanistan (Rogers 2005, 2). Moreover, there are reports of growing links between the drug trade in Afghanistan and Iraq (IRIN.org 2006). However, the insurgencies in Iraq have developed somewhat differently to those in Afghanistan.

As argued above, US-led forces were relatively ‘successful’ during the major combat operations in Iraq – defeating the Iraqi army at great speed. However, the Iraqi army’s tactic of ‘melting into the background’ proved very effective at making things harder for the Coalition.

US-led tactics immediately following the invasion gave a significant initial boost to the insurgency. The radical ‘de-baathification’ strategy favoured by the US had the unfortunate effect of removing tens of thousands of Iraqis (significantly more than initially expected) from their jobs (Clarke 2004, 271-272; Cockburn 2006b, 70; Struck 2005). This caused annoyance and hardship to many Iraqis, and stopped many Baath Party members from doing jobs that could have assisted with the reconstruction of Iraq (Clarke 2004, 271-272; Cockburn 2006b, 70; Struck 2005).

Moreover, Paul Bremer’s decision to demobilise the Iraqi army immediately on the implementation of regime change, without offering them alternative jobs, meant that hundreds of thousands former soldiers – armed, and with military training – were made unemployed (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 586-590; Hilton 2003; Keegan 2004, 210; Slevin 2003; Struck 2005). Many of them became involved in the post-war disorder in Iraq (Keegan 2004, 210; Struck 2005).

The US had (as noted above) assumed that they would be able to use sympathetic Iraqis to carry out peacekeeping duties after the invasion; the US-led Coalition therefore deployed relatively few troops and civilian staff (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 142). However, they were not actually able to use Iraqis in this way (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 142). Low troop numbers therefore contributed significantly to the post-invasion disorder, and meant that insurgents could score relatively easy initial ‘victories’ (Gordon and Trainor 2006, Chapter 24). For

example, al Sadr's supporters were able to force the withdrawal of Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) staff from Wasit with a relatively small "attack that would have merited no more than a single line in a World War Two company diary" (Etherington 2005, 195).

Moreover, the lack of international legitimacy for the Operation – caused in particular by the failure to pass a second UN resolution providing explicit support for war – impeded efforts to get foreign (especially European) governments to provide post-war support (Clark 2003, 92-93; Kampfner 2003, 330; Short 2003b, 203-211). Such debates also meant that the Coalition "rather lost control of the democratic concept in the months since the war, because the political controversy created by the invasion had encouraged unrealistic claims for the fruits of peace" (Etherington 2005, 78).

There is not convincing evidence that the Baathist central government directly implemented a 'master plan' for the insurgency (International Crisis Group 2006b, 5; Roberts, Rockefeller et al. 2006, 104-105). However, certain of the regime's actions did provide a boost to the insurgency. During 'major operations', Saddam's regime uses its forces in paramilitary attacks on US-led troops (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 206-207). There were efforts to allow non-Iraqis to enter Iraq in the run-up to war, to fight alongside the Fidayeen (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 366). Moreover, former Baath officials did play a part in the developing insurgency: joining and helping to set up cells, and drawing on the hierarchies of the old regime to provide some of the initial structure of the insurgency (International Crisis Group 2006b, 5; Shish 2004).

Nonetheless, post-war interviews indicate that the Saddam regime did not expect that US-led forces would occupy the country in the medium- or long-term, or that they would ever get as far as Baghdad (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 167). This was reflected in some Iraqi tactics, such as not sabotaging Iraq's oil wells to nearly as great an extent as they might have done had regime change and the subsequent occupation been anticipated (Gordon and Trainor 2006, 167). This indicates that it is unlikely that the Saddam regime played a significant role in planning the post-war insurgency, although many aspects of their strategies during 'major operations' (for example the use of paramilitary attacks during the invasion, or granting entry to foreign jihadi) were helpful during the early days of the insurgency.

The developing insurgency was keen to distance itself from the Saddam regime: “[f]rom the outset, the armed opposition’s discourse built on patriotic and religious themes at the expense of a largely discredited ideology” (International Crisis Group 2006b, 5). It was therefore the case that, even when (former?) Baathists were involved in the insurgency, in the course of doing so they moved beyond Saddam’s favoured variant of Baathist ideology in order to focus on broader – and more popular – issues. Most insurgent groups “either passively or actively recognize” that – if they are to successfully compete for popular support – “they cannot say they are fighting to restore the old order” (Hashim 2006, 89).

Those groups that did initially claim to act in the name of Baathism struggled to deal with Saddam’s controversial interpretation of Baathism, with the human rights abuses of his regime, and with the rapid defeat of the Iraqi army which took place under Saddam’s leadership (International Crisis Group 2006b, 6).⁸⁶ Therefore, as noted above, almost all groups acted to publicly distance themselves from Saddam – with a number of them very explicitly denouncing him (International Crisis Group 2006b, 6; al-Khairalla 2005; Hashim 2006, 89).

Certainly, Saddam was not in control of the insurgency. Given that the insurgents made Saddam’s legal team live with the very real threat of torture and violent death it looks likely that, if Saddam had been allowed to go free in Iraq, he would have risked harsh treatment from at least some sectors of the insurgency (Jaber 2005).

Networks of resistance sprung up and are springing up in order to challenge the cyberwar of the US-led Coalition. These networks are proving much harder for the Coalition to deal with than the attempts of the Iraqi army to engage in ‘conventional’ war (Metz 2003, 26-30; Rubin 2005). Insurgent networks have, as Clarke argues, served to make Bush’s claim that Iraq is a “central front” in the ‘war on terror’ retrospectively correct (Clarke 2004, xviii). The levels of anti-US violence taking place in and developing from Iraq dramatically increased following the invasion (Clark 2003, 97, 147 and 159; Clarke 2004, xviii; Zunes 2006).

⁸⁶ From the 1980s, Iraq’s government moved away from ‘traditional’ Ba’athist rhetoric – which centres around Arab unity and socialism – and towards a personality cult around Saddam (Farouk-Sluglett, Sluglett et al. 1984, 24).

A striking feature of Operation Iraqi Freedom was therefore that – both in terms of civilian and Coalition casualties – the ‘post-war’ period was much bloodier than the period of ‘major operations’ (BBC News 2004f; BBC News 2004e; CNN.com 2005a; Iraq Body Count 2005, 12; Burnham, Lafta et al. 2006; Frei 2004; Roberts, Lafta et al. 2004).⁸⁷ Changes in the ways in which war is fought can thus mean a move to interminable violence that takes place at a ‘lower’ level than war but which is nonetheless brutal; engaging effectively with this violence is therefore important (Joint Vision 2004a; Krepinevich 2004). This would at least partly explain why the US and UK militaries are showing an increased interest in preparation for this kind of low or lower intensity conflict (Defence Internet 2003; Joint Vision 2004a; Defence Internet 2005; Collins 2006; Krepinevich 2004; Wilcox 2003).

During the first phase of the Iraqi insurgency, the anti-occupation networks were perhaps at their most diverse and chaotic: a number of small groups appeared and then faded away, and group competed for exposure in order to assist with their recruitment strategies (International Crisis Group 2006b, 6-7). There was then a “convergence of individual groups responding to the same impulse” (Mackinlay 2005, 26). From mid-2004 to mid-2005 there was then a phase of consolidation: competition lead to groups merging and cooperating for greater efficacy, and Coalition actions such as the April 2004 violence in Fallujah helped the insurgency to gain additional support (International Crisis Group 2006b, 9; Chehab 2006, 8 and 15; Cobb, LaCour et al. 2005, 26; Cordesman 2006, 16; Hashim 2006, 35).

From mid-2005 until the time of writing, insurgency entered what the International Crisis Group (ICG) calls a ‘phase of confidence’. In order to maintain their legitimacy, different insurgent groups could refer to

a well established corpus of authoritative texts and documents. The insurgency is acting as if it has already proved its case and demonstrated both the iniquity of the U.S.-sponsored political process and the threat represented by the Iraqi government, accused of

⁸⁷ Casualty rates in Afghanistan have also been increasing, especially in 2005 and 2006 (CNN.com 2005b; iCasualties.org 2006).

undermining the country's unity and sovereignty (International Crisis Group 2006b, 13).

In this phase, the discourses of insurgent groups show an increased amount of confidence regarding their military prowess and their possibilities for victory (International Crisis Group 2006b, 14; Cordesman 2006, 11). While there is a propaganda element to this, it is also the case that the insurgents have had a number of military and public relations successes (International Crisis Group 2006b, 14; Bennis, Leaver et al. 2005, ii-iii).

There is therefore now a distinct possibility that insurgents could force (or play a significant part in forcing) an early withdrawal of foreign troops, and overthrow the Iraqi government following this withdrawal (International Crisis Group 2006b, 14; Bennis, Leaver et al. 2005, ii-iii; Cockburn 2006b, 221-222; Hashim 2006, 350). Influential US politicians are now supporting (a timetable for) the withdrawal of troops, and some opinion polls suggest that a majority of the US population support withdrawal (Babington and VandeHei 2006; Newport 2006). Even when military analysts argue that the situation in Iraq is "looking up", the possibility that US-led forces might not succeed in achieving their aims (and, according to many interpretations, the insurgents would therefore win) is often taken as a given (Collins 2006, 10; Hashim 2006, 349-364).

In common with many other radical movements, the insurgent groups generally hold that:

The eviction of U.S. forces must produce a *tabula rasa*, wiping away all that has occurred since the occupation began. Invoking the Islamic precept that whatever stems from an illicit act is illicit, the armed groups argue that because the war was illegitimate both in terms of Islamic jurisprudence and international law, the institutions and political process to which it has given rise are equally illegitimate and thus must go (International Crisis Group 2006b, 16. Emphasis in original; Hashim 2006, 121).

At least publicly, insurgent groups therefore reject the possibility of negotiating with the US-led Coalition and the Iraqi government (International

Crisis Group 2006b, 17; Ware 2005).⁸⁸ There is also a consensus that the Iraqi electoral system is rigged and, while some groups advocate participation, this is only in order to subvert the system (International Crisis Group 2006b, 17; Cole 2005, 4-10).

While the insurgent groups lack any clear (and any agreed) positive political programme, there is a degree of consensus that the first aim of the armed insurgency must be to remove the occupiers and the current government (International Crisis Group 2006b, 19; Beehner 2005). A more positive political programme will (it is, largely tacitly, assumed) follow after the insurgency achieves its negative political goals (International Crisis Group 2006b, 19). Currently, though, for the insurgents to focus their energies on this negativity appears to be an effective political tactic.

Insurgents in Iraq (and also in Afghanistan) did try – and largely failed – to hold fixed territorial positions (Center for Defense Information 2006; Cordesman 2006, ii; Synovitz 2006; Wilson 2004). However, when this was relatively unsuccessful they then moved beyond this to a more flexible type of warfare: attacking quickly, and often withdrawing before there could be a full retaliation (International Crisis Group 2006b, 23-24; Mackinlay 2005, 35-36).

Especially as Iraqi security forces have grown stronger – posing a more significant threat to the insurgents – insurgents have given greater priority to targeting Iraqi ‘collaborators’ (International Crisis Group 2006b, 25; Jarrar 2006; Whitfield and Chance 2004). As well as these smaller insurgent operations, some larger operations are planned as ‘shows of force’ (International Crisis Group 2006b, 25). In such shows of force a large number of insurgent fighters engage in a prominent action, often against symbolic targets, and this is then publicised through statements and videos after the event (International Crisis Group 2006b, 25; Fickling and Sturcke 2006; Modell 2006; Wyatt 2006).

Insurgents seek to prevent the establishment of a ‘normal’ situation in Iraq: for example, attacking oil facilities in order to disrupt production (International Crisis Group 2006b, 25; Rogers 2005, 1-2). However, in order to maintain their legitimacy, insurgent groups claim not to attack water and

⁸⁸ There are convincing reports that the US has been negotiating with Iraqi insurgents (Johnson, Nordland et al. 2006; Priest 2006, 1; Ware 2005). However, these groups have not – as yet – felt able to go ‘on the record’ regarding these negotiations.

electricity infrastructure (International Crisis Group 2006b, 25). Moreover, insurgents have allowed Iraq's communications infrastructure to continue to function, at least to an extent: because they gain from using these communications technologies, they "have a vested interest in keeping the Net 'up'" (Mackinlay 2005, 20).

As Arquilla, Ronfeldt and Zanini predict, in a 1999 paper, "[d]espite widespread speculation about terrorists using cyberspace warfare techniques to take 'the net' down they may often have stronger reasons for wanting to keep it up (e.g., to spread their message and communicate with one another)" (Arquilla, Ronfeldt et al. 1999, 41). Much more than the insurgents, it is US-led moves towards 'development' in Iraq that sometimes kept the 'net' down.

Mobile phones in Iraq are one example of this – Iraqis have enthusiastically taken up these technologies, but the CPA actually blocked promising attempts by a local company in Baghdad to establish a mobile phone network shortly after regime change (Vann 2003). In order to ensure that Iraq used the (US) CDSM system, rather than the GSM system that is more common in the rest of the world, the CPA became involved in troublesome negotiations and helped to keep down the 'net' in Iraq by installing a relatively unreliable mobile phone system (Stockman 2003).

The current resistance in Iraq is an example of a complex insurgency (as described by Mackinlay) engaging in netwar (Mackinlay 2005). The role of information here is once again significant. Through effective communications with one another, and a good awareness of the tactics of international and government forces, insurgents are able to develop effective strategies of their own as well as adjusting quickly to the tactics of their enemies (International Crisis Group 2006b, i; Chehab 2006, 48; Cordesman 2006, ii; Mackinlay 2005, 38-39). As with the anti-Communist Afghan insurgency, it will be shown below that insurgents in Iraq have constructed an effective representational framework that allows different networks of resistance to work together and maintain an apparent coherence (Mackinlay 2005, 31-32).

Information is also important because the insurgency – functioning in part as an ideational struggle – exists in a broader global 'public relations' context. Along with the Afghan insurgency, the Iraqi resistance resonates in different ways with different audiences. Insurgents and sympathetic groups target

Western audiences (and people) in order to achieve propaganda and military victories – as seen, for example, in the withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq after the Madrid bombing (International Crisis Group 2006b, 6 and 19; Jeffery 2004; Mackinlay 2005, 16). Insurgencies also gain support and personnel from abroad (Mackinlay 2005, 29).

The “vital ground” for the insurgents is therefore continually shifting – spreading across the globe to incorporate populations in (and US citizens sent to work in) different parts of the world (United States Institute of Peace 2004, 14; Mackinlay 2005, 16). Insurgents have thus done a particularly good job of following the advice of the US military, which argues that it is important to “think locally but be able to act globally” (Joint Vision 2004a, 6).

This use of information, changing of tactics, and even changing of vital ground leads to a complexity that renders situations unpredictable. This can frustrate attempts at military planning or even at understanding what is happening: in such situations, while “[d]etailed simulation, using agent-based approaches, is always possible...the highly situation-specific results that it provides may offer little general understanding for carrying forward into robust conclusions of practical significance” (Moffat 2003, 3). This has led to problems with military planning, and questions as to the utility of military plans *per se* (especially long-term plans) (Collins 2006, 10).

Attempts to deal with this unpredictability are problematic, and have to date been relatively unsuccessful. For example, Moffat argues that “the concept of control of an area as corresponding to the prevention of flow through an area (flow in terms of an opposing force, or perhaps some third party) has been endorsed as a good analogy” (Moffat 2003, 86). However, the US-led cyberwar has failed to stop these flows, and it seems unlikely that it will be able to do so.

These flows are becoming faster and more intense, with new connections forming with Islamist, Arab nationalist and anti-US networks across the world and with the ‘underground’ economy (allowing increasing flows of anti-occupation activists and illegal drugs, for example) (IRIN.org 2006; Mackinlay 2002, 79; Zunes 2006). Iraqi borders are now sufficiently porous for foreign fighters and illegal drugs to enter the country with relative ease (meaning that the Iraqi drugs trade is currently “burgeoning”) (Hashim 2006, 340-341).

The occupying forces have tried to respond to such problems with a “manoeuvrist approach” that allows them to disrupt the enemy, to act inside their decision-making cycle, and therefore prevent effective resistance (Mackinlay 2005, x; Spinney 2003). Such tactics have, however, not been effective against the insurgents (Defense and the National Interest 2005; Bennis, Leaver et al. 2005, 28; Mackinlay 2005, x-xi). For Mackinlay, this is because

the hostile forces, are informally organized and spread in a global pattern that corresponds to their supporting diaspora. Their strength is that they are hard to identify and attack; nevertheless they can demonstrate a surprising degree of ideological and practical cohesion between cells (Mackinlay 2005, x-xi; Wilcox 2003, 5).

Insurgents thus utilise what I would follow Arquilla and Ronfeldt (whose work Mackinlay also draws on) in referring to as netwar techniques (see Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996; Hoffman 2004, 17). When it is not clear who the ‘enemy’ is, where they are, who they will become or where they will move to, a manoeuvrist approach to disrupting this enemy will not be successful. Moreover, problems in finding or hurting the ‘enemy’ have lead to a “counter-productive...overuse of firepower”, which offers propaganda victories to the insurgency (Cockburn 2006b, 102).

US attempts to engage with the complexities of the insurgency in Iraq echo Soviet responses to Afghan insurgents in the way that both superpowers’ concept of their enemy was only a very loose, crude and biased approximation of the insurgency (The Times 1989; International Crisis Group 2006b, i; Binyon 1980, 4). As with the Soviets in Afghanistan, categories used by the US to ‘understand’ events in Iraq “(Saddamists, Islamo-fascists and the like)...bear only passing resemblance to reality” (International Crisis Group 2006b, i; Bush 2003c). Instead of the relatively ordered Saddamist/post-fascist resistance that they theorised, the US had to deal with the way that:

- One effect of the human element in conflict situations is to bring a degree of complexity into the situation such that the emergent behaviour of the system as a whole is extremely difficult to predict

from the characteristics and relationships of the system elements (Moffat 2003, 3).

Rumsfeld has acknowledged the problems with understanding such insurgencies, stating that in Iraq “[w]e know we’re killing a lot, capturing a lot, collecting arms. We just don’t know yet whether that’s the same as winning” (Hoffman 2004, 16; Loeb 2003). For Rumsfeld, the US “lack[s] metrics to know if we are winning or losing the global war on terror” (Rumsfeld 2003).

While the US struggles to find a metric to measure success/failure, the speed with which insurgent networks move means that they are changing the tactics and terms of engagement before the US is able to catch up. As the ICG argues, “the groups seem to be learning from their mistakes and from their enemy’s tactics, and changes appear to reflect both – a nimbleness that, given its size and bureaucratic character, the U.S. military at times has appeared to lack” (International Crisis Group 2006b, 3; Burns and Semple 2006).

It is also worth remembering that, although the Iraqi insurgency developed rather quickly, most of those involved would have lacked experience of this type of conflict (although some may have had counterinsurgency experience while working with and for the Baath regime) (Grau 2004, 43). However, Iraqi fighters have been able to develop a relatively ‘successful’ insurgency faster than US-led forces have been able to determine what they are dealing with.

While international forces in Iraq (and Afghanistan) are struggling to deal with – struggling to even find a way to understand – these complex insurgencies, the insurgencies are quickly developing new and effective ways to challenge international forces. Although it is not possible to verify this information, a recent NSC report argues that the Iraqi insurgency has even managed to develop fundraising strategies which make it self-financing (Burns and Semple 2006).

The Battle for Legitimacy

An effective engagement in the battle for legitimacy has played an important role in the ‘success’ of the Iraqi insurgency. As Shaw notes, ‘new’ wars – including Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom – can lead to massacres and can cause a significant number of civilian casualties (Shaw 2005, 67 and 117-122). Shaw is therefore correct to argue that one of the strengths of this

terrorist violence in the competition for legitimacy is that it can draw comparisons between the civilian deaths caused by terrorism and the deaths caused by US-led wars (Shaw 2005, 131).

It is tempting to go further than Shaw: while terrorist violence is not the same as that carried out by US-led coalitions, this does not mean that valid comparisons between the different types of violence cannot be made. Moreover, some aspects of the US-led violence – for example, the levels of casualties caused and the use of chemical or chemical-like weapons such as white phosphorous – can look especially unpleasant, even compared to the violence of terrorist groups.⁸⁹

This does not establish an equivalency between virtuous wars and terrorism. Deliberately targeting civilians – as one sees in many terrorist attacks – is different from killing civilians in the course of actions aimed at other targets. However, even granting that civilians are – by and large – not deliberately targeted in US-led virtuous wars, their killing as part of these wars is still extremely problematic and, of course, upsetting.

Even taking this non-equivalency into account, an immediate problem should be apparent: if US-led virtuous wars are killing large numbers of civilians, this will cause significant problems for attempts to cast these wars as legitimate. Moreover, certain US strategies are making US-led forces and actions look considerably less legitimate. For example, responding to coming under attack (including in densely populated urban areas) by even a single sniper with “recourse to massive firepower [which can include] many hundreds of rounds of machine gun or cannon fire, quite possibly followed by an air strike called in to respond to the attack” will be likely to cause civilian casualties and look like a disproportionate response to an attack (Rogers 2006, 2). Tactics such as the “collective punishment” of Iraqi farmers who are seen to be insufficiently cooperative are also likely to make US-led forces look less legitimate (Cockburn 2006b, 125).

If terrorist attacks are seen to be part of a ‘solution’ that could end or limit these wars, this may lend them considerable appeal. For example, insurgent

⁸⁹ For example, white phosphorous (used by the US as an antipersonnel weapon in Fallujah) can cause multiple deep burns, sometimes down to the bone; it will continue to burn human flesh until it is deprived of oxygen or disappears in the chemical reaction (GlobalSecurity.org 2005; Cobb, LaCour et al. 2005, 26).

groups in Iraq present themselves as (at least in part) fighting against the killing and mistreatment of civilians by US-led and government forces (International Crisis Group 2006b, 3 and 21; Gupta 2005; Hashim 2006, 351).

In anti-insurgency warfare it is especially important, as Hashim argues, to at least maintain the appearance of “[r]ectitude and ethical conduct” (Hashim 2006, 329-331). US and Iraqi government forces have failed here, with high levels of civilian casualties playing an important part in this failure; this very much helped insurgents to gain public support (International Crisis Group 2006b, 3 and 21; Hashim 2006, 326-331; Jmail and Al-Fadhily 2006).

Insurgents were well aware of the importance of winning the ideological ‘battle’: “[p]ractically from the outset, insurgent groups emphasized the need to legitimise their actions”, and the very visible civilian casualties caused by Coalition forces greatly helped with this legitimisation (International Crisis Group 2006b, 8-9; Shaw 2005, 131).⁹⁰ The events in Fallujah played an especially important role here (Hashim 2006, 35). Saddam’s capture also

gave the insurgency renewed momentum, dissociating it from the Baathist regime and shoring up its patriotic, nationalist and religious/jihadist credentials. By the same token, it facilitated a rapprochement between the insurgency and transnational jihadi networks, which had been hostile to a partnership with remnants of a secular, heretical regime (International Crisis Group 2006b, 9).

Moreover, while it is too soon to determine the long-term consequences of Saddam’s execution, one thing this did achieve is to make it very obvious that he will never rule Iraq again. The successful achievement of significant goals of the US-led Coalition (capturing, trying and punishing Saddam was seen as a major part of restoring ‘order’ to Iraq) can thus be appropriated by insurgents in order to strengthen their position (International Crisis Group 2006b, 9; Bush 2003c; Rogers 2006, 2).

⁹⁰ Even within Al Qaeda, there are reports of an ongoing debate as to what tactics can ‘legitimately’ be used – with influential figures criticising the ways in which Al Qaeda uses violence and arguing that “[p]olicy must be dominant over militarism” (Atiyah 2006).

This reveals problems with the Coalition's strategy. Inadequate understandings of the insurgency lead to the belief that a desire to restore Saddam to power played a major role. Bush was, however, mistaken to assume that "Baathist holdouts [are] largely responsible for the current violence" (Bush 2003c).

It was therefore the case that Bush's assurance (made when Saddam was captured) that "there will be no return to the corrupt power and privilege they once held" was of little relevance in the context of Iraqi insurgent politics (Bush 2003c). If anything, Bush's statement may have strengthened the insurgency by ameliorating fears that an insurgent victory could lead to a return to Baathism (International Crisis Group 2006b, 9).

Saddam's capture therefore – as shown above – did not have the demoralising effect on the insurgency which many in the Coalition hoped for; if anything, it actually assisted the insurgency (International Crisis Group 2006b, 9; PBS 2006). The flexibility with which the insurgency worked actually allowed them to use Saddam's capture (and, it seems likely, his execution) to their advantage. Insurgent groups can make themselves appear more legitimate by further distancing themselves from (fears of return to) the old regime (International Crisis Group 2006b, 9).

The insurgent groups in Iraq have different goals, and several different ideologies. Their political positions range from the relatively hard-line and Islamist influence of Al Qaeda to the more nationalist approach of Al-Jaysh al-Islami fil-'Iraq (International Crisis Group 2006b, 1-3; Hashim 2006, 170-175; Wilson 2004). Foreign fighters do play a role in the insurgency, and estimates as to their numbers vary; however, they appear to make up less than 10% of the insurgency (International Crisis Group 2006b, 1; Rogers 2005, 2).⁹¹

Despite serious – and sometimes violent – disagreements between groups, all groups were able to draw on the support of Imams and prominent Islamic jurists (International Crisis Group 2006b, 10; Chehab 2006, 25; Karmon 2006; Poole 2005). They share a very similar reading of particular sections of the

⁹¹ Estimating the number of foreign fighters involved may be made harder by the 'spin' put on events by some insurgent groups. For example, Al Qaeda in Iraq has been working hard to "Iraqify" its image" (International Crisis Group 2006b, 2).

Koran, of history, and of international politics – which they have used in order to ‘justify’ their violence (International Crisis Group 2006b, 10; Walt 2003).

Insurgents overcame differences between themselves through “a mutual narrative”: sharing common views on, for example, the situation in Israel/Palestine and the ‘godless’ dictators in various Muslim countries (International Crisis Group 2006b, 10; Hayden 2006; Krepinevich 2004, 1-3; Mackinlay 2005, 30). It was therefore the case that (as with the anti-Communist Afghan insurgency) networks of quite different insurgent groups, with strong disagreements with one another, were overlaid with a virtual network. This gave the appearance of ideological coherence within the insurgency and made ‘the insurgency’ appear to be more legitimate (and to be the type of thing to which legitimacy can attach).

Insurgents even accuse ruling Shiite parties and US-led forces of engaging in sectarian politics and violence, while insurgent groups claim to be seeking national unity (International Crisis Group 2006b, 22-23). Sectarian insurgent groups in Iraq are responsible for a significant amount of sectarian violence (Cockburn 2006a; Cockburn 2006b, 117-121; Hashim 2006, 351). However, given for example reports that US forces and the Iraqi government are using sectarian militias in order to assist them in Iraq – and using the militias to engage in what looks rather like sectarian violence – these claims regarding the sectarian politics of the governing parties are not without justification (Arnove 2006, 73-74; Gupta 2005).

One could also argue that aspects of Iraq’s constitution – such as a three member Presidential Council designed to accommodate Iraq’s three largest ethnic groups, and the way in which oil revenues will be distributed after devolution – have themselves worked to embed sectarian divisions (Diamond 2005a; Diamond 2005b, 152 and 169-171). As Hashim observes, it is thus the case that “there are political elites...who are definitely bent on the ‘social construction’ of ethno-sectarian hatred of the Other for a variety of reasons including mobilisation of their political base” (Hashim 2006, 351).

Sectarian Violence in Iraq

There is thus a significant level of what is – or, at least, functions as – sectarian conflict and violence in Iraq: attacks take place in which Shia Iraqis are

killed because they are Shia and Sunni Iraqis are killed because they are Sunni (Cockburn 2006a; Cockburn 2006b, 117-121; Hashim 2006, 351). Moreover, while the relatively peaceful North of Iraq currently enjoys considerable autonomy, it is unclear how the Kurdish nationalist militias there would respond to attempts to exert central control (Stansfield 2003, 183-185).

One aspect of the netwar failure in Iraq is thus that there have been moves towards sectarian violence in and the sectarian division of the country. In some cases – such as, as discussed above, the formulation of Iraq's constitution – the way in which post-Saddam Iraq has been administered has worked to further build and intensify sectarian divisions.

There has been a considerable debate about whether or not a sectarian civil war is taking place, or will take place, in Iraq (or in certain parts of Iraq) (Feldmann 2006; Morin 2006). There are clearly a range of ways of naming the sectarian violence that is currently taking place. For example, in some cases this violence is overlaid with insurgent networks in order to be viewed as part of 'the insurgency' (and therefore anti-occupation violence, instead of civil war) (International Crisis Group 2006b, 10-11 and 19-20). In other cases, it is argued that a sectarian civil war is taking place alongside the anti-occupation violence (Cockburn 2006b, 216-218).

One should begin by acknowledging that a considerable level of sectarian violence is taking place in Iraq. Moreover, this violence and these tensions may well, in the near future, allow a higher level of sectarian violence to take place. The violence currently taking place is, as shown above, being overlaid with the apparent coherence of an insurgent network: the Iraqi insurgency is able to incorporate and draw upon sectarian violence (in order to, for example, prevent the situation in Iraq from being normalised or stabilised).

I would argue that this debate about whether or not a civil war is taking place is often a distraction from more important issues. Those who wish to take a pro-war and pro-occupation stance often insist that a civil war is not taking place and use this to suggest that the current situation in Iraq is relatively positive (BBC News 2006b). However, such a move is extremely problematic: as shown above, the interminable not taking place of non-wars can be at least as brutal as wars which do take place.

Claiming that a sectarian civil war is not (yet) taking place in Iraq is of little comfort if this not taking place is itself killing and injuring Iraqis at a rate similar to that at which a civil war that did take place would kill and injure. Engaging in a politics of naming which refuses to call this sectarian violence a civil war is not an effective means for ameliorating the suffering caused by this violence. As Kofi Annan puts it, “when we had the strife in Lebanon and other places, we called that a civil war. [Iraq] is much worse” (Annan 2006). The violence in Iraq is worse than what we have seen in preceding conflicts that we have called civil wars. Whether one names the violence in Iraq ‘civil war’ or something else does nothing to ameliorate the horror of this violence.

I would, therefore, also be sceptical of the supposed benefits of insisting on naming this violence as ‘civil war’. Many who oppose the occupation of Iraq offer a compelling critique of the damage done by the violence in the state as part of what they view as a ‘civil war’ (either taking place, or imminent) (Cockburn 2006a; Gupta 2005; Lind 2004). However, their arguments would be at least as compelling if they were criticising the damage done by ‘sectarian violence’ instead of ‘civil war’. Naming the violence in Iraq as ‘civil war’ does not necessarily strengthen peace movements, and it leaves one open to the risk that political opponents might ‘rebut’ criticisms of this violence by claiming that it is not civil war (while doing nothing to ameliorate the violence).

Communications and Public Relations

Despite or because of this high level of sectarian violence, insurgent groups have drawn on well thought out communications strategies in order to manage perceptions of the insurgency and the conflict. These strategies have served to substantially enhance the ‘legitimacy’ of insurgents. This offers an example of the significant role that communications plays in ‘successful’ netwar.

Public Relations was important to insurgent groups from the start. The groups use a range of techniques for their public communications, including leaflets, videos and audio tapes (International Crisis Group 2006b, i; Modell 2006). However, as the insurgency developed it became clear that “Internet sites are of particular importance, for they have become the principal daily means of exchange among groups” (International Crisis Group 2006b, 4; see also Healy 2005, 136; Wyatt 2006).

Insurgents were able to learn from problems and successes in the communications of the US military (International Crisis Group 2006b, 20). Careful media management from the US-led Coalition raised many concerns. 'Official' policy on embedding was relatively open, with the Department of Defense stating that "MEDIA WILL HAVE LONG-TERM, MINIMALLY RESTRICTIVE ACCESS TO U.S. AIR, GROUND AND NAVAL FORCES THROUGH EMBEDDING" (Department of Defense 2003).

Despite this 'official' US openness, though, there was considerable worry that this embedding made journalists become too close to the troops they were embedded with, and that embedding resulted in "a narrow view of what is going on" (Haigh, Pfau et al. 2006, 140; Goldstein 2003a; Kellner; Mendel and Anonymous 2005; Skiba 2003; Workman 2003). Despite the broadcast of "'live' reporting from ongoing battles, computer animation of 'extraordinary' advances, [and] the scenic illustrations of 'shocking and awing' aerial bombardment", this did not have the desired effects on "the target audiences of allied propaganda in America, Europe, the Middle East or elsewhere in the world" (Stochetti 2003, 658-659).⁹²

Western journalists tried to alert their audience "to the possibility that claims from the proponents of war might be propaganda, or at least that information might be being presented in the service of a clearly identified agenda, and should be judged as such. There was a much greater 'meta-discussion' than in previous wars" (Lynch 2006).

Insurgent groups, however, conducted much of their 'policy' discussion in public, using Internet sites that were relatively open to public input (International Crisis Group 2006b, 4; Cordesman 2006, 9). They were careful to make documentary evidence of their actions publicly available, even when this evidence was extremely unpleasant to watch (International Crisis Group 2006b,

⁹² The speed at which real time footage arrived from embedded journalists was itself problematic: rather than helping to clarify the situation, it can be argued that "[m]ore, faster and closer coverage simply produced more 'fog', to use the metaphor of war" (Hoskins 2004, 123; Stanyer 2004, 424).

Real time broadcasting could also prevent 'normal' methods of correcting misinformation from functioning. For example, a CNN photojournalist who had helped cover the 'war on terror' recalled having "heard reporters lie on air... I didn't say anything because...there was no one to voice it to. And it was a live, it was a live broadcast so it was already out there and gone, too late...if it's on tape then you can challenge it and it can be changed, but when it's going out there live..." (Mendel and Anonymous 2005).

20; Jarrar 2006; Wyatt 2006). The insurgents' communications was thus organised in such a way that they could appear to be more open with the media and public(s) – and less manipulative – than the US-led Coalition.

The insurgent groups used their public relations strategies to (try to) to maintain an appearance of 'honourability' (International Crisis Group 2006b, 20-21). In contrast to this 'honourability', insurgent groups tried to make their enemy appear criminal (International Crisis Group 2006b, 20-22; Hashim 2006, 326). They emphasised the civilian casualties caused by the US-led Coalition and the Iraqi government, the alleged US attempts to subjugate Iraq, and the US involvement in and 'subcontracting' of 'dishonourable' tactics such as the use of torture or 'stress techniques' in prisoner interrogations (The National Security Archive 2003b; International Crisis Group 2006b, 21-22; Bennis, Leaver et al. 2005, 35; Hirsh, Hosenball et al. 2005, 3; Krugman 2004a; Marqusee 2004). The 'honourable' struggle of insurgents is thus contrasted with – and presented as a way to oppose – the 'criminal' tactics of their enemies.

Chapter 2 and 3 analysed how Al Qaeda functioned as a virtual overlay network, incorporating a number of disparate movements and acts into an Al Qaeda network. Likewise, as argued above, insurgent and terrorist groups can overlay events with their discourses in order to give the appearance of cohesion (Mackinlay 2005, 24-27; Wilson 2004). Violence from the Euphrates to London is not linked together by a clear-cut trail of 'conventional' causality (there was not evidence, for example, of a direct link between the London tube bombings and events in Iraq) and a number of different actors are involved (Mackinlay 2005, 25-27). However, the appearance of cohesion is constructed because actors "are inspired by the same impulse – or, in the minds of news readers around the world...could have been" (Mackinlay 2005, 26).

Does Netwar Failure Inevitably Follow Cyberwar 'Success'?

As shown above, the US-led Coalitions that imposed regime change on Afghanistan and Iraq did make a number of errors. However, 'just' to have avoided these errors would not have been sufficient to prevent these failures: it would not have prevented the Coalitions' failures to engage with their netwar opponents. Instead, for successful military interventions to be possible – to deal effectively with these complex netwars – more radical changes will be needed.

When the US chose to work with Northern Alliance and other networks in Afghanistan – supporting their efforts to overthrow the Taliban regime – they had already determined that their actions would fail in certain ways. What happened in Afghanistan was not so much that problems such as the opiate trade emerged in opposition to the wishes of the US and its allies. On the contrary, the networks of warlords that were used to overthrow the Taliban have long incorporated such tactics into their politics.

As shown in Chapter 2, the opiate trade played an important role in funding all sides of the conflict in Afghanistan since the anti-Soviet insurgency, and Afghan warlords have long competed for control over particular areas and communities. The type of connectedness that the US has struggled to deal with in Afghanistan is thus not a new thing. As well as helping to develop this connectedness during the anti-Soviet insurgency there, the US developed it further during the removal of the Taliban regime.

Chapter 2 showed that Afghanistan has had a relatively long tradition of netwar; the netwar challenge faced by international forces there is thus relatively unsurprising (Conetta 2002b). The same cannot be said for Iraq: as shown above, prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom Iraq had minimal engagement with international ‘terrorist’ networks. As shown in the Introduction and earlier in this chapter, the efficacy of US cyberwar techniques will, however, tend to push their opponents towards netwar tactics.

As shown above, Saddam’s regime does not appear to have had a detailed plan to collapse the army and then use these assets for netwar: it did not even expect a full-blown invasion, let alone an occupation. However, even if the Iraqi plan had been for the army to stand and fight, it would have been extremely hard to force troops to do so when faced with US-led cyberwar. Iraqi troops were aware of the advantages enjoyed by US-led forces, and there was little appetite “to die for Saddam” (Cockburn 2006b, 53).

The conflict in Iraq was therefore an example of how the US use of cyberwar techniques can force their opponents into netwar by rendering more ‘conventional’ military responses ineffective. Rather than the crowds that many expected to celebrate US-led ‘liberation’, many Iraqis and non-Iraqis opposed the invasion and occupation and have found effective ways to resist – largely outside of the ‘major operations’ that US cyberwar techniques allowed them to dominate.

Moreover, the connectedness of the insurgencies allows these netwars to develop extremely quickly, drawing support from across the world.

As demonstrated above, Iraq has thus moved from a state with minimal involvement in the networks of international 'terrorism' to being a central front in the 'war on terror'. It has developed a netwar struggle so effective that it looks quite possible that US-led forces might 'lose'. There is certainly no clear path to US 'victory'.

It is therefore the case that – while the US is able to achieve numerous 'successes' through using cyberwar techniques – where there is significant popular opposition to these 'successes' they will tend to provoke netwar responses that international forces will fail to deal with. Unsurprisingly, the bloodshed and disruption involved in conflict will itself tend to generate a certain amount of opposition – so netwar responses to cyberwar action will be extremely hard to avoid. For the US to find itself facing netwar opponents is thus an inevitable consequence of the type of intervention that took place in Afghanistan, and an extremely likely consequence of the type of intervention that took place in Iraq. Netwar failure will therefore tend to come hand-in-hand with cyberwar 'success'.

This raises the question of whether such failure can be avoided, or is an integral part of cyberwar 'success'. One 'obvious' way to avoid such failures in the future would be to follow Jacqueline Rose's advice: "Hang on to failure...if you want to avoid going to war" (Rose 1993, 37). There is a lot to be said for remembering the failures that followed past cyberwar conflicts, and therefore avoiding repeating the same failures in the future. Put simply, there are many advantages to not going to war.

However, I would be broadly sympathetic to calls for a 'politics without principle' and will therefore avoid a 'principled' pacifist position (see Campbell 1993). It is conceivable that US-led military interventions will have positive consequences, and they may on occasion even be necessary. A 'principled' opposition to all military interventions – regardless of the circumstances – is therefore undesirable.

As shown above, representational conflict has been key to the efficacy with which netwar actors have been able to challenge – and cause serious problems for – US-led coalitions. A second option for military intervention

might then be – if executing ‘major operations’ – to handle the representational aspects of the conflict better.

If the US could engage in a battle for legitimacy sufficiently successfully that (many of) the publics in the operational space supported US forces, this could prevent the netwar opponents of the US from acting effectively. As shown above, those using netwar to oppose US forces depend on a degree of public support, or at least acquiescence. Denying them this support would therefore be an effective tactic.

A first problem with this strategy is ‘just’ that it is difficult to do, and may require a degree of ethical engagement in international issues that the current and future US governments would struggle to maintain. However, I would hope (as argued in the Introduction) that this type of ethical engagement is possible, albeit difficult.

If such a strategy were effectively put into action, a second issue would be that – if US-backed political change had so much popular support – the tasks that could usefully be assigned to the military would be very different. For example, the US military may be needed to lend protection to a popular uprising or to prevent genocide. This, though, would require a very different military – and many of the techniques used in the ‘major operations’ phases of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom would generally be best avoided.

As shown above, the casualties caused by cyberwar can cause real problems for US-led engagements in representational conflicts. Therefore, if the US were already enjoying the benefits of success in such a representational conflict, generating relatively high numbers of casualties – and the accompanying dissent – would be undesirable.

The type of international ethical engagement that more successful interventions would require from the US might itself mean that many tactics would have to be modified or abandoned. For example, the US might need to accept more military casualties in order to have more troops engaged in ‘hearts and minds’ missions and to minimise civilian casualties. Likewise, the need for civilian staff (engaged in ‘reconstruction’ and other work) to work effectively and engage with local populations would mean that they would have to be exposed to a certain amount of risk (Etherington 2005, 7 and 222).

The type of international intervention that is not followed by a netwar failure would therefore be something very different from the cyberwar tactics used in Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. The strategy advocated here may seem to echo Barnett's account of the SysAdmin and Leviathan; however, a more successful intervention would need to be significantly different from the type of action that Barnett suggests (Barnett 2005, 18).

Barnett believes that US-led failure in Iraq is because the US "plan[ned] to win the war with [their] Leviathan force but [did not] bother to mount a serious SysAdmin effort" (Barnett 2005, 18). This is an interesting argument, but does not go far enough: if the Leviathan force does significant damage to a society, and continues with intermittent 'anti-terrorist' operations after the end of 'major operations', this will generate significant opposition. As shown above, if military forces are killing and injuring a substantial number of civilians then this will make it very hard for an intervention to appear legitimate.

A Leviathan force which acts as if in (a particular, contestable interpretation of) the Hobbesian state of nature will therefore generate responses that neither a Leviathan or SysAdmin will be able to deal with effectively – as has been seen in Afghanistan and Iraq (Barnett 2004, 326-327). Instead, the aim should be to win the competition for legitimacy prior to and during the intervention – meaning that, while violence may be needed, this will take place as part of an ethical commitment to others instead of a Leviathan acting as if in a 'state of nature'.

The current situation in Afghanistan and Iraq is more problematic: regime change has already taken place in these states, international forces are already there, and netwar actors are already resisting the occupation and governments of these states. As shown above, the US-led Coalition in Iraq and ISAF forces in Afghanistan have not been able to find an effective (purely) military solution to the problems in these states. There is therefore, once again, an argument for moving the focus to representational conflict: as the ICG argues, the US could benefit from moving to "[a]n anti-insurgency approach primarily focused on reducing the insurgents' perceived legitimacy" (International Crisis Group 2006b, i). It is necessary to engage in the struggle for 'hearts and minds' by "addressing the causes of unrest upon which an insurgency feeds" (Mockaitis and Rich 2003, vii; Mockaitis 2003, 31-33).

Through helping to improve living conditions, building ‘legitimate’ Afghan and Iraqi governments – or devolved government structures – and attempting to compensate citizens of these states for the damage done by US-led interventions, there may be hope of more ‘successful’ nation building. Again, though, this will require a changing and curtailing of the military’s involvement: many types of action will only serve to make the occupying forces more unpopular. For example, the ICG argues that the US-led Coalition in Iraq should try to improve its legitimacy by acting to “[c]losely monitor, control and, if necessary, punish the behaviour of security forces” and abandoning “questionable” techniques such as torture (International Crisis Group 2006b, ii).⁹³ This type of engagement will also require an ethical commitment to – for example – attempting to compensate those harmed in military actions for the damage that has been done.

This is not an argument for isolationism: as argued above, it may be possible for the US and its allies to intervene and to have positive effects. However, while opposing isolationism I would argue against the type of ‘major operations’ seen in Iraq and Afghanistan. To avoid netwar failures, a good first step would ‘simply’ be to avoid large-scale cyberwar interventions. Future ‘successes’ might then be made possible by a radical rethink of how state militaries work and how interventions take place.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I have shown that the US used cyberwar techniques effectively during the ‘major operations’ phases of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. Both these Operations were ‘won’ at striking speed and with low casualties (on one side of the conflict).

⁹³ The US military has made moves in this direction, especially as regards its activities in Iraq. Lt. Gen. Peter Chiarelli’s new guidelines for US forces are perhaps the most important example of moves in this direction (Chiarelli and Michaelis 2005; Macdonald 2006; Shanker 2006). It is too early to be sure how effective these will be – both in limiting US-led violence, and in allowing the US to engage more effectively in representational and normative conflict. I would suspect that these guidelines do not go far enough – for example, the guidelines appear as if they will, at best, limit US actions rather than compelling them to repair the damage that has been done. Moreover, as will be argued in Chapter 4, the logic of incorporation that is in play in Chiarelli’s thinking is itself problematic. However, while I believe that these likely problems are worth highlighting, I would be delighted to be proved wrong.

However, the chapter has also shown that these cyberwar ‘successes’ contrast with – and led into – the netwar failures that followed the end of ‘major combat operations’. US-led and ISAF forces have not dealt effectively with the complex insurgencies resisting the governments of and international forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. US-led and international forces currently lack an adequate grasp of the situations they face, and they lack the ability to deal effectively with the netwar of the insurgents. While it is not clear what ‘success’ in Iraq and Afghanistan would look like, the situation described in this chapter could reasonably be referred to as failure.

Significant changes to current US foreign and military policy will be needed if future netwar failures are to be avoided and/or if current problems are to be ameliorated. Current policy will provoke opposition and, due to the US dominance of cyberwar techniques, opponents will be driven to develop and utilise netwar techniques. US-led forces are currently unable to deal effectively with netwar opponents, and it is unlikely that they will develop this ability in the near future. We have thus reached a point where the netwar opponents of the US have rendered the US-led dominance in the use of cyberwar techniques relatively ineffective. For all the discussion of NCW in the US military, US forces are currently not able to deal effectively with – let alone defeat – netwar opponents.

US-led forces will need to engage more effectively in representational struggles, and to find alternative ways of ethically engaging with others, if such failures are not to continue for the foreseeable future. Bearing in mind the damaging nature of cyberwar conflicts – and their associated failures – Chapter 4 will therefore consider some ways in which those of us outside of ‘policy’ circles might respond to war and politics today.

Chapter 4: Trauma, Ethics and Politics

Introduction

The preceding chapters analysed the development of virtual and virtuous war, and cyberwar and netwar: I have shown that there has been a US-led move to cyberwar, and that netwar failures will be a corollary of their cyberwar ‘successes’. I will use this chapter to consider some of the broader implications of these moves to cyberwar and netwar.

It may appear that I am describing historical political changes in the thesis – a rupture in the ways in which wars are fought, which brought the shift to virtual warfare, cyberwar and netwar – but this is not the case. In order to make this clear, I will use this chapter to analyse the problems with referring to the move to virtual war, cyberwar and netwar as historical change, and look at some alternative approaches that one might take. The chapter will argue that we are now faced with an end of ends of history, and consider how politics works in this situation. The chapter will therefore begin with an analysis of the important role of incorporation in the end of ends of history.

One rupture in today’s political reality can be seen in the ways in which it traumatises countless others, and in the failure of our discursive reality to entirely incorporate a real trauma. I have spent a considerable amount of time in the thesis analysing different techniques of killing and maiming. I have not, however, yet analysed the trauma that is associated with this violence in any detail. I will therefore use this chapter to analyse trauma, suffering and virtual war (in particular, focusing on Gulf War Syndrome following the 1991 Gulf War). I will demonstrate that theories of the virtual allow us to offer an improved account of these experiences and of their political implications.

A problematisation of ‘mainstream’ emancipatory projects, such as those offered by some versions of Marxism, will accompany my reading of trauma and my problematisation of a ‘conventional’ account of history. This might make the political projects advanced here appear to be conservative, to allow no hope for change. In order to resist this reading – and to explain some of the implications of my research for political action – I will conclude the chapter by considering how this project of analysing the end of (ends of) history might lead us towards what Antonio Negri refers to as the ‘Time for Revolution’ (Negri 2003b). To

develop the critical potentials of this end of ends of history, I will also draw on Derrida's *Specters of Marx* and Žižek's (re)reading of Hegel (Derrida 1994; Negri 2003b; Žižek 1991).

There is one more rupture worth noting: this chapter does not really 'fit' with the rest of the thesis. However, while this might initially appear to be a problem, it is in fact entirely appropriate that something disruptive occurs at the end of this PhD. As will be argued below, part of what is traumatic about trauma is the way it forms a gap or a hole in our symbolic reality: trauma resists attempts to fully incorporate it into discourse, and the discussion of trauma in this chapter will therefore disrupt the discourse of this PhD thesis. It is also appropriate that the discussion of political action below is somewhat disruptive: political action can constitute a real disruption of our political reality; often, it should.

Through engaging with the possibilities for political change, and some of the effects of trauma, the thesis can move towards an ethical response to those others who are traumatised in conflict. To end the thesis in this way is certainly disruptive, insofar as it leaves a rather obvious gap or discontinuity in its discourse. However, I would argue that the ethical and political possibilities opened up by such a gap considerably outweigh any perceived imperative to offer a 'neat' or 'conclusive' ending to this text. A lot of the work in this chapter will therefore be focused on engaging with this gap, and on considering the potential utility of such gaps in our discursive reality.

The End of (Ends of) History and Incorporation

When addressing and/or engaging with the gaps in our discursive reality, writers frequently draw on 'postmodern' theorists. It has become a commonplace to oppose (or, in the more interesting accounts, draw out the tensions between) ideas of 'postmodernity' or 'postmodern' theorising and the project of a universal history. One might note, for example, Rorty's remark that it is strange for Lyotard to abandon the project of universal history and yet discover world-historical significance in changes such as the new information-processing technologies (Rorty 1992, 69).

With this in mind, it is worth asking how this thesis fits into such an account of theory and history, and whether my analysis of the move to virtual war, cyberwar and netwar is also an analysis of world-historical changes. It is

important to acknowledge the limitations of this thesis: while it might appear that I have demonstrated that historical changes have taken place over the past few decades, I should make clear that this is not the case.

As shown above, there have been significant changes in our political reality; this affects the types of political action and conflict that are now (potentially) effective. It could well seem that what I have been describing above are events of historical significance (to return to Rorty's term, one might write of events of 'world-historical significance'): changes in the ways in which conflict takes place, and changes in what we can do about it. However, the shift to virtual war and politics makes any such claim deeply problematic: it will be shown below that 'history' has now, in a sense, 'ended'. I will argue below that – instead of an historical shift to virtual war – we have witnessed a certain kind of 'end of history'.

Probably the most famous recent reference to the 'end of history' comes from the liberal thinker Francis Fukuyama. Fukuyama argues that, with the end of the Cold War, there came an end of ideological struggle that also constituted an end of 'history' (in the Hegelian sense of the term) (Fukuyama 1992).⁹⁴ I should therefore avoid possible misunderstandings by first noting that the 'end of history' that I argue is taking place is not the same one as Fukuyama believes we have reached. Instead, it would be better to talk of an 'end of history' in two senses.

Firstly, there is an 'end of history' which signifies an end of the ability to construct and maintain the grand (ideological) metanarratives that have constituted what we used to view as 'history' (Lyotard 1984, xxiv). Secondly, there is an 'end of ends of history' when the ever-shifting layers of representation which constitute hypermodernity (and their necessary failure to cover over the 'real' lack in the symbolic) means that there is no longer the possibility of stabilising this (ended) history in the type of triumphalist 'end of history' that Fukuyama announces (Baudrillard 1990, 11).

I will therefore once propose two potentially contradictory arguments, and maintain a certain tension between them. Firstly, I *would* argue that history is over. As Baudrillard puts it, "things have always-already happened" and today's

⁹⁴ For an earlier account of an 'end of history', see (Lefebvre 2003b, 180-183).

hegemonic ideological system therefore cannot be ended or escaped through revolutionary changes of world-historical significance (Baudrillard 1996a, 2).

Capitalism today – what Hardt and Negri call Empire – has become utterly inclusive, to the extent that even ‘difference’ is now merely fuel to aid the functioning of the global and globalising market (Hardt and Negri 2000, 150). As Hardt and Negri argue, “[d]ifferences (of commodities, populations, cultures, and so forth) seem to multiply infinitely in the world market, which attacks nothing more violently than fixed boundaries: it overwhelms any binary division with its infinite multiplicities” (Hardt and Negri 2000, 150). In Hegelian terms, such capitalism swallows up any potential antithesis (Hardt and Negri 2000, 189).

This argument about the ‘end of history’ could easily be read as conservative – as arguing that an effective challenge to capitalism is no longer possible (see Callinicos 2003b). However, to do so would miss out on an essential second argument that needs to be read alongside it: I would argue that ends of history have now also ended. As shown in Chapter 1, the symbolic reality of capitalism cannot securely absorb a real lack; it will also be shown below that capitalism cannot securely absorb countless real traumas. I will therefore argue below that the (im)possibility of radical political acts, and other techniques of political action, remains open.

With this in mind, it will be helpful to turn to Derrida’s Specters of Marx (Derrida 1994). After Derrida, we should begin by affirming absolutely that the ‘traditional’ Marxist/Communist idea of history and of historical progress toward an international revolution of the proletariat is lost to us – is (as it always has been) a ghost (Derrida 1994, 99). This may seem to mean that capitalists can now breath a sigh of relief and say that communism is dead, is finished (Derrida 1994, 99). However, communism was *never* anything but a ghost: Marx and Engels’ “Specter haunting Europe” (Marx and Engels 1954, 495). Capitalists such as Fukuyama therefore “do no more than disavow the undeniable itself: a ghost never dies, it remains always to come and to come-back” (Derrida 1994, 99).

In realising that communism (along with its stories about history and change) is and always was a ghost – we have become incredulous towards historical metanarratives, and communism never did ‘really’ take place – we

have reached an end of ends of (capitalist and communist) histories (Derrida 1994, 99; Lyotard 1984, xxiv). While capitalism might have attained a kind of totality, might no longer allow any antithesis to challenge its hegemony, the ghosts of communism still haunt it and, as ghosts, are not the type of thing that could ever be killed. A capitalist ‘end of history’ can thus never be secure. The real lack at the heart of capitalist reality, the traumatic lack that haunts capitalism’s political and economic reality, means that even after the ‘end of history’ impossibly radical political change might still take place.

This spectre of communism thus means that capitalism can never attain closure: as argued above, such ghosts can never be securely eradicated, can never completely die. Without such closure, no ‘end of history’ can ever be a complete ending – as argued in Chapter 1, there is always ‘something more’ left outside of our political reality – and ends of histories have therefore themselves come to an end.

Political action after the end of ends of history now lies in haunting capitalism with the ‘something more’ outside of its political reality. The type of ‘tarrying with the negative’ advocated in Chapter 1 would be one example of such action.

Political action now lies in living in a profoundly capitalist ‘end of history’, but nonetheless haunting “the misery of [capitalist] power [with] the joy of being” otherwise (Hardt and Negri 2000, 413). It is in such action that there lies “the irrepressible lightness and joy of being communist” (Hardt and Negri 2000, 413).

This wonderful, ‘irrepressible’ lightness can only exist *after* the death of communism, can only be the lightness of the ghost of an ideology. For example, Negri’s own waxing lyrical about the joys of communism would have seemed far heavier when the Soviet bloc was still holding millions under oppressive ‘communist’ regimes.

The ‘War on Terror’ and Incorporation

While much of the argument above chapter may seem very abstract, I would like to emphasise once again that this “abstraction is inscribed into very ‘real’ situations” (Žižek 2002b, 36). For example, a certain kind of incorporation and end of history can be seen in the way that Operations Enduring Freedom and

Iraqi Freedom were justified in terms of respect for the ‘human rights’ of Afghans and Iraqis (Blair 2002a; Blair 2003f; Burrows 2002; Bush 2005a).

These Operations aimed, in part, to erase the differences between ‘them’ and ‘us’ and thus fully incorporate citizens of these ‘rogue’ states into a (neo)liberal regime of human rights and ‘democracy’: the operations were often justified in these terms. For Bush, for example, central to the ‘war on terror’ is “the universality of liberty. And we must never forget the origin of our own founding, as we look around the world” (Bush 2006a).

Sadly, such attempts to construct a global system of (neo)liberal ‘human rights’ are carved out in blood on the bodies of many actual humans: “although the practice of Empire is continually bathed in blood, the concept of Empire is always dedicated to peace – a perpetual and universal peace outside of history” (Hardt and Negri 2000, xv). It is however still notable that, rather than using the imperial logics of colonialism and exploitation, Empire works by *fully incorporating* its others into its system (Hardt and Negri 2000, xii-xiii).

Bialasiewicz et al therefore argue that we are seeing the “deployment of integration as the principal foreign policy and security strategy. It is telling that Bush’s claim of ‘either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists’...relies not on a straightforward binary, as is sometimes suggested, but a process of incorporation” (Bialasiewicz, Campbell et al. 2007, 415. Emphasis modified). Given my focus on military conflict, I am particularly interested in the US military’s approach to incorporation.

One significant example of these attempts at incorporation can be found in Lt. Gen. Chiarelli’s account of the need to include cultural issues in the ‘full spectrum’ of US operations in Iraq (as briefly discussed in Chapter 3) (Chiarelli and Michaelis 2005). For Chiarelli and Michaelis, if the US is to be successful in Iraq the ‘hard power’ operations of the US military need to be accompanied by operations to “support...the cultural realities of the area of operations” (Chiarelli and Michaelis 2005, 4).

In order to achieve such a task, the US military needs a “keen understanding of demographics as well as the cultural intricacies that drive the Iraqi population” (Chiarelli and Michaelis 2005, 5). The type of ‘cultural awareness’ that Chiarelli seeks to incorporate into the full spectrum of US operations thus mitigates against moves to altogether destroy the ‘other’ culture.

Instead there are attempts to draw on particular aspects of said culture in order to assist with US operations. It therefore looks likely that some aspects of ‘Iraqi Culture’ will be incorporated into Empire (while certain other cultures in Iraq are directly targeted with the ‘hard power’ of US operations). Iraqis (and foreigners who are politically active in Iraq) can thus either be with ‘us’ or with the ‘terrorists’.

The refusal of Empire to recognise any antitheses is especially clear in the reaction when the US-led Coalition in the ‘war on terror’ meets violent resistance. The Coalition and their supporters often respond “as if the ultimate proof that [their opponents] are truly criminal terrorists (‘unlawful combatants’) is that, when they are fired on, they *shoot back*” (Žižek 2002b, 92. Emphasis in original).

The very fact that some people violently resist the development and expansion of Empire – for example, that fighters in Afghanistan and Iraq returned fire at Coalition troops – is seen as demonstrating that those returning fire are criminals, or even mentally unstable (Žižek 2002b, 92). Those resisting Empire – listening to other voices, and responding to what various of the ghosts haunting Empire might have to say – can only be represented as mad or criminal. As argued below, what Foucault calls ‘the world’ (which may be similar to what Hardt and Negri call ‘Empire’) lacks a way to justify itself in the face of such madness (Foucault 1967, 289).

Ethics and Trauma: Suffering and Trauma Did Take Place, and How to Respond to Them

Having come near to the end of the thesis, and to the end of (ends of) history, a number of factors mean that it would be unsatisfactory to end here. Having spent several years reading and writing about various types of violence, what remains at the ‘end’ of this thesis is the real trauma that this violence has inflicted – and continues to inflict – on countless people. It is this trauma – which, as will be shown below, cannot be satisfactorily contained in the discourse of this thesis or in any other discourse – which means that the thesis cannot end here.

There is still (and will continue to be) something left, and the thesis must respond to this ‘something’. My failure in the thesis to ‘completely’ deal with or

engage with this trauma means that is still scope for the thesis to keep moving (and that there will be an imperative for my political research to keep moving even after the completion of this thesis) (see Butler 1997b; Philips 1997).

In response to this trauma, and to our responsibility – and my responsibility – to traumatised others, it is important that this thesis should engage with the horribly real trauma caused by war. I will therefore analyse such trauma here. This trauma also provides an imperative to develop ethical and political responses to conflict: as will be argued below, there is a need for ethical responses to the trauma of others, and for political acts to disrupt the violence of today's *status quo*.

Sadly, the conflicts analysed in the thesis have generated too many examples of trauma for me to discuss them all. Violence that is ongoing at the time of writing means that certain potential 'examples' are in a considerable state of flux, and would thus be significantly more difficult for me to analyse. I will therefore focus on the example of Gulf War Syndrome, because of the availability of information on this Syndrome and the additional perspective made possible by the length of time that has passed since 1991.

Analysing Suffering as Socially Constructed

As argued in Chapter 1, one should not look for a positive real behind the 1991 Gulf War: such moves are unhelpful. I will also not look for any positive real behind the suffering and trauma caused by the Gulf War, or by Gulf War Syndrome. That said, I should emphasise that I do not deny the reality of the suffering and trauma that this war has caused and is causing.

I would view it as pointless – even, as will be argued below, damaging – to search for any real thing behind this suffering, for a thing which 'really' caused this suffering and which allows us to distinguish 'genuine' from 'fake' suffering. However, this certainly does not imply that pain no longer hurts.

To argue that certain modes of suffering are socially constructed, and are only possible in a particular society and time period, is not the same as saying that this suffering is somehow fake or imaginary. Instead, it would involve analysing how such suffering is "*made real*" and simulated as part of our discursive reality (Edkins 2003b, 43-44. Emphasis in original).

This move is of considerable political importance. It allows one to escape from purely and crudely biological, psychological or therapeutic models of suffering and trauma – in which such experiences are assumed to be pre-politically present. Instead, one can move to an analysis of how suffering and trauma are constructed through political processes, and of the political implications of such experiences.

Including a discussion of virtual suffering and trauma in the thesis will also let me rebut the commonplace criticism that virtual theories, such as those utilised above, ignore suffering and trauma. I will demonstrate that, on the contrary, my approach actually allows an improved account of such experiences. I will also demonstrate how such an account allows these experiences to be more effectively used as part of and/or inspiration for political action.

There is No Positive Real to be Found Behind Trauma or Behind the Traumatized Subject

An awareness of the absence of any positive real behind our political reality opens up numerous opportunities for political action. Clearly, the violence of the Gulf War did cause (and is causing) trauma and suffering. When discussing trauma in this context, one should first note that a significant part of the trauma arising in many of the (Coalition) veterans of the Gulf War was caused by the heightened fear brought about by exaggerated reports of Iraqi military capabilities:

Apprehension and uncertainty about possible attacks, the effectiveness of defensive suits, and the possible side effects of prophylactic agents aimed at mitigating consequences of exposure to chemical weapons served as a constant backdrop to the day-to-day hardships of preparation for possible war (Davis, Marshall et al. 1999).

This already suggests that we have moved past a ‘traditional’ model of trauma: where a pre-existing individual is traumatised by something terrible that ‘really’ happens, by an intolerably real presence. In Iraq, what was traumatic was a real lack or absence. It is Iraqi military capabilities that did not exist

which proved so traumatic for many of the troops in the Gulf, and the way that these non-existent things were presented had clear political dimensions.⁹⁵ This view of trauma very much resonates with a Lacanian account of subjectivity.

From a Lacanian perspective, the socialised subject is formed when we ‘lose’ the access to real *jouissance* which it is retrospectively assumed that we were able to enjoy as children (Butler 1993a, 204; Stavrakakis 2002).⁹⁶ This ‘loss’ is necessary in order to allow our entry into the symbolic, into an intersubjective discursive reality in which the real and *jouissance* cannot be represented without the very signification of this reality unravelling (Butler 1993a, 204). The subject is then “always-already traumatised” (Stavrakakis 2002). We are necessarily, in order to exist and persist as socialised subjects, traumatised by losing our supposed direct access to *jouissance* on our entry into the intersymbolic system; we are thus ‘alienated’ in the symbolic order (Butler 1993a, 204; Groden and Kreiswirth 1997).

This leads us towards reading trauma as a double-movement. What is traumatic about trauma is not that it confronts us with some terrible Thing that threatens to disrupt our supposed status as complete subjects. Instead, trauma confronts us with the impossibility of ever attaining complete subjectivity due to the real lack that is constitutive of this very subjectivity. Trauma is thus traumatic in that it confronts us with the real lack around which our subjectivity is formed. Rather than being traumatic ‘in themselves’, traumatic events are therefore traumatic through referring back to an earlier trauma (which itself can never be complete) and trauma can therefore never attain a complete or positively real status.

As Edkins argues, trauma thus raises political possibilities by demonstrating the incomplete and therefore unfixed – in the sense of being both mobile and somehow ‘broken’ – nature of our subjectivity (Edkins 2003b, 16). By disrupting the supposedly sovereign subject, trauma can allow us to move from an increasingly technologised politics that assumes a pre-existing sovereign subject (and the exclusions needed in order to construct such a subject) and

⁹⁵ As noted in Chapter 3, apprehension about lacking Iraqi capabilities was also important in the discussion of WMD and links to Al Qaeda prior to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

⁹⁶ ‘*Jouissance*’ can be roughly translated as ‘enjoyment’, although to do so loses some of the sexual connotations of the term (Sheridan 1977, 281).

towards *political* action, where “‘the political’ implicates and produces subjectivity” (Edkins 1999, 1).

This allows political action that does not assume a preformed ideology or theoretical framework as a pre-requisite. For example – particularly noticeable in the US around the intervention in Vietnam and the current operations in Iraq – veterans groups have played important roles in anti-war movements. Sometimes these groups explicitly cast their political action both as a therapeutic process through which traumatised subjects are (re)formed and also as a political process of resistance to certain types of military action (Barton 2004; Harrington 1994; Herman 1997, 26-27, 200, 207).

Žižek’s account of subjectivity, the real and the Other of the symbolic system shifts subtly over the course of his work. This shift can be read as a move from an account of modern subjectivity to an account of ‘postmodern’ subjectivity. Following this shift will therefore help the chapter develop its account of how trauma functions in wars such as the 1991 Gulf War (which are often read as postmodern) and in the construction of subjectivity around these wars.

In Tarrying with the Negative, Žižek argues that the type of modern subjectivity analysed and developed by Kant and Hegel “struggled desperately to articulate...the dependence of the very assertion of the subject’s autonomy on the sympathetic response of an Otherness” (Žižek 1993, 169). The modern subject thus depends upon an “answer of the Real” to subjectivise “the abyss of the pure subject” (Žižek 1993, 169). Such an answer was, in a sense, guaranteed by modernity because, in the very same move in which the subject places everything at risk in order to obtain an answer from the real, this loss is given back to the subject.

For the modern subject (as represented in the earlier Žižek and – according to Žižek’s reading – in the earlier ‘structuralist’ Lacan) this ‘answer of the real’ is reassuring, shows that the Other is capable of giving meaning to their experience (Žižek 1999c). This modern subject would be close to a ‘hegemonic’ construction of ‘the veteran’: the type of strong, stable subject that the Gulf War may have been intended to produce, in order to allow the US to move beyond ‘Vietnam Syndrome’.

However, we have to face a 'postmodern' situation instead. While the modern subject renounces access to the Thing-*jouissance* in order to gain an answer from the real, the postmodern subject sees this real Thing-*jouissance* represented to it in all its banality and thus no longer takes any answer from the real too seriously (Žižek 1999c, 40–41 and 44).

Without a 'convincing' answer from the real, the postmodern subject feels the abyss of their impossible subjectivity all the more deeply. Any answers that the real may still have to offer us can no longer be taken altogether seriously in attempts to paper over "the abyss of the pure subject" (Žižek 1993, 169). This void of subjectivity becomes horrifying clear in Žižek's answer to "postmodern doubts about the existence of the ideological big Other": for Žižek, "it is the subject itself who doesn't exist" (Žižek 2002b, 86).

One could thus read the trauma of some Gulf War veterans as postmodern responses to the events that took place in the Gulf, and to their participation in these events. For example, rather than offering any answer from the big Other, the 'turkey shoot' that ended the Gulf War showed a violence which was divorced from any ideological Other that might let one make sense of it. There was no removal of the Saddam regime, human rights violations continued – and sometimes even intensified – in Iraq and Kuwait, and 'answers' could only come from a lacking 'principle' of sovereignty. It is hard to take such 'answers' seriously.

Žižek argues that "[p]erhaps...our very physical survival hinges on our ability to consummate the act of assuming fully the 'nonexistence of the Other', of *tarrying with the negative*" (Žižek 1993, 237. Emphasis in original). With the shift to a postmodern mode of subjectivity, this 'tarrying with the negative' becomes vital. Now that the real fails to give us any answer that can be taken seriously, the symbolic is disrupted by the exposure of the unsymbolisable real void that constitutes our subjectivity. We must therefore find a means of responding to such disruption.

The alternatives to tarrying with this negative are a constellation of particularly unpromising techniques for papering it over. We could, for example, depend upon "fake premodern forms of reliance on the 'big Other'" such as 'New Age' ideologies, or we could blame an 'other' for stealing our *jouissance* and thus implanting a real lack in our subjectivity (Žižek 1993, 237 and 203).

Tarrying with the negative is thus an important political strategy: it is necessary in order to avoid such undesirable political moves and – significantly – to maintain access to the space for political action which is opened up by the real impossibility of subjectivity, identity and society. The lack of any positive real behind suffering is a significant aspect of this politically important negativity, and is of particular relevance to a PhD thesis on military conflict: this will therefore be discussed below.

There is No Positive Real to be Found Behind Suffering

‘Gulf War Syndrome’ was a significant part of the reality of the Gulf War and of its aftermath. Although the deployment of troops into combat overseas may in itself have certain negative effects upon their health, “[t]hose who went to the Gulf were between two or three times more likely to complain of each and every symptom asked than those who went to Bosnia” (Kings College London 2004). Given the number of troops deployed to the Gulf – the Allied force numbered about 660,000 – this two to three fold increase in the number of veterans reporting numerous unpleasant symptoms indicates that a significant amount of suffering was caused (CNN 2001a; Hiro 1992, 316).

Since the apparent end of the Gulf War there has been considerable focus on the suffering of veterans through ‘Gulf War Syndrome’, and on whether or not this syndrome can be seen to be real. One can note, for example, that the US Department of Veterans’ Affairs is clearly concerned by the extent to which ‘Gulf War Syndrome’ is “unexplained” and “undefined” (The Department of Veterans’ Affairs 1999). However, openness to the suffering of veterans does not necessitate an account of whether ‘Gulf War Syndrome’ is real or not. For example, the Department of Veterans’ Affairs can offer certain types of ‘care’ to veterans in response to their experiences of ‘Gulf War Syndrome’ – despite the many uncertainties about the status of this syndrome (The Department of Veterans’ Affairs 1999).

An account of how this syndrome can be socially constructed might even allow a better understanding of and response to veterans’ suffering, could allow better political decisions to be made about it. With this in mind, one should note that ‘research’ into whether there is any positive real of ‘Gulf War Syndrome’ behind its discursive constructions has, on occasion, actually *damaged* the

interests of veterans. For example, the UK Ministry of Defence's Special Commission on Defence has condemned the way that scientific research can act as a "smokescreen" which serves to impede attempts to respond to veterans' suffering (Special Committee on Defence 2004).

By way of a preliminary account of the 'syndrome' arising from the Gulf War, I would note that to be suffering from 'Gulf War Syndrome' can sometimes allow one to find a particular 'space' where one's suffering and subjectivity can be securely placed. This is similar to how 'Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder' (as conceptualised by Edkins) may take place: it allows one to situate one's suffering in a way that 'just' experiencing diverse types of suffering or trauma would not (Edkins 2003b, 46-48).

There is therefore a certain comfort to be gained through attaining such a diagnosis, and this type of syndrome should thus be viewed as, at least in part, a component of the performative construction of one's subjectivity (see Butler 1993b, 13). Unfortunately, this comfort often comes only at the cost of papering over the real void in this subjectivity: for example through blaming 'others' (the military, the government etc.) for one's lack – for stealing one's *jouissance*.

I would certainly acknowledge that – often with good justification – medical diagnosis and treatment can play a major part in our response to suffering and trauma (see Herman 1997). However, reducing suffering and trauma to *nothing more than* a particular medical diagnosis should be read as another unfortunate technique for effacing the need to 'tarry with the negative'. This works to restrain the ability of trauma to destabilise our political reality (which will be discussed in more detail below).

Reducing suffering and trauma to nothing more than a medical diagnosis should be seen as an attempt to efface the 'presence' of a traumatic real that cannot be contained in or described by any such diagnosis. Trauma can lead to ethico-political action that takes us beyond both the traumatic event and the traumatised subject.

Trauma and Suffering Can Be an Ethico-Political Response to What One Has Done

A number of those suffering from 'stress' or 'Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder' (PTSD) after the Vietnam war could be seen as 'perpetrators': they had

killed or injured civilians, or had ‘just’ killed or injured other human beings (Edkins 2003b, 48; Herman 1997, 54). In attempts to offer ‘therapy’ to those suffering from such stress, veterans’ struggles to move from ‘symptoms’ to political action were often regarded as a mere ‘acting out’ of patients’ symptoms (Edkins 2003b, 50). However, such moves towards political action might better be viewed as ethico-political responses to what happened to soldiers – and in some cases as responses to justified guilt about the things that the soldiers had done. Similarly, among those soldiers who served in the Gulf War, those at increased risk of suffering from stress-related ‘illness’ included a range of groups who had acted in particular, ethically problematic ways.

One such group was “combat and transport units who had witnessed the combat or its aftermath on the Highway of Death or other areas in which there had been massive human and physical destruction” (Davis, Marshall et al. 1999). One should ask here what ‘witnessed’ means – what about those who engaged in or assisted this slaughter? And to what extent would veterans be justified in feeling partially responsible for the mass killing of retreating Iraqi troops that took place in this ‘turkey shoot’?

“Troops exposed to Iraqi dead, including badly burned and mutilated bodies [or] who observed injured civilians” were also at an increased risk of stress-related ‘illness’ (Davis, Marshall et al. 1999). Once again, one should ask how the troops’ ‘illness’ might relate to their role in these ‘observed’ bodies becoming dead, mutilated and/or injured. Soldiers who “had participated in...friendly fire incidents”, and thus played a part in killing or injuring their ‘comrades’, were also at higher risk (Davis, Marshall et al. 1999).

Stress-related ‘illness’ can then be, at least in part, an ethico-political response to what soldiers have done and to their (sometimes justified) guilt at their participation in this.⁹⁷ For example, it seems perfectly understandable for someone to respond to their guilt at killing civilians in an unjustified military action by starting or joining a peace movement to oppose future unjust military

⁹⁷ It should be noted that my argument that many of those who served in the Gulf War *should* feel guilty about their involvement in this war is not intended as an assault on the ethics of the individual soldiers involved in this action. Instead, I would follow the loosely Levinasian argument that our living in the world and our involvement in political action means that we all do or do not do things for which we *should* feel guilty: our hands (including, of course, my own hands) are always-already dirty because our ethical obligations to the Other can never be satisfied (Critchley 1992, 216).

actions. The therapist and activist Thomas Barton even advocates such political action as the best ‘treatment’ for PTSD (Barton 2004). I would (although cautious about the reference to transcendence) therefore largely follow Judith Herman’s argument that, when traumatised ‘perpetrators’ receive ‘treatment’, a good approach is to start from the belief that “[w]hile there is no way to compensate for an atrocity, there is a way to transcend it, by making it a gift to others” (Herman 1997, 207).

Trauma could thus lead to the realisation that political change is possible and to a desire to instigate such change. With this in mind, I would follow Herman’s argument that, with regards to assessment of one’s conduct, the aim of treatment should be “finding a balance between unrealistic guilt and denial of all moral responsibility” (Herman 1997, 68).

An account of trauma and suffering, where these experiences are read as arising from a real lack rather than any positive thing, could thus allow a more politically engaged account of suffering. Such an account could respect the agency of sufferers, and their capacity to bring about change.

As Connolly notes, “[s]ufferers are full of surprises” (Connolly 1999, 48). If there is no Thing behind trauma and suffering, if these are linked to a void or a lack instead, then how individuals respond to their experiences is undetermined. An impossibly real lack cannot be fitted into causality neatly enough for it to be included in any deterministic account of politics. Opportunities for *political* action therefore become available; this is what one might describe, echoing Edkins, as a space of the political (Edkins 1999).

Suffering and trauma do not determine how the ‘victim’ responds to them. For example, they do not determine whether a soldier will suffer from PTSD in such a way as to need ‘therapy’, whether they will participate in an anti-war movement, or whether both will be the case. There is therefore space for sufferers to surprise us with kinds of political action that will take both them and us beyond their suffering.⁹⁸

In loosely Žižekian terms, some Gulf War veterans would then typify ‘postmodern’ subjectivity. When the real fails to give them an answer that can

⁹⁸ For example, despite the broad range of symptoms suffered by Gulf War veterans, most of them are continuing to lead productive lives and to deal with these symptoms (Kings College London 2004).

order their experiences in any worthwhile way, they are instead offered ‘answers’ from the banal representations of trauma to be found in the certain of the therapeutic models of ‘PTSD’ or ‘Gulf War syndrome’. These ‘answers’ in fact work as attempts to paper over the real void in subjectivity. However, incorporating this void into the symbolic – securely covering it over – is ultimately impossible: the real void in our reality means that such closure cannot be attained (see Edkins 1999, 15). This inability to integrate trauma into a stable meaning or a stable reality can certainly lead to ‘pathological’ symptoms, but it can also provoke important political acts and lead to veterans taking on the challenge of ‘tarrying with the negative’.

This ‘postmodern’ subjectivity need not mean an end to ‘therapeutic’ responses to suffering: as acknowledged above, such responses can still be useful. However, what is required is to move beyond what may be a “desire to deny atrocities” and a temptation “to take the side of the perpetrator” (Herman 1997, 1 and 7). As Herman argues, the ‘neutrality’ of a therapist need not, in this context, mean moral neutrality (Herman 1997, 135). Instead, this type of work needs “a committed moral stance. The therapist is called upon to bear witness to a crime” (Herman 1997, 135).

Trauma Can Help Us Move Beyond a ‘Frozen’ Ethico-Political Stance

When viewing the guilt of Gulf War veterans as merely pathological, there is an implicit assumption that the acts they engaged in (and that their societies largely supported, or at least acquiesced to) as part of this war were ethically justified. It is tempting to see how far one could push this argument: Bryony Lavery’s play *Frozen* (as performed at the National Theatre in 2002) is interesting in this context.

Lavery depicts a serial killer who claims to feel no guilt at his crimes, but is just upset that he got caught; this lack of guilt is seen as pathological by the psychiatrist examining him, as is standard practice in the UK prison system. The play ends on a deeply ambiguous note – an ambiguity that left many reviewers thinking, incorrectly to my mind, that the play was arguing against retributive justice by “brush[ing] aside the idea of moral responsibility” – when the murderer at last begins to feel the pangs of guilt and kills himself in response to these feelings (Billington 2002).

While ambiguous, this suicide did at least show that it was possible for the murderer to feel the 'proper' guilt that his crimes deserved and to move beyond his (psychologically? morally?) 'frozen' state. One might use a very loose analogy to view certain of the 'symptoms' of those who bear part of the responsibility for the Gulf War as likewise being part of a positive move towards accepting their guilt, or at least as a move beyond being frozen in self-justification.

This moral stance and bearing witness should lead us to reject the assumption that responses to the trauma inflicted on soldiers by what they have done and what happened to them in the course of war are necessarily pathological. Instead, the assumption that these are always pathological can be seen as an attempt, on behalf of those societies who sent them into war, to escape their own (often justified) guilt. When a grossly immoral act has been committed one usually views feelings of guilt on behalf of the perpetrator as (at least initially) part of the *healthy* response to their actions. As noted above, Herman therefore views a "realistic" level of guilt as a significant goal of treatment (Herman 1997, 68).

With this in mind, part of the 'treatment' for many responsible for the Gulf War could in fact be to encourage them to experience justified guilt. It could, for example, be seen as a positive event if George Bush Senior were to move from being frozen in his attempts to justify the atrocities of the Gulf War to acknowledge his guilt (even through 'symptoms' such as suicide). 'Symptoms' of guilt in those wider sectors of the population that helped to perpetrate and to make possible these wars would also be welcome.

We could thus begin to move beyond the present situation where we are 'frozen' into a self-congratulatory stance: a stance which has recently made it much easier for 'us' to engage in atrocities as part of the 'war on terror'. For example, if the 'turkey shoot' of retreating Iraqi troops at the end of the Gulf War is believed to have been ethically unproblematic and any feelings of guilt felt by Gulf War veterans are pathological symptoms of their trauma then many current military tactics would seem comparatively gentle.

Regarding responses to the more recent atrocities of the 'war on terror', Naomi Klein argues that even anti-war movements have often been caught within a self-help paradigm that does not allow us to feel guilt at our involvement

in or acquiescence to war, or to make meaningful efforts to make amends (Klein 2004a). All-too-often, activists seek instead to find a 'closure' that will let them carry on with their lives, despite their knowledge of the atrocities of a 'war on terror' which they have failed to prevent and which they are failing to bring to an equitable end (Klein 2004a).⁹⁹ I would argue that an earlier frozen state can also be seen in our failure to come to terms with or try to make amends for the atrocities of the 1991 Gulf War. As Kellner notes, Saddam is expected to shoulder all the blame for the damage done by the 1991 Gulf War; this means that other actors are exonerated (Kellner 1992, 188).

It is now important to engage in political action to move ourselves out of this frozen state, perhaps by using 'trauma' to disrupt the types of subjectivity constructed by 'self-help' theories and to move towards more effective political acts. By not engaging with our responsibility for the events of the Gulf War – by not feeling justified guilt at these events – future atrocities in the 'war on terror' have been made easier to justify.¹⁰⁰

We should therefore work towards a Foucaultian stance in relation to the 'madness' and 'acting out' of traumatised Gulf War veterans (and other 'victims' of the Gulf War), where

the world that thought to measure and justify madness through psychology must justify itself before madness...And nothing in itself, especially not what it can know of madness, assures the world that it is justified by such works of madness (Foucault 1967, 289).

In the case of Operation Iraqi Freedom, we are now seeing a stark contrast between the ethical 'madness' of parts of the anti-war movement and the brutal 'rationality' of much of the conflict itself. Organisations such as Gold Star

⁹⁹ I should note that I include myself in this 'they' that failed to prevent the violence of the 'war on terror'.

¹⁰⁰ A powerful and recent example of this failure to feel 'proper' guilt for what is done in our name – of our still being frozen in a position of self-justification – is that when there were reasonably credible allegations about the slaughter of about 30,000 prisoners of war by Northern Alliance troops in Afghanistan (with the complicity of the US-led coalition, who are alleged to have provided spotlights in order to illuminate the massacre) this barely made a mention in the UK press (Rose 2004a; 2004c). While it is not possible to be sure of the accuracy of the allegations, it is striking that they received minimal media attention and there was not an adequate public investigation (Rose 2004a).

Families For Peace and Traveling Soldier place a great deal of emphasis on the trauma undergone by those sent to war and those they leave behind (Gold Star Families For Peace 2006; Traveling Soldier 2006). The ‘madness’ of such emotional appeals stands in stark contract to the rationality with which the brutality of combat is handled.

For example, one might note the rationality of attempts of military psychiatrists to diagnose and treat trauma in the field, so that soldiers can be returned to combat as quickly as possible (sometimes within 72hrs) (Herman 1997, 165). Likewise, the US military had a very matter-of-fact, ‘rational’ way of dealing with the use of white phosphorous in ‘shake and bake’ operations: they focused on the fact that this “proved to be an effective and versatile munition”, without addressing the more troubling ethical implications of its use (Cobb, LaCour et al. 2005, 26). Such actions must now be judged as much in the light of the ‘madness’ of those caught up in combat and its consequences as in the more ‘rational’ or rationalising discourses of those planning and legitimising this violence.

Trauma Can Make Available a Space and Time for Political Action

Such ‘madness’ and trauma can be politically invaluable. For Edkins, trauma can make available a space for political action – for action to respond to traumatised others (Edkins 2003b, xiv). One should note here that Edkins uses the term ‘political’ in opposition to ‘politics’, and defines political acts as those which implicate and produce subjectivity and are “unsupported by any foundation of legitimacy in the social order” (Edkins 1999, 1 and 8). Trauma can thus open a space for political action insofar as it highlights the unstable, contingent nature of our subjectivity. Trauma’s real lack can disrupt the symbolic, can disrupt the discourses through which our very social reality and our subjectivity are constructed.

Responding to trauma through ‘tarrying with the negative’ can therefore offer a means of resistance against states and against capital (Žižek 1991, 260). It can allow us to disrupt the histories through which nations, states and property rights are constructed by highlighting the real lack on which the ‘foundations’ of these entities depend (Edkins 2003b, xiv; Žižek 1991, 260).

We should now take advantage of the shift to ‘postmodern’ subjectivity, and the space opened up when the ‘answer of the real’ loses its authority and the real thus becomes a more ‘complete’ void in our symbolic reality. ‘Tarrying’, playing and struggling with the negativity – the void – that this ‘reveals’ can allow us to disrupt our social reality in order to engage in radical political acts.

As the real lack in our symbolic reality opens up, *anything* is im/possible. Causality, part of the symbolic – in Kantian terms, a category that orders our phenomenal reality – is no longer fully binding when the real void is exposed and even the distinction between the possible and the impossible unravels (Kant 1929, 409-414). When *everything* becomes im/possible, the im/possible includes radical political acts that may further disrupt – and altogether change – our social reality before being retrospectively attributed meanings (see Žižek 1991, 222).

In order to clarify this theorising on causality, it will be helpful to utilise Connolly’s work: he offers a compelling account of “emergent causality” (Connolly 2004b, 340-345). Drawing on his reading of Deleuze and Guattari, Connolly analyses an

‘uncertainty’ [that] exceeds the assumption of limited information marking conventional empiricist and rational choice theories; it also resides in the difference between human capacities of observation/conceptualization and the volatile character of the matter-energy flows under investigation (Connolly 2004b, 342).

This type of uncertainty is, I would argue, especially apparent in the complex netwar of Al Qaeda and of the ongoing insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq (as analysed in Chapters 2 and 3). Insurgent groups are able to take advantage of such ‘uncertainty’: acting within and disrupting the decision-making cycles of their opponents (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 11). As Connolly puts it, “[e]mergent causation issues in real effects without being susceptible to full explanation or precise prediction in advance, partly because what is produced could not be adequately conceptualized before its production” (Connolly 2004b, 343).

Connolly’s theorising here may sound rather abstract (it should be noted that the quotes above are drawn from a paper on research methods, so this is not

altogether surprising). However, this concept of emergent causality actually maps extremely well across to the politics of netwar and the ‘war on terror’.

As noted above, Arquilla and Ronfeldt argue that, “during the course of a netwar offensive, network forces will...be able to manoeuvre well within the decision-making cycle of more hierarchical opponents” (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 11). In Connolly’s terms, netwar forces will be able to create real effects through drawing on an emergent causality – and will do this before their hierarchical opponents are able to decide what to do, let alone come to understand their situation or the types of causality that are in play here.

To return to one of Rumsfeld’s statements, we should note that the US therefore “lack[s] metrics to know if we are winning or losing the global war on terror” (Rumsfeld 2003). Such emergent causality creates serious problems for attempts to measure or predict events using ‘traditional’ techniques such as rational choice theory or a ‘classical’ empiricism (Connolly 2004b, 340-345). Connolly therefore advises that “we *naturalize a place for mystery*, folding a modicum of it into emergent causality” (Connolly 2004b, 343. Emphasis in original). Echoing Connolly, I would emphasise the need to remain open to the possibilities created by the mysterious real lack in our reality and to remain open to the possibilities of the radical political act.

The understanding of our social reality that I develop above also has important implications for how one understands national identity – and what can be done to and with such an identity. Because such identity is impossible, is formed around a real lack, there is always the space to disrupt or destroy such identity – or at least to keep it moving – through political action (see Butler 1997b, 164). Through naturalising a place for mystery within these identities – realising their necessary incompleteness – we could remain open to the emergence of new causal factors. Reconceptualising trauma can therefore let us move past ‘conventional’ accounts of national identity that assume it to be pre-discursively constituted, to be an essence.

I would therefore advocate an account of how such identities are made possible by repressing the traumatic “little piece of the real” which persists at their heart where it “holds the place of [their] founding/foreclosed violence” (Žižek 1991, 260. Emphasis modified). This then opens up the question of how exposing such repressions can serve to disrupt national identities: new political

opportunities can be created by moving beyond identities such as ‘British’, ‘American’, ‘Iraqi’, ‘Sunni’, ‘Shia’ and ‘Kurdish’.

Trauma, Resistance and Depoliticisation

It is thus politically useful to view identities as *part of* the simulations that make up virtual politics and which attempt to cover over the real void in our symbolic reality. In the move to ‘postmodernity’ the political nature of suffering becomes ambiguous, and realities such as ‘Gulf War Syndrome’ can offer powerful ways of engaging with virtual politics.

If suffering is viewed as part of an engagement with politics, this allows a repoliticisation of these experiences – and allows them to have significant impacts on politics – instead of falling into a crude pathologisation or a ‘therapeutic’ stance. In terms of the utility of trauma in political action, one might note for example that (due in large part to the publicity given to, and the debates around, previous problems with ‘Gulf War Syndrome’ from the 1991 Gulf War) anthrax vaccines for UK soldiers serving in the 2003 Gulf War were ‘optional’ (MacKenzie 2003).¹⁰¹

In this context, Vanessa Pupavac’s work on ‘therapeutic governance’ is interesting. Pupavac argues that the representation of those who have been involved in conflict as traumatised is used to pathologise whole populations and thus depoliticise their post-conflict behaviour (Pupavac 2001, 369). Populations such as ‘Vietnam veterans’ or ‘Gulf War Veterans’ are assumed to be traumatised to such an extent that their attempts to offer ethico-political responses to their experiences are seen as a mere ‘acting out’ of their symptoms (Edkins 2003b, 46–48). Even behaviour that would be easiest to view as a rational attempt by veterans to improve their material situation – such as claiming not to have been ‘cured’ of PTSD when such a ‘cure’ could reduce a veteran’s entitlement to state support – is often viewed as a pathological manifestation of their symptoms (Edkins 2003b, 49).

This pathologisation – and the accompanying depoliticisation – of resistance can have striking results. For Žižek, an excellent example of this

¹⁰¹ It should however be noted that going onto the field – and thus risking exposure to biological and chemical weapons – was compulsory, rather constraining the ‘choice’ available to individual soldiers (MacKenzie 2003).

depoliticisation of resistance is to be found in the response to US-led Coalition troops entering Afghanistan and meeting Taliban/Al Qaeda resistance. As discussed above, Žižek observes the surprise that, when US-led forces faced Taliban/Al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan, “when [these fighters were] fired on, they [*shot*] back” (Žižek 2002b, 92. Emphasis in original). This shooting back was seen as ‘proof’ that these fighters were “criminal terrorists” (Žižek 2002b, 92).

When dealing with Iraqi troops in the 1991 Gulf War, there was a similar response to resistance. The ‘decent’ thing for Iraqi troops to do was to surrender. It was seen as acceptable – even, if one believes the US Air Force Chief of Staff Merrill A. McPeak, desirable – for the US to massacre retreating troops that had not formally surrendered (although the fact that they were moving away from Coalition troops and formerly occupied territory at considerable speed might have been seen as a hint) (Hiro 1992, 391; Kellner 1992, 369).

Rather than engaging with others, conflicts such as the Gulf War and Operation Enduring Freedom thus reduce otherness and its political action to apolitical fighters who can only surrender or be annihilated as ‘terrorists’ or ‘unlawful combatants’. As well as fighting from different military platforms, in the Gulf War the US and the Iraqis seemed almost to be communicating on different platforms as well (the *de facto* surrender of the retreating Iraqi forces in Kuwait could not be seen as such by US forces) and therefore could not fully engage with one another.

The way that certain (traumatised?) subjects cannot be political – cannot acceptably sacrifice themselves for a political cause – is particularly clear in discussions around the establishment of an International Criminal Court (ICC) and the ‘rights’ of American soldiers and veterans. The fact that US veterans of actions such as the Gulf War might be tried for war crimes has often been seen as a decisive argument against establishing such a court. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms has gone so far as to oppose US “ratification of the treaty because the ICC does not provide American soldiers with *total protection from prosecution* in military situations” (United States Mission to the United Nations 1999. Emphasis added).

However, the desire to protect veterans from punishment for war crimes they committed, from facing any legal action, is in fact a deeply dehumanising

tactic. As Hegel would put it, this deprives the veterans of the *right* to be viewed as political actors under the law and therefore to be punished for their actions (Hegel 1952, 81-82; Hegel 2004).¹⁰² Retribution can be seen as a communicative act – an attempt to show the perpetrator of a wrong its wrongness through a wrong on him or her – and refusing the criminal the right to retributive punishment is thus a part of an exclusion from the communication of the political community (see Nozick 1981, 370-372).

As Michael Moore puts it, a “moral being *feels* guilty when he or she *is* guilty of past wrongs” (Moore 2000, 243. Emphasis in original). Political beings should be expected to *feel* guilty when they *are* guilty. If I were to commit some appalling act – if, for example, I were to have participated in the massacre of Iraqi troops as they fled Kuwait – I would hope to feel terrible guilt at this, and such guilt seems a positive thing. I *should* then feel “guilty unto death” and would expect to face punishment or at least to suffer for my actions (Moore 2000, 242). Instead, however, veterans are offered ‘therapy’ to help them ‘get over’ their (often very reasonable) guilt. Any attempts to engage in political action in response to this guilt are seen as pathological and requiring treatment. Veterans are thus denied their right to be acknowledged (and, on occasion, punished) as moral and political beings. Here, I would follow Edkin’s argument that it is important to bring the political back into international politics (Edkins 1999).

It is also worth noting that – as part of state responses to ‘terrorist’ insurgencies – the political aspects of such insurgencies are often denied. The political projects of those using violence are often either cast as ‘just’ criminal (until recently, for example, in the British state’s treatment of IRA prisoners) or ‘just’ terrorist, with no political goals (as in the case of Al Qaeda in the ‘war on terror’) (CNN 2000; Bush 2006a).

Even when insurgents sympathetic to Al Qaeda took *de facto* control of the Iraqi town of Tel Afar – something that would seem easiest to read as a political move, even as a fairly conventional political move to achieve control over a certain territory – this was cast as ‘just’ terrorist violence (Bush 2006a).

¹⁰² Hegel goes so far as to argue that “action has a multitude of consequences. These consequences are the outward form whose inner soul is the aim of the action, and thus they are the consequences *of the action*, they belong to the action...acting means surrendering oneself to this law” (Hegel 1952, 81-82. Emphasis in original).

The (largely non-violent) insurgencies of global justice movements are also often situated as apolitical.¹⁰³ While I would not necessarily approve of such movements, moves to exclude (or try to exclude) these movements from the political realm are notable.

Political Action Today

Although attempts are made to exclude certain actors and interests from the political realm, opportunities for political action are still available. As argued in the Introduction, there is an ethical obligation to respond to others. The trauma analysed above calls for a response: there is an ethical obligation to respond to these traumatised others. One can begin by responding to the ongoing “mutilation of human lives by capitalism [with] a scream of sadness, a scream of horror, a scream of anger, a scream of refusal: NO” (Holloway 2002, 1).

Faced with the brutality of the ‘war on terror’ – and with the trauma that it has caused and is causing – one place to start is to find ways to say ‘no’ to this violence. One might note, for example, the non-violent peace protests which took place and are taking place across the world, Iraq Body Count’s tally of the civilians slaughtered in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Whitehouse.org’s mockery of the ‘war on terror’, etc. There are many ways to say ‘no’, and it is also possible for us to create new types of negativity.

A kind of negativity is, as argued in Chapter 1 and in this chapter, vital to our efforts to engage with politics and the political today. However, a sufficiently radical negativity will fail even to do nothing – nihilism taken to extremes will end up demonstrating the impossibility of nihilism, the impossibility of ever reaching an end – so that something ‘positive’ will still come out of this negativity (Baudrillard 1996a, insertions following end of final chapter; Blanchot 1997, 126). A ‘negative’ politics can still be extremely productive: it can produce alternative political realities. As Holloway argues, there is thus a kind of optimism in the ‘negative’ screams of anti-capitalists:

¹⁰³ The academic and activist David Graeber expressed his perplexity that – at the same time as he and others involved in global justice movements were speaking to the media about positive goals such as participatory democracy – the media were repeatedly stating that the ‘anti-globalisation’ protesters were ‘just’ anarchists without any positive goals (Graeber 2005).

We scream not because we face certain death in the spider's web, but because we dream of freeing ourselves...the scream of rage that arises from present experience carries within itself a hope, a projection of possible otherness (Holloway 2002, 6).

The radical negativity of our rage at the current political situation is thus also haunted or inhabited by a spectre of communism that retains a ghostly 'positivity' – by the aforementioned "irrepressible lightness and joy of being communist" (Hardt and Negri 2000, 413). This rage helps to ensure that the capitalist 'end of history' seen in the 'war on terror' is always denied closure – this is also the end of ends of history – because our screams of rage, the trauma of conflict and the spectres of communism continue to haunt the capitalist present (Hardt and Negri 2000, 413; Holloway 2002, 6).

It should be emphasised once again that these ghostly joys are dead, impossible, have never been. There is no 'pure' enjoyment with which to challenge capitalism: in becoming a 'we' that can take collective anti-capitalist action – in becoming socialised subjects – we are always-already unable to access what is posited as a lost real *jouissance* (Butler 1993a, 204; Stavrakakis 1999, 34). However, such ghostly joys can still play a valuable role in political action.

If one wished to push *Empire* towards a more Nietzschean style, it could be argued that the dominance of capitalism today means that it is in fact impossible to *be* a communist. Empire no longer allows any outside where a communist opposition can stably *be*, and I would doubt that the type of irrepressible joy advocated by Hardt and Negri could be found in a stable *being*. The political joy that Hardt and Negri feel and express – we should recognise, after Žižek, that enjoyment is now a very political factor – is instead the more fluid joy of a communist *becoming* (Hardt and Negri 2000; Žižek 1991).

These spectral, impossible joys and desires are, as ghosts, not the type of thing that can be killed. For example, the lack of *jouissance* which leads us onto the ladder of desire will – through its very nature as an un-satisfiable lack – ensure that the movement of desire and subjectivity can continue indefinitely (Butler 1997b, 9).

The 'end of history' is now ripped open by ghosts that are Other than or (un)dead to the capitalist account of history, by challenges to the capitalist symbolic too radically Other to be contained in its account of politics, and by real traumas that cannot be fully encompassed in any discourse (capitalist or otherwise). It is thus the political struggles that are often dismissed as lying outside of politics which actually engage most profoundly with the political today (Edkins and Pin-Fat 2004, 16-17). We should listen carefully to voices from subject-positions such as the 'bare life', the outsider, the refugee and the internee. As argued will be argued below, it is therefore important for trauma to be 'heard' – and for trauma to be used to push for political change.

Time for Revolution

Theoretical Framework – Negri

This traumatising of countless others in war – and the imperative to respond to their voices – calls for an ethical and political response: there is a real need to bring the political back in here, and to respond to our ethical obligations to others. I will therefore discuss some possible issues and strategies for those of us seeking political change after the end of (ends of) history, and then move to consider some potentially useful techniques.

As noted in the Introduction, I began writing this thesis driven by both a broadly Socialist existential faith and by an ethical obligation to others. However, as argued above and as will be expanded on further in the remainder of the chapter, I no longer have faith that a 'conventional' Socialist approach will be sufficient. My existential faith has therefore been modified by and during my engagement with virtual war. However, at the same time as this has taken place my analyses of the brutality of the 1991 Gulf War and the 'war on terror' have made me all the more convinced of the need to find effective political responses to such violence. This leads me to move – as I do below – to seek alternative means of responding to others.

In Time for Revolution Negri analyses the roles that differing constructions of time have played in the development of capitalism (Negri 2003b). With the move to 'higher' stages of capitalism, concepts of time shift and capitalism accelerates (Negri 2003b, 39). This acceleration means that, as

Negri argues, “the temporal rootedness of existence becomes more disquieting and pervasive” (Negri 2003b, 39).

For Negri, “time opens itself, in its interior, to a real contradiction while the real contradiction itself constitutes it in structural totality” (Negri 2003b, 38). This acceleration of time, and opening up of time to new possibilities, has had a number of political effects. For example, as argued above, networked actors are able to draw on an emergent causality to work inside and disrupt “the decision-making cycle of more hierarchical opponents” (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1996, 11; Connolly 2004b, 340-345). The Iraqi insurgency is currently able to draw on an emergent causality in order to outpace and outmanoeuvre US-led forces. There are attempts to cover up these failures and contradictions – for example, to claim that Iraq is a functioning, ‘whole’ state – but these attempts to efface the real lack can never be entirely stable or entirely complete (Williams and Roach 2006).

For Negri, we need to find a ‘time for revolution’ if we are to achieve the transition to something like Socialism or Communism. As Negri argues:

If there is a transition it happens in the form of antagonism and certainly not in the form of a linear utopia...Time will increasingly appear to us as the real material from which communism is constituted...the truth and concept of communist time will appear to us as fireworks and flares rather than as a secure trajectory of physical time. And yet it is necessary to begin (Negri 2003b, 46-47).

We thus need to find a kind of temporality in which revolution can take place after the end of ends of history. Insofar as it is still useful for us to think of utopias, these should be distinctly non-utopian ‘utopias’ which are situated very much inside of time and as part of today’s political struggles (Negri 1999, 112).

Once again, we can see here that political action has become a case of negotiating a contradiction. We must work to pull apart the linear account of time on which capitalism depends. We must move towards what Negri describes as “the productive passage of life [which] is here to be understood as the highest symbol of human dignity: where time is lived constitutively and redeemed in the negativity of class struggle” (or, I would add, other emancipatory struggles) (Negri 2003b, 126). By engaging with the productive becoming of life and

struggle, we can chip holes through the frozen constituted power of states and Empire: we can break through the apparently stable surface of our political reality (Buckley, Hardt et al. 1999, vii; Negri 2003b, 126).

This constituted power can be unfrozen through allowing greater freedom of motion to the constituent power of the multitude: constituent power can problematise constituted power and emphasise that state power was at one time ‘founded’ on a contingent lack of foundations (Buckley, Hardt et al. 1999, vii; Negri 2003b, 126). It is this “conflict between active constituent power and reactive constituted power [that] characterizes...revolutionary experiences” and “democratic revolt” (Buckley, Hardt et al. 1999, viii; Negri 1999, 139).

Emphasising the real contradiction(s) in the account of time on which capitalist production depends can thus be a way to move towards revolutionary action, to confront the constituted power of states and Empire. The realisation that (as argued above) communism has the character of a ghost can also allow us to realise that “[a]fter the death of each revolution, constituent desires disappeared but did not die. They burrowed underground in wait for a new time and a new place to spring forth again in revolution” (Buckley, Hardt et al. 1999, viii).

While revolutions to-date have failed, have been defeated by the constituted power of that time-period or have been quickly frozen into what is merely a new form of constituted power, this does not represent any final death of constituent power. In a sense, such radical politics is already dead, anyway: existing only as a spectre. There is, as Derrida argues, always the possibility of forming a New International – even or especially after the miserable death, destruction or corruption of previous Socialist Internationals (Derrida 1994, 14-15 and 103-104). In Negri’s terms, then, revolutionary “virtue survives its own political defeat; as constituent power, constituent motor, as hypothesis of a machine for liberation, it lives in modern history, ready to reappear anywhere democratic revolt resurfaces” (Negri 1999, 139).

Haunting, as Derrida argues, is thus “not *dated*, it is never docilely given a date in the chain of presents, day after day, according to the instituted order of a calendar. Untimely, it does not come to, it does not happen to, it does not befall, one day” (Derrida 1994, 4. Emphasis in original). We must, as implied by

Derrida's liberal use of quotes from Hamlet, throw time out of joint (Derrida 1994). And yet we must begin.

The 'War on Terror' and Time for Revolution

Once again, the above may all seem extremely abstract and 'theoretical'. However, I would again argue that this abstraction has very significant implications for the reality of international politics and political action. When looking at international politics today, and especially the brutality of the 'war on terror', an 'obvious' first response to a section titled 'time for revolution' is – yes, we need that *now*! Recent events in international politics should serve to bring radical political change to the forefront of many minds: the violence that is used to maintain the current (deeply flawed) *status quo* is now becoming horribly obvious.

It should, though, also be obvious that I would not have needed to use such abstract theoretical discussions if all I wanted to do was to demonstrate that it would be good if some aspects of international politics were changed. A number of political campaigners and researchers have demonstrated this fact very effectively in much more straightforward texts (see Ali 2003a; Klein 2000; Monbiot 2001; Moore 2002; Muttit, Hughes et al. 2005; Zunes 2006).

However, to return to my reading of Negri, while it is now time for revolution – we need to begin – we also need to find a time for revolution in which to begin. It is in this 'outside' of the time of capitalism that revolutionary political change might become possible. So, while this revolution depends upon the problematisation of accounts of time that allow concepts such as 'the beginning' to stand, nonetheless we must begin. With the continuing violence of the 'war on terror', our screams become more urgent and it becomes more important to 'begin' *now* (Holloway 2002, vii).

The lived experience of time and the time of lived experience have never been quite as stable as was 'conventionally' thought: "[e]ven ordinary perception moves pretty fast, faster than the conscious mind can think" (Connolly 2002, 27). What we see with the acceleration into hypermodernity and the great differences in speed that characterise virtual war is that "[t]hinking bounces in magical bumps and charges across zones marked by differences of speed, capacity, and intensity. It is above all in the dicey relations between the zones that the seeds of

creativity are planted” (Connolly 2002, 66). It is in such ‘magical bumps’ that an emergent causality might be found (Connolly 2004b, 340-345). However, as shown in Chapter 2 and 3, this acceleration is also an important part of the productive and destructive capacities of netwar.

It is thus tempting to respond to the speed of the ‘war on terror’ with a kind of depression: the remarkable speed with which Iraq could be invaded and occupied, for example, might seem to leave no space for analysis or for any political decision (Virilio 2002a, 43). However, such differences in speed, to an extent, are to be celebrated: they open a space from which new creativities can emerge, as well as what Der Derian analyses as new ultra-catastrophes (Der Derian 2005). To refer back to De Landa’s work, “cracks and fissures [will] open in the war machine”, and these cracks and fissures will create opportunities for political action (De Landa 1991, 178).

I would therefore reject Virilio’s mild nostalgia for a past where things supposedly functioned at a more ‘human’ speed (although I would argue that the dromologic of virtual war and politics is also making it harder to learn any historical ‘truth’ about what was supposedly a slower past). Instead, one response to the speed at which states and their militaries function in the ‘war on terror’ would be to buy into the innovative use of virtualities *more fully* than they do, to go *faster*, to find *higher* rates of acceleration and to switch velocities *more* quickly (Dillon and Reid 2001). As argued in Chapter 2, the move to virtual warfare is ethically and politically ambivalent. However, this move can open up new opportunities and new ethical and political possibilities, as well as bringing a number of negative consequences.

Political Action: What Can Be Done?

The acceleration associated with virtual warfare thus opens up certain opportunities for political action, while closing other potential avenues. Even after the end of (ends of) history, trauma still remains – as does the obligation to respond to the trauma of others. However, I have also shown above that the ways in which trauma is now ‘managed’ have worked to depoliticise particular subject positions; this, along with changes in the ways in which time functions, makes resistance (in any ‘conventional’ sense) more difficult. We need to find a time for revolution, but it is still necessary to begin.

Put bluntly, all of this therefore raises the question of what can now be done. I will therefore move to look at how one might challenge the current political *status quo*. I will advocate a move beyond 'conventional' critical approaches, in order to build a more effective critical politics and to find alternate means of political action.

We Should Move Beyond the Conventional 'Critical' Modes of Interpretation and Resistance

One inference that should be drawn from my argumentation in the thesis is that we must now abandon 'critical' attempts to look 'behind' representations of war in order to affirm some of these representations as true. The trauma of conflict – as analysed above – should remind us that all that is behind the representations of our reality is a real void that can no longer supply us with any answer that can be taken seriously.

The type of 'critical' stance that is so common on the Left – where thinkers try to reveal the lies told to 'us' in order to justify unjust wars, for example – is in fact complicit with the simulations through which these wars are constructed.¹⁰⁴ Such a stance allows, for example, too much emphasis to be placed on the opposition between those for and against the Gulf War – without asking more useful questions about how (as discussed in Chapter 1) the Gulf War was simulated and how this atrocity was able to masquerade as a just war. Baudrillard therefore complains that all (whether pro- or anti-war) agreed that the Gulf War existed and there was therefore "no interrogation of the event itself or its reality...The real victory of the simulators of war is to have drawn everyone into this rotten simulation" (Baudrillard 1995, 58-59). Broadly following Baudrillard, I will therefore suggest three alternative means of resistance that are potentially more effective than a 'conventional' critical stance.

Resistance Through Believing Too Much

Those who 'really' believed in Communist ideology were often made dissidents by believing *too much* in what their regimes had said (Žižek 2002a). Likewise, those who take the Neoliberal emphasis on concepts such as 'human

¹⁰⁴ As argued above, my existential faith has been modified in the course of writing the thesis; a loss of faith in this type of 'critical' left-wing stance is one aspect of this modification.

rights' too seriously have often been propelled into political action against certain aspects of Neoliberalism. Groups such as Amnesty International, dedicated to defending a philosophically dubious – but nonetheless extremely valuable – system of human rights would be one example of this. One should also note writers such as G.A. Cohen who, through believing too much in liberal theories of justice such as Rawls' – making explicit the anti-capitalist implications of Rawls' 'difference principle' – offer powerful challenges to the distribution of resources under capitalism today (Cohen 2000, 125-127; Rawls 1972).

Believing too much in an ideology can lead to a disruptive failure to take account of the necessarily self-effacing nature of the unwritten rules underlying an ideology. For example, Žižek argues that the unwritten rule in Stalinist Russia was that Comrade Stalin must not be argued with by his colleagues in the Duma (Žižek 2002a). However, if someone in a cabinet meeting had made explicit this rule in order to challenge someone who did disagree with Stalin, they would have likely to be executed before someone who actually challenged Stalin (Žižek 2002a).

An equivalent *faux pas* in Neoliberal society might be to make the 'error' of making *too explicit* the unwritten rules about whose rights 'human rights' are. One might note, for example, the numerous (neo)liberal attempts to avoid acknowledging the sex-specific origins of 'human rights', or the controversy generated when groups such as Amnesty made explicit the contradictions between a self-proclaimed belief in human rights and practises of torture and detention without trial (Amnesty International 2006; Fisk 2005; Pateman 1988).

It is therefore the case that "[s]ometimes...the only truly subversive thing to do when confronted with a power discourse is simply to *take it at its word*" (Žižek 1993, 237. Emphasis in original). This tactic of 'naively' believing in the simulation 'too much' can, indeed, be deeply disruptive – can be significantly be more troublesome than a 'conventional' critique.

For example, if we really believe in all today's (neo)liberal discourse about the need to enforce human rights in the International System, this leaves us with 'no choice' but to take radical political action in many ways that go beyond and against the type of politics that were simulated in the Gulf War and the 'war on terror'. For example, we should challenge the way that racist societies

necessarily abrogate the human rights of many of their residents and citizens, seek to defend human rights across all the Middle East, take Bush Senior into custody in order for him to be punished for his involvement in human rights abuses, etc.

Marxism's role as a 'mirror of production' could thus, contra-Baudrillard, in fact be its greatest *strength* as a political strategy: it allows us to participate too fully in the system it mirrors and thus reflect its contradictions back onto it (Baudrillard 1975).¹⁰⁵ Marx's analyses of and reflections on capitalism should therefore be read in the light of his claim that "capital contains contradictions. Our purpose...is to develop them fully" (Marx 1973, 351. Emphasis modified).

As argued above, the violence of Empire works to incorporate its others – making 'resistance' in any conventional sense of the word extremely problematic. In order to challenge the *status quo*, one of the techniques that Edkins and Pin-Fat therefore suggest is to emphasise the workings of this violence by not attempting to resist but instead by making the violence obvious and (Edkins and Pin-Fat 2004, 16).

By being more Neoliberal than the Neoliberals, by buying too much into the beliefs that govern the system and thus being too accepting of Empire, the contradictions and violences in this system might at least be highlighted (Edkins and Pin-Fat 2004, 18). Through an excessive acceptance of and submission to Neoliberalism, we could thus render explicit our subjection under Empire in such a way as to highlight its violence.

Resistance Through Refusing to Draw Certain Lines

The strategy discussed above is, of course, rather uncomfortable: many people would struggle to muster this excessive support for Neoliberalism. Happily, there are other options. We should now maintain a loosely dialectical relationship between two alternatives: firstly, one should use the aforementioned

¹⁰⁵ One possible route for such resistance can be seen in Hardt and Negri's post-Marxist reappraisal of the role of 'free trade': they note that "proponents of capital celebrate a new era of deregulation and free trade" (Hardt and Negri 2000, 306-307). However, instead of the usual leftist challenge to this Neoliberal dogma, Hardt and Negri *take this discourse at its word* – arguing that "[i]f this really were the case, if the state really had ceased to manage the affairs of collective capital and the virtuous dialectic of conflict between state and capital were really over, then the capitalists ought to be the ones most fearful of the future! Without the state, social capital has no means to project and realize its collective interests" (Hardt and Negri 2000, 307).

technique of taking Neoliberalism too seriously; secondly, Edkins' and Pin-Fat's suggested strategy of refusing to draw the lines on which Empire depends may also be beneficial (Edkins and Pin-Fat 2004, 13).

If we can move beyond drawing lines between such categories as 'human'/'non-human' or 'male'/'female' then this will also serve to disrupt Empire (Edkins and Pin-Fat 2004, 13).¹⁰⁶ For example, biopower necessarily depends upon drawing a distinction between life and non-life and between human, pseudo-human, sub-human and non-human (Edkins and Pin-Fat 2004, 13; Rorty 1993, 112).

Those of us in the academy who find support for Neoliberalism hard to muster may find this technique especially appropriate. There are obvious links here to the theoretical work that has been done in order to 'deconstruct' today's social and political categories. What is now needed is to use this theoretical work in order to 'deconstruct' the discourses of Empire and challenge the actualisation of its discourses.

It should be noted that, in the above paragraph, I use 'deconstruct' in inverted commas for a reason: the type of 'deconstruction' to which I refer differs significantly from (a common interpretation of) Derridean deconstruction. Clarifying this will be helpful, in order to emphasise that this is not 'just' a Derridean strategy and to explicate what I do mean.

The strategy that I advocate would not seek to 'unmask' the violence of logocentrism, and it would not follow Critchley's strategy of seeking to find and be faithful to a perspective of the victims (Critchley 1992, 30). After Nietzsche, I would instead seek to use 'deconstruction' as a violent textual strategy that constitutes a no-saying to the distinctions on which Empire depends. Such a strategy would offer the hope of moving beyond the appalling Being of Empire, towards a yes-saying to the Becoming of the political (Nietzsche 1967, 273-274).

Nietzsche argues that it is a winter doctrine to believe that our reality is stable: like a frozen river, even what appears to be frozen is always in motion underneath the frozen surface (Connolly 2002, 54-55). The *bricolage* of

¹⁰⁶ It should be emphasised that by arguing that there is no clear distinction between these categories I do not deny that there might be ethically and politically relevant differences between things that fall into different categories. For example, arguing in favour of the 'deconstruction' of the 'human'/'non-human' dichotomy does not mean that I would not acknowledge ethically relevant differences between a mouse and myself.

‘deconstruction’ would here be used as a chisel, to chip away at the ‘frozen’ Being of sovereign power – the Being of politics – in order to reach the Becoming of the political (see Spivak 1974, xix-xx). This Becoming of the political is always in motion, always remains moving and hidden ‘underneath’ where the Being of sovereign power would seek to construct its foundations – which are already undermined by this Becoming – as stable (see Butler 1993b, 7).

These two techniques for challenging sovereign power should therefore be maintained in a ‘permanent’ dialectical tension: on the one hand taking Neoliberalism too seriously, and on the other hand challenging the distinctions on which it depends in order to tear apart its categories. This move would allow a two-pronged attack that might constitute an effective challenge to Empire.

The Real Political Act

The two strategies discussed above loosely fit into the categories of the Lacanian symbolic and imaginary. The strategy of excessive affirmation of such fantastic constructions as ‘human rights’ would belong firmly to the imaginary – buying into the fantasies of Neoliberalism in order to challenge it – while the ‘deconstruction’ of the categories of sovereign power would be a largely symbolic game. Having laid out this dialectical pair, it is appropriate that there is still ‘something left’: the real radical political act forms an impossible third moment in this dialectic.

This is an absence in Edkins and Pin-Fat’s work on power and (non)resistance: they do not consider the possibility of challenging the *status quo* through radical political acts that lie in an impossibly real outside of this Neoliberal symbolic (Edkins and Pin-Fat 2004). What is left is the possibility of the appalling – unjustifiable, because it exceeds the symbolic order through which any ‘justification’ might be constructed – trauma and/or violence of a real radical political act (Žižek 2002b, 27-28).

Perhaps the most ‘obvious’ (though not the most desirable) means of doing this would be to reciprocate the violence of Neoliberalism. For Hardt and Negri, in certain elements of movements such as the US black nationalist movement there was a “violent reciprocity”, a reciprocation of the violence of

what Hardt and Negri call sovereignty (Hardt and Negri 2000, 132). This violence

does not lead to any dialectical synthesis; it is not the upbeat that will be resolved in a future harmony”; instead, “[t]his open *negativity* is merely the healthy expression of a *real antagonism*, a direct relation of force (Hardt and Negri 2000, 132. Emphasis added).

In Hardt and Negri’s terms, this “negativity...opens the field for politics” (Hardt and Negri 2000, 132). I would prefer to describe it in terms of the opening a space of the political, an opportunity for the real political act.

A third option for challenging Empire would thus be the trauma and/or violence of the real political act that marks out the impossibility of any ultimate harmony or dialectical synthesis. This would be an unfounded (and potentially, though not necessarily, violent) move which destroys the current regime of sovereign power and instigates a new regime (Edkins 1999, 5; Žižek 1991, 222). However, due to the real and therefore unsymbolisable nature of such political acts, it is literally impossible to consider the form that such acts might take and the type of regime that might result (Žižek 1991, 222).

The act itself is then, strictly speaking, impossible. Edkins argues, quite correctly, that the nature of Empire does not allow subjects to reciprocate its violence, and that it is impossible to use violence to move us out of this relation of violence (Caruth and Edkins 2004). However, it is in this very impossibility that the real political act resides.

The thesis and antithesis of this dialectic should therefore remain held in tension. The third moment of this dialectic does not constitute any kind of synthesis, as synthesis is literally impossible here: it is this impossibly real synthesis that constitutes a third moment in the dialectic.

It should be apparent that the strategy advocated above bears more than a passing resemblance to the Derridean double contradictory injunction. However, it is by considering the aforementioned impossibly real synthesis – the ‘something left’ – that the distinction between my approach and the Derridean double contradictory imperative can be clarified.

For Derrida, the tension between these contradictory injunctions is maintained and any 'beyond' to them, such as the "emancipatory promise" that exceeds deconstruction, nonetheless fails to offer any way 'beyond' this logic of double imperatives (Derrida 1994, 59). What is important is 'just' for the subject to "remain faithful to the double injunction" while nonetheless reaching political decisions (Campbell 1998, 185 and 188-190; Derrida 1992, 38-39).

My strategy, in contrast, emphasises an impossible 'resolution' of these contradictory injunctions – or, better, a coming apart of the whole symbolic system in which these double contradictory injunctions can be experienced as double and contradictory. This impossible 'resolution' would constitute a pulling apart of both thesis and antithesis (or, in less Hegelian terms, of the double contradictory injunction) in the course of a radical political act that works to break up and reorder the symbolic and the imaginary, shifting their relation to the real void. While Derrida's double contradictory injunction leaves subjects always 'oscillating' between the two imperatives, always making and remaking their 'mad' decisions, my strategy posits an impossible move 'beyond' these imperatives (Campbell 1998, 184-185; Derrida 1992, 38-39).

To put this in the context of Lacanian psychoanalysis, such a move 'beyond' this imperative would be loosely analogous to the possibility of an analysand fall out of their identification with the Other of the symbolic system: a fall into the suicide of the political act (Harari 2001, 83-85). The radical negativity of such a suicide could, as discussed above, open up new political possibilities and allow the formation of new political realities.

Conclusions

This chapter has analysed the role of trauma in politics, and argued that there is an imperative to respond to this trauma. We must try – and will fail – to respond to the impossibly real trauma that remains after the end of, and cannot be contained in the discourses of, our political reality (and, of course, this thesis). While I have argued that we are at an end of histories, this real trauma – which cannot be fully incorporated into any discourse – means that we are also at an end of ends of histories: a capitalist end of history cannot ever attain closure.

Bearing this in mind, along with our ethical obligation to respond to traumatised others, I have advocated a three-pronged strategy for challenging

Empire. The tactics of taking Empire's discourses *too seriously*, and of deconstructing the distinctions on which Empire depends, should be held in a 'permanent' dialectical tension: providing two different 'angles of attack'. However, I would also want to keep open the possibility for more radical political change: the reshaping or destruction of our current political reality through the negativity of impossibly real political acts.

One more possibility that I will – and should – leave open is that of additional engagements with international politics which build on and/or move beyond this thesis. By using the final chapter of the thesis to offer a disruptive analysis of trauma – an analysis that cannot be smoothly incorporated into the discourse of the thesis – I have sought to highlight the fact that this thesis is not a complete discourse. On the contrary, this final PhD chapter has allowed me to open up the discussion of alternative ways of engaging with conflict today and with international politics.

Such discussions and such engagements will require a move beyond the discourse of this thesis. I will take the opportunity to expand on these possibilities: both briefly, in the Conclusions that follow, and then at more length in my postdoctoral work.

Conclusions

As argued above, the thesis does not describe any kind of historical change. However, the thesis has covered a certain amount of ground and developed some ways of approaching virtual wars past, present and – I would, unfortunately, expect – future. I will therefore summarise the ground that I have covered: outlining how I have addressed my research questions, and the theoretical achievements of the thesis.

Research Questions Addressed, and the Ethical and Political Implications of This

The most significant research question addressed by the thesis was that of how war has developed over the past several decades. In the course of the thesis, I have mapped out two parallel processes: the US-led development of cyberwar techniques which allow the domination of high tech, large scale conflicts, and the development of netwar techniques that utilise the advantages of a network form in order to resist and undermine such cyberwars. At the time of writing, netwar actors are ‘successfully’ resisting the US-led deployment of cyberwar techniques. The US has not yet developed the capacity to deal effectively with such netwar, and does not appear likely to do so in the short or medium term.

As stated at the start of the thesis, I believe that it is important to analyse how war has developed over time instead of foreshortening the historical field. Over the course of the thesis, I have therefore used Chapter 1 to trace the development of the aforementioned netwar techniques back to the anti-Soviet Afghan insurgency. Chapters 1 and 3 both analyse the importance of the interoperability of new and old technology in cyberwar. Both these chapters also investigate how netwar actors in Islamist networks and Afghan and Iraqi insurgencies were able to use the advantages of a network form to ‘successfully’ fight hierarchical opponents that had access to significantly more technology and resources.

I began the thesis by questioning the role of ethical and representational factors in conflict, and the thesis gives considerable consideration to these questions. A first important finding to emphasise is that ethical and representational considerations cannot be avoided: it is that it is not possible for

effective military action to be divorced from ethical considerations. In particular, Chapter 3 finds that there are sound pragmatic reasons why ethical concerns need to be addressed when engaging with the Afghan and Iraqi insurgencies. Chapter 4 moves somewhat beyond these ‘policy’ considerations, to look at the type of actions that those of us outside of the policy community can use to influence our political reality and bring much-needed political change.

Given this pragmatic need for ethical engagement, I use the thesis to consider how such engagement might (or might not) take place. Chapter 1 begins to look at the role of normative factors – a ‘politics without principle’ – in legitimising the 1991 Gulf War, while Chapter 2 outlines the important role that normative and representational factors played in (the development of) netwar in Afghanistan and beyond. Chapter 3 expands this analysis further, considering the important roles that representational factors have played and are playing in the ‘war on terror’. Chapter 4 moves to address (or fail to address) ethical issues in more detail, analysing potential ethical and political responses to trauma and violence.

While such ethical and political questions could be analysed at great length, I have not been able to address them as fully as I would have liked in the course of this thesis. While ethical and political concerns have driven much of the work behind the thesis, I certainly do not offer any complete account of such issues here. From a loosely Lacanian perspective, it is this (inevitable) failure to achieve completion that can keep things moving, providing additional impetus for my postdoctoral work.

Theoretical Achievements

One of the first ‘theoretical’ points to note is that it is somewhat incongruous to have a section on ‘theory’ that is separate from the rest of my conclusions. One of the ‘theoretical’ achievements of the thesis is to demonstrate that – if one wishes to engage with the issues of acceleration, networking and complexity that play a major role in conflict today, and to begin to move towards the type of ethical positions necessary for successful interventions – one’s empirical research will become inextricably entangled with ‘theoretical’ issues.

Theory is thus not something confined to academic or other researchers: instead, the theory of conflict is inseparable from its practice in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. Theories of ethics, for example, are not just something for philosophers or just war theorists to consider. Instead, as Chiarelli and others in the US military appear to be starting to acknowledge, an engagement with such theories is necessary if there is to be any hope of ending the ongoing US-led failures in Afghanistan, Iraq and beyond (Chiarelli and Michaelis 2005). That said, a number of the concerns of the thesis are likely to be considered ‘theoretical’. It is therefore worth summarising some of these issues here.

As shown above, we need to develop theoretical approaches that allow us to engage with the complexity, acceleration and networking which are inherent in conflict today. In the thesis, I therefore develop a poststructuralist approach to the analysis of such networks. I draw on a number of social, political and military theorists in order to demonstrate the need to find relatively new ways to analyse such conflicts, and to begin to develop a fruitful approach to doing so. Instead of looking for a positive real behind the discourses of international politics, I demonstrate that it is more useful to analyse these discourses themselves and to investigate the ways in which they fail to incorporate a real lack.

An ‘obvious’ response to a poststructuralist discussion of virtual war is to point out that war – ‘virtual’ or otherwise – has very real political effects. With this ‘obvious’ criticism in mind, my theoretical approach analyses the virtuality of conflict today but also considers what Žižek describes as the reality of the virtual: the very real effects of these virtual wars (Žižek 2004h, 3).

While a thesis in this field is not the appropriate forum to build a ‘definitive’ theory of the ethics of international politics (if such a definitive theory is even feasible, which I doubt) I do begin to look at ethical and political aspects of netwar and cyberwar – and ways to theorise them – in the thesis. In particular, I use the thesis to demonstrate that there are good pragmatic reasons why ethical issues cannot be ignored, and draw in particular on Edkins’ and Žižek’s work in order to outline some potential ways of responding to our obligations to others.

Summary of Chapters

Chapter 1 focuses on the 1991 Gulf War, and how this played an important role in the US-led development of virtual war and cyberwar techniques. The chapter also showed how one might build a negative ontological framework, through analysing the failure of the Gulf War to take place (in certain ways) and demonstrating the utility of such analyses.

As a complement to Chapter 1, 3 and 4's analyses of cyberwar, Chapter 2 analysed the development of netwar techniques in the anti-Communist insurgency in Afghanistan and looked at how these techniques were turned against the US in the events of September 11. While Chapter 1 began the analysis of various failures of state sovereignty, Chapter 2 extended this in order to look at how networks such as Al Qaeda can and do cut across the boundaries of sovereign states and even go so far as to overlay such states. I have therefore demonstrated that – in parallel to the aforementioned US-led development of cyberwar techniques – other networks have developed netwar techniques against which cyberwar both was and is relatively ineffective.

Chapter 3 developed the work of the previous chapters further, bringing them relatively 'up-to-date' with present-day conflicts. This chapter showed that the 'major operations' phases of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom demonstrated the efficacy with which the US could use cyberwar techniques. However, the chapter also showed that these techniques tend to push opponents towards netwar strategies – which have been developed alongside US-led cyberwars, and have become particularly prominent in the aftermath of 'major combat operations'.

For all the focus on NCW in the US military, the US does not deal well with netwar opponents. Chapter 3 therefore analysed how and why cyberwar 'successes' in Afghanistan and Iraq have been followed by netwar failures. The chapter concluded with an account of how such failures might be prevented in the future, and demonstrated that there is a need to remember 'our' previous military failures (in order to avoid unwise military interventions in the future). If we do conduct military interventions in the future, there is a real need to find new ways of engaging with others and engaging in representational conflict.

The first three chapters of the thesis thus demonstrated that military conflict has developed in a number of ways. There has been a significant

acceleration of conflict, and different technologies and techniques have been brought into play. This can be read as a move to virtual war; however, I have demonstrated that it is also useful to analyse these changes as the parallel development of cyberwar and netwar techniques.

While the previous three chapters thus showed that various political changes have taken place, and Chapter 3 showed the pragmatic need to find different ways of engaging with others, Chapter 4 has looked at what types of political action might allow us to move closer to such ethical engagements. In doing so, the chapter has also moved to challenge the common misconception that theories of the virtual do not take adequate account of the trauma and suffering caused during violent conflict: it used the thesis' negative ontological framework to analyse the role of trauma and suffering in the Gulf War, and in politics in a broader sense.

As argued in Chapter 4, the trauma caused by conflict provides part of the reason why there is an imperative to act against Empire today. Bearing this in mind, I have suggested several ways of taking action under/against Empire. I have advocated several strategies that should be held in tension with – and used alongside – one another: I have suggested an excessive yes-saying to Empire, a deconstruction of the distinctions on which Empire depends, and a move towards the (im)possibility of the radical political act.

Deciding and Acting: The Example of United 93

Throughout the thesis, I have suggested a number of possible inspirations for political action and a number of means of taking action. Despite an end of ends of history, numerous opportunities for political acts and action (including, I would hope, many possibilities that I have failed to consider here) remain open. It now seems appropriate to end by referring back to – and paying tribute to – one inspiring political act that has played a significant role in 'mainstream' political discourse.

Chapter 2 analysed the political act of the passengers of United 93: in an uncertain situation, they "decided, and acted" (Kean, Hamilton et al. 2004a, 13). In doing so, they were able to significantly change the course of events.

While I would certainly acknowledge that alternative readings of these events are justified (for example, there would be scope for a critical analysis of

the political effects of representing these actions as heroic) this will not be my goal here. Instead, as I suggest in Chapter 4, I will draw out some of the political potentials of taking a 'mainstream' discourse – the representations of the events of September 11 in which these passengers are represented as heroes – at its word (Žižek 1993, 237).

My political situation, and the likely situation of any readers, is clearly very different from that of the passengers of United 93: we are not facing imminent violent death, for example. However, in finishing this PhD, and looking for new courses of action on which to embark, I would still like to draw some inspiration from these passengers.

Like these passengers, we cannot know enough about our political situation to act with any certainty and we cannot know the consequences of our actions. There is, in a sense, nothing on which to base our acts and actions (we cannot find any stable principles on which to act) (see Campbell 1993). However, there is still an imperative to take political decisions and to act – in order to respond to our ethical obligations to others, and to the violence of Empire.

As Chapter 4 has argued, it is unclear how a revolution might now take place or begin; however, the violence of the 'war on terror' and the violence of Empire mean that it is time for revolution *now*. Bearing in mind this urgent need to decide, act and begin, it seems appropriate to end by drawing inspiration from the passengers of United 93. As was the case for those on United 93, it is hard for us to know what action we can take or how to reach any kind of political decision. However, there is an urgent need to decide and act – now.

