This chapter considers countries at the periphery of South Asia—first Bhutan, then Afghanistan, Nepal and Myanmar. Events in these countries have cascaded violence from South Asia into Central Asia and the Middle East on one side, and South-East Asia on the other. Afghanistan, according to the analysis in this chapter, is a strong fit to the 10 propositions of our starting theory. Myanmar is a weaker fit, Nepal is a much weaker fit still and Bhutan barely fits the theory at all. Myanmar is more clearly part of South-East Asia than South Asia, though Myanmar has applied to be a full member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Afghanistan has significant historical, cultural and social ties with both Central and South Asia. Both regions’ political and strategic interests overlap in Afghanistan, contributing to its security dilemmas. We will see that cascades of violence that have shifted boundaries across the centuries are among the reasons for a degree of fluidity about what South Asia means.

Bhutan

Bhutan is the least geopolitically significant country of South Asia apart from the much smaller string of atolls of the mid-Indian Ocean that make up the Maldives. Bhutan has a tiny population of 744,000 and a weak economy. Its people are extremely poor. Bhutan has little in the way of natural resources. Timber is its most valuable resource, but
impenetrable mountains make such limited resources difficult to access profitably. So, potential invaders from the powerful states around it never saw Bhutan as a plum waiting to be plucked.

Moreover, Bhutan always recognised its weakness by aligning with the biggest kid on the block. It did not resist the British Empire and was an early mover in cultivating close ties with it. In 1910, the Treaty of Punakha guaranteed that British India would not interfere in Bhutan’s internal affairs if it accepted British advice on its external relations. After India became regionally dominant, Bhutan cut a similar deal with India. The Treaty of Friendship between India and Pakistan, 1949, stipulated that India would not interfere in Bhutan’s internal affairs, but would guide its foreign policy. India also dominates its economy and trade, with China having limited interest as a result of the impenetrability of this part of the Himalayas. This was a different situation from Tibet, which suffered brutal Chinese occupation, cascades of protest suicide immolations that continue to this day and integration into China because it was accessible from there. Tension was compounded by Indian destabilisation of Tibet’s integration. The upshot is that Bhutan is most unusual as a country in that it has been independent throughout its history as a state without ever having been conquered. In foreign policy and trade, it has, however, always been subjugated to the regional hegemon.

Bhutan therefore offers up considerable refutation of our cascade propositions. A methodological weakness of this book is that, at the outset, we decided not to undertake fieldwork in Bhutan because it has not hosted any of the subcontinent’s major wars—an error of selecting on the dependent variable. Perhaps the lessons from the history of Bhutan are so clear that fieldwork is not needed to affirm it; perhaps not. We leave that assessment to critics who are deeply knowledgeable on Bhutan. Our reading is that Bhutan in recent centuries is a clear case of a phenomenon that is hugely recurrent throughout recorded history. This is of a weak state that is geographically difficult to totally dominate accepting the proposition that it be absorbed geopolitically into a large empire in return for autonomous governance of local affairs. A generalisation that has already come up in this book is that empires can pacify large spaces for long periods—as the Ottoman Empire did across North Africa, the Middle East, Turkey and the Balkans, and as the Habsburg Empire did across Central and southern Europe, Spain and Latin America—but, when empires break up, violence cascades. That was our account of the onset of the World Wars cascades in Chapter 2. The collapse of the Spanish part
of the Habsburg Empire a century earlier likewise cascaded a great many decades of revolutionary violence in Latin America. So we might conceive Bhutan as likely to remain securely nestled under the huge shadow of the Indian ‘empire’ until something unusually catastrophic, such as a nuclear war, triggers the breakup of India.

Propositions 3–5 are the relevant parts of our starting theory here:

**Proposition 3:** Violence cascades through alliance structures when a cleavage motivates mobilisation of alliances or unsettling of power balances.

**Proposition 4:** Disintegration of the capacity of a single legitimate armed force to pacify a space through its domination over all competing armed groups enables the cascading of violence across that territory.

**Proposition 5:** Once cleavages put alliance cascades on the march, security dilemmas can further accelerate the cascade.

We construe Bhutan as a case where submission to the British Empire and then India averted any ‘unsettling of power imbalances’, where the capacity of those empires of armed force to prevail as the ‘single legitimate armed force’ that dominates Bhutan has never been challenged. It was challenged neither domestically nor by other empires such as China. Therefore, there have never been armed factions in Bhutan who believed that credible enemies were preparing to defeat them. Hence, they never saw themselves as being in a security dilemma where they should attack first. Even though the states of India and China today rule more people than the Roman or British empires ever did, it is controversial to describe them as empires. The ambiguity of language here is educative. Whether we think of large swathes of pacified space as states or empires, the important thing is that they are pacified spaces where one armed force dominates all others across that space. Whatever you call it, Bhutan is part of a continuity of pacified space with India. These are conditions where alliances that unsettle power imbalances and create security dilemmas are unlikely and where cascades of violence are unlikely to spin out of control. Bhutan is not only a society without armed conflict, but also a low-crime society with a homicide rate and an imprisonment rate far below the global average, even though cannabis abuse has long been a major social problem (UNODC 2009). Over 60 per cent of the population of Bhutan is below 25 years of age (Bhutan National Statistics Bureau 2012: 8). Such a large youth population theoretically should cause the crime rate to be higher than average.
While Bhutan has nowhere near the violence problems of Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Myanmar or Sri Lanka, some violence has cascaded from these more troubled neighbours. For example, it is common for terrorism by outsiders to be commented on as the only major crime problem in Bhutan. The United Liberation Front of Asom, the National Democratic Front of Bodoland, the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force and the Kamatapur Liberation Organisation have had significant bases in Bhutan (as discussed in Chapter 5). The Bhutanese military has complied with pressure from India to attack their bases at times (particularly in 2003). This, in turn, has triggered some retaliatory terrorist attacks against the state and people of Bhutan by these groups. No nation can totally cut itself off from cascades of regional violence to be an island of peace and happiness.

Bhutan domestically has also triggered violence by driving approximately 100,000 Nepalese refugees out of the country into UN refugee camps in Nepal and India. These refugee camps have been tragic breeding grounds of poverty, suicide, crime and violence. While it was domestic communal conflict rather than war that created these camps, the dynamics of violence in the camps mirror our Proposition 6 analysis. Upreti (2010: 248) reports the proliferation of small arms among militant groups in camps for refugees chased from Bhutan as a major concern of post-conflict arms proliferation inside Nepal. Recruitment for the Bhutan Communist Party (Marxist–Leninist–Maoist) was strong in these refugee camps. This was a party that demanded return of refugees and a constitutional republic in Bhutan that did not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity or in language policy. In 2008, during the transition to a constitutional monarchy, the Bhutan Communist Party declared a people’s war that had little impact. Its party membership was fewer than 1,000 cadres. Five bombs were exploded across Bhutan, the Maoists killed four forest rangers and the police killed a handful of Maoists (South Asia Terrorism Portal 2008).

These qualifications aside, we interpret Bhutan as illustrating quite a common limit on our cascades propositions. Our explanatory framework has much more limited purchase in circumstances where settled subordination of a pacified space occurs under the umbrella of a dominant state or empire. Such pacification of cascades occurred when Britain was nested within Rome’s European empire and today with secure micro-states such as Monaco and Luxembourg, nested under the hegemony of EU foreign policy.
Afghanistan

As a battleground for several intrastate and international conflicts, including the Cold War and the ‘global war on terror’, Afghanistan’s sociopolitical infrastructure has been deeply affected. While the US-led international military intervention that ousted the Taliban regime in 2001 was welcomed at the time by many Afghans, statebuilding and peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan have had very limited success. Following the Bonn process in December 2001 that drew a road map for Afghanistan’s statebuilding, several benchmarks were set to establish key institutions of a sovereign and democratic Afghanistan, including a transitional government, a new constitution, presidential elections by September 2004 and parliamentary and provincial council elections by October 2005. The Bonn Agreement addressed security sector reform only indirectly and not as part of a broader set of law reforms. It emphasised the need for an international security force until such time as an Afghan security force could be developed. The initial priority was not on building credible institutions, but on ensuring a minimal security presence in provinces and districts, with the focus of Western forces on targeting Al-Qaeda. As a result, building and reforming the Afghan National Police, the border police, the Afghan National Army and the National Security Directorate were compromised during and after the Bonn process (Ayub et al. 2009: 11).

On 22 March 2011, then Afghan president Hamid Karzai announced that the first phases of the transition to national control of national security would be completed by the end of 2014. By the end of 2012, the Afghan National Security Forces were meant to have taken over protection of 87 per cent of Afghanistan’s population, with 23 of 34 provinces completing the transition process. However, by the end of 2013, evidence on the ground suggested that overall security conditions had deteriorated as a result of increased attacks on civilians and greater restrictions on civil society and, in particular, on women’s rights groups. By 2018, this security situation had become even worse.

The sharp rise in the number of children and young people killed and maimed in the Afghan wars has also generated lifelong grievances among young Afghans living in camps in Pakistan or in a range of settlements

---

1 A total of 159 interviews were conducted in Afghanistan, mostly in five Afghan provinces in 2011 and 2014 and mostly by John Braithwaite and Ali Wardak (2013), with some interviews with Afghans also conducted in New York and other sites.
in Afghanistan. According to the United Nations, in 2016, there were 11,418 causalities—a 3 per cent increase since 2015 and the highest civilian casualty toll in Afghanistan since 2001. In addition, small militant groups loyal to Islamic State also pose new threats to Afghanistan (Rasmussen 2017).

While this book does not dedicate a chapter to Afghanistan, Chapters 1–6 were each about Afghanistan in major ways. Because the conflict in Afghanistan has been so repeatedly canvassed in these six chapters, we do not retrace the history of this conflict. We have already seen that one cannot understand cascades of violence in India and Pakistan without understanding Afghanistan. Chapter 6 showed that the Balochistan conflict also cascaded across to the Middle East, with violence cascading between Iranian and Pakistani Balochistan, as well as across Pakistan’s border into Afghanistan. In a similar fashion, Afghan Shia refugee camps that accommodated several million Afghans in Iran cascaded weapons and young refugee fighters into Afghan Shia armed groups that staked Shia and ethnic Hazara claims in Afghanistan’s various wars.

The Afghan civil war in 1992 cascaded in a terrible way into a civil war in Tajikistan that cost 50,000 to 100,000 lives. This was a war that started as an opposition movement of both Islamist and liberal democratic reformers opposed to the way the ethnic community of the Leninabadi region continued to dominate the ruling elite in the post-Soviet era, in continuity with their domination during the Soviet period. The Tajik civil war in turn cascaded back into Afghanistan as 80,000 of the million-plus refugees fled to Afghanistan, where Afghan Tajik leader Ahmad Shah Massoud, the pre-eminent leader of the Northern Alliance, became a benefactor of the Tajik opposition (Djalili et al. 1997; Rashid 2002; Roy 2001).

Jihad in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan also cascaded back into conflict in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and beyond, even to China. An instructive micro–macro process tracing of these cascades is through the biographies of Jumaboi Khojayev (nom de guerre Juma Namangani) and Tohir Yuldashev. Khojayev was a Soviet conscript from Uzbekistan sent to fight in Afghanistan. He returned home impressed by the Afghan jihadists. Newly radicalised, he established, with Islamist ideologue Tohir Yuldashev, a Salafi2 opposition group called Adolat (Justice) in his home,
the Fergana Valley of Uzbekistan. In 1992, Adolat established order in this anomic, unstable post-Soviet valley by imposing Sharia law. The Uzbek military attacked the valley, driving Khojayev and Yuldashev to Tajikistan, where Khojayev became an important commander on the Islamist side in Tajikistan's civil war. From there, Yuldashev networked ideologically with jihadists, travelling to Afghanistan and the Middle East. Between 1995 and 1998, he moved his base to Peshawar, Pakistan, where he befriended Osama bin Laden and other Afghan Arabs. Khojayev and Yuldashev became disillusioned with their Tajik hosts when they agreed to a UN-brokered powersharing peace deal in Tajikistan and when their Tajik hosts also backed Massoud's Northern Alliance against the Taliban. In 1998, Khojayev and Yuldashev formed the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) with the objective of establishing Sharia law across all Uzbekistan and beyond. They received funding from Pakistan's intelligence services, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

Episodic IMU attacks on the Uzbek state continue to this day, at times with terrible repression and militarisation coming back as a state response. On 13 May 2005, Uzbek troops fired on a demonstration in the Fergana Valley, killing approximately 850 people (Rashid 2010a: 268). IMU violence cascaded into the Batken region of southern Kyrgyzstan, which is inhabited mainly by ethnic Uzbeks. This generated pressure on the Tajik Government to drive the IMU out of its bases in Tajikistan. In a less than constructive Russian contribution to regional stabilisation, Russian military helicopters flew the IMU fighters to refuge in northern Afghanistan, where they fought against Massoud's Northern Alliance alongside Osama bin Laden's brigade and later against the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces. One of the ways the IMU was useful to the Taliban was when the Taliban Government came under pressure from China to drive out Uighur militants (from China's Xinjiang province). Mullah Omar's government simply pushed the Uighurs out of Afghanistan to IMU camps across the border in Uzbekistan where they were able to remain part of the regional jihad network.

The IMU fled to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in Pakistan after the fall of the Taliban in 2001. There the IMU allied with the Haqqani network and Al-Qaeda fighters who fled to the same districts. From 2007, IMU fighters were an integral and exceptionally violent part of the Pakistani Taliban network (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, TTP) and conducted many operations with it against the Pakistani military. By this time, the IMU had morphed from an ethnically Uzbek
group to a multiethnic group in which Uzbeks were a minority: the IMU included many Uighurs, Afghans, Chechens, Turkmen, Arabs, Westerners and others (with a Kyrgyz military commander and a mufti who was a Pakistani national of Myanmar Rohingya descent). One IMU niche in its contribution to global jihad was the proliferation of internet, video and print propaganda in many languages, including Uzbek, Russian, German, Persian, Arabic, Burmese, Urdu and Pashto. By September 2009, US airstrikes had killed both Jumaboi Khojayev and Tohir Yuldashev. But in the micro politics of Pakistan, Afghanistan and beyond, the IMU lived on to destabilise local regimes in many hotspots (see, for example, Box 9.1). The cascading of IMU Uighurs from China, according to some informants, cascaded Chinese special forces into working with the Afghan army to kill the Uighurs inside Afghanistan.

**Box 9.1 The IMU pounces on the killing of innocents in a night raid**

In the province of Takhar in May 2011, we saw another way that killing operatives can be counterproductive. An Uzbek *mullah* and two women were killed in a NATO night raid. Leaders of the Uzbek community alleged they were targeted by the Tajik governor and police commander of Takhar on the basis of false rumours of involvement in terrorism. These false rumours were allegedly passed to NATO intelligence because the *mullah* was a critic of Tajik domination of Takhar province. It has become a tactic of criminals across Afghanistan to tighten their grip on local power by planting clever intelligence that their political adversaries support terrorism. In this case, they also spread the rumour that NATO troops raped the two innocent women before they killed them. This was almost certainly false. But whoever thought up the rape rumour was effective in building anti-NATO sentiment among the Uzbek majority of Takhar province.

Local NATO commanders sought to explain it was false that the women were raped, that they had intended only to arrest them because of evidence they were sewing belts for suicide bombers. A crowd of Uzbek demonstrators persisted in the belief that the women were innocent and that they were raped and in the belief that, even if they were guilty, the crime of sewing a suicide belt did not justify execution without trial. Over two days the demonstration swelled, culminating in a massed attack on a German military base where Molotov cocktails were thrown. Neither the Afghan police nor the young German soldiers defending the base had training in riot control; they panicked and fired on the crowd with live rounds, killing at least 12 and wounding possibly 75 on 28 May 2011.

The security situation in the province plummeted after this incident. This insecurity was driven not by the Taliban, but by Uzbek anger at the minority Tajik leaders of the province for excluding Uzbeks from political power, and particularly at the allegation that the governor and the police leadership spread false rumours against the victims of the NATO night raid. Then, when the governor called a summit on the demonstration, a bomb was detonated during the summit, killing General Daud (the police commander for the northern region of Afghanistan), the hated local police chief, another policeman and two German soldiers, and seriously wounding the governor and German General Markus Kneip, who was the NATO northern commander. Then, on 10 June, a suicide bomber attended the funeral of General Daud, killing mourning police.
We must ask one question about these waves of collateral damage and unravelled local security as a result of counterproductive night raids. How many successful night raids must NATO conduct to create sufficient productive ‘military pressure’ to counterbalance one such counterproductive raid? We presume a very large number. Of course, this is an extreme example of a counterproductive night raid. Condra et al. (2010: 3) report a more moderate average revenge impact of civilian casualties in a systematic statistical study:

[[if the average ISAF [International Security Assistance Force]-caused incident, which resulted in 2 civilian casualties, was eliminated, then in an average-sized district there would be 6 fewer violent incidents between ISAF and insurgents … over the next 6 weeks.

Braithwaite and Wardak (2011) discuss in detail how the benefits of military pressure on foot soldiers seem as doubtful as those on mid- and high-level insurgents.

Afterword: The two deadly bombings that killed General Daud and other leaders were almost certainly the work of the IMU, exploiting the instability and anger into which Takhar had cascaded. A minister in Afghan President Ashraf Ghani’s cabinet said four years later:

The High Peace Council is an industry. It’s not a peace process; it’s a death process. We have lost too many of our best leaders to it. We lost Professor [Burhanuddin] Rabbani to it because he let the Taliban into his home as part of the peace process. We lost many police chiefs to the peace process like General Daud. (Interview with minister in Kabul, 2015, No. 121411)

But was it the peace process to which General Daud was lost? Or was it the war process of night raids in this local cascade to which the General was lost?

Source: Adapted from Braithwaite and Wardak (2011).

We decided it would be tedious in Chapters 5–8 for readers to construct the narrative of each country case under the list of 10 propositions. For Afghanistan, and then the other shorter cases in this chapter, however, this is what we do as a prelude to systematic re-evaluation of those propositions in Chapter 10.

**Proposition 1:** As coercion escalates, both deterrence and defiance increase. The deterrence effect exceeds the defiance effect only at high levels of coercion. During the large range of values of coercion when defiance effects are steeper than deterrence, violence cascades.

Our interpretation of the Afghan war in Part I of this book is that deterrence effects of the Taliban exceeded defiance effects between 11 September 2001 and 2003, perhaps even until 2005. This period, 2001 to 2005, was therefore the best window for crafting a sustainable peace. From then on, as the Taliban regrouped and retrained with support from elements of the ISI, they ceased viewing themselves as outmatched by the combined might of NATO powers and the Northern Alliance. For more than a decade since, defiance effects have exceeded deterrence effects.
Afghan tribal society has a long history of warfare. As with many rural warlike peoples who routinely carry weapons, Afghans are skilled at making war, but also adept at making peace. While the former is well understood by Westerners who see Afghan success in subduing the British, Russian and American/NATO empires, their aptitude for peacemaking is not so well understood. The Afghan tribal tradition is one of rising up against centralised power when it encroaches excessively on tribal prerogatives. The second part of that tradition, however, is that, as soon as a central power in the capital agrees to back off from excess in encroachments on rural tribal society, tribal militias reach an accommodation with the centre. The hope in Afghanistan today is that president Ghani might be able to negotiate a peace with the Taliban that president Karzai and the United States were unable to accomplish. One of the many limits on that hope is the fear that Islamic State may cascade in, positioning themselves as spoilers of a peace that many elements of the Taliban hope for. Another is Pakistan resuming the spoiling role it played during earlier Karzai-led and US-led peacemaking efforts; or Iran as a future spoiler if US and Sunni reconciliation with Iran continues to unravel under the Trump administration and the new Saudi adventurism Trump encourages.

In 2002, president Karzai was appealing constructively to the Pashtun tradition of the Taliban to acknowledge the defeats it had suffered on the battlefield in 2001 and reach an accommodation with his government. Vindictive elements among his Northern Alliance coalition partners and in the Bush administration that had swept Karzai to power frustrated this sensible work. Many Taliban figures with whom Karzai reconciled and who were welcomed back in peace to Afghanistan from Pakistan in 2002 were murdered when they returned. They also had their land and property stolen. This included people as senior as the Taliban military commander and the Taliban minister of defence (Afghan 2011: 308–9; ICG 2011a: 6; Ruttig 2011: 6). Michael Semple (2011: 2) argued that, in 2002, many ‘senior Taliban figures attempted to pledge loyalty to the new order, but were hunted down. The US sent to Guantanamo Bay many people who could have been far more useful if they had been given a chance to participate’.

Likewise in 2005, in advance of the insurgency spinning out of control, Karzai sought to initiate talks and amnesties with the Taliban through a peace and reconciliation commission. Again, this was opposed by Northern Alliance loyalists and was viewed as appeasement by the Bush
administration (Rashid 2010b: 228). This persuaded the Taliban that accommodation with the new regime was a door their Northern Alliance and NATO enemies had slammed in their face.

Their only option was to train a new generation of fighters for a long haul of insurgency. As that defiance of the US-backed regime became more successful, the Taliban capitulation that was a possibility in 2002 and even in 2005 became an unlikely prospect. Reconciliation was never impossible during the next decade. There was not the diplomatic resolve, however, to bring all the players (including Pakistan and Iran) to the peace table. That resolve was always missing from protagonists on both sides, who naively believed either that they could prevail with military ‘surges’ (and in a short space of years) or that a bit more surging would deliver them the upper hand in negotiations.

**Proposition 2:** Violence cascades when violent imaginaries are modelled; nonviolent resistance cascades when diffusion of nonviolence grasps the imagination of the public. Both are most likely to occur when architectures of extreme coercion begin to crack or cleavages in a society begin to open.

With defiance exceeding deterrence after that 2001–05 window, Taliban and Al-Qaeda leaders found they could imbue a new generation with a jihad imaginary in Pakistani madrassas funded by petro dollars from the Gulf states. In Chapter 6, we saw that Pakistani civil, political and military society were surprisingly widely infused with a jihad imaginary that conceived jihad against US forces in Afghanistan as noble work. As president Karzai’s military resistance to them began to creak and crack under escalating desertion rates, widespread drug addiction in the Afghan army, ‘green on blue’ killings inside their barracks, the retreat of one NATO contributing country after another and then the recapture by the Taliban of districts NATO had pacified, the jihad imaginary diffused more aggressively. The Taliban began to believe—rightly or wrongly—that, in time, large swathes of the Afghan army would defect to its side.

**Proposition 3:** Violence cascades through alliance structures when a cleavage motivates mobilisation of alliances or unsettling of power balances.

The vindictive elements in the Northern Alliance and NATO who were spoilers of reconciliation with the Taliban in 2001–05—who derided ‘negotiation with terrorists’—failed to conceive of the possibility that even bin Laden himself could renew his old alliance with elements of the ISI to establish the world headquarters for Al-Qaeda in Pakistan. Zahab and
Roy (2004: 62) called this ‘the Pakistanisation of Al Qaeda’. It was from Pakistan that the terror attacks on Madrid, London and Bali were planned (Rashid 2010b: 237). The spoilers of reconciliation with the Taliban did not conceive the possibility that, from Pakistan, Al-Qaeda could cascade alliances with the Afghan and Pakistani Talibans, with jihadi groups from Yemen to Iraq, to Syria, to Libya and down into the depths of Africa. Neither the spoilers of a Taliban reconciliation nor the leaders of Pakistan conceived of the possibility of a Taliban leadership protected by the Pakistani state cascading as violent a jihad inside Pakistan as it had cascaded across to Afghanistan. They did not conceive that this would become a global jihad that would find alliance partners in jihadist cells inside every NATO state and inside the other two great powers of our era, China and Russia. They did not conceive that unknown thousands of foreign fighters from these countries could play a major role in military conquest of the very cities in Iraq that NATO forces had conquered a decade earlier. They did not conceive of the rise of Islamic State as a radical flank and spoiler of any softening or weakening by elements of Al-Qaeda. They did not understand the formidable dynamics of cascade–cleavage–alliance and the unsettling power balances that jihadists put in play.

**Proposition 4:** Disintegration of the capacity of a single legitimate armed force to pacify a space through its domination over all competing armed groups enables the cascading of violence across that territory.

The mujahidin’s disintegration of the communist monopoly of armed force almost four decades ago was the last time Afghanistan experienced a monopoly of armed force. Consequently, violence was incessant across these four decades. It is questionable whether post-2001 Afghanistan ever experienced any semblance of a state monopoly of armed force. The Northern Alliance’s armed capability was factionalised, at cross-purposes, under the control of disparate warlords and never really under the control of president Karzai. President Bush and president Karzai were also fighting different enemies. Bush was in the business of crushing Al-Qaeda and their Taliban supporters; Karzai would embrace Afghans who were former Al-Qaeda supporters so long as they joined him in fighting his hard-core Taliban adversaries. Karzai resented Bush turning a blind eye to Pakistan providing a safe haven for Taliban leaders as long as it handed over foreign fighters the United States wanted in Guantanamo Bay. In rural Afghanistan, tribal militias and police armed by the US military had their own local power agendas, the politics of which were recurrently at odds with both Karzai and NATO. For example, tribal groups armed by the United States would cooperate with (and fund) the Taliban to protect their
trading routes for opium exports. At cross-purposes with US objectives, even members of Karzai’s family were profiting hugely from those opium exports. For all the military might unified under the same command structure in US–NATO–Karzai–Northern Alliance Afghanistan, there was no reality of a single monopoly of armed force. For this reason, our analysis is that violence cascaded.

**Proposition 5:** Once cleavages put alliance cascades on the march, security dilemmas can further accelerate the cascade.

The tragedy of security dilemmas is that combatants strike out to defeat their enemy in the sometimes false belief that, if they do not kill them, they will be killed by them. The murder of reconciled Taliban with a genuine desire to return in peace to their beloved valleys in 2002 and 2003 was a case in point. We have seen that this was critical to surging the cascade of insurgency from north-west Pakistan throughout the past decade and a half by a younger generation of Taliban commanders who had lived their lives in Pakistan and who were more radicalised and more brutal than those older Taliban leaders who longed to return to their home valleys. As late as 2011 during our fieldwork, we were able to attend peace negotiations with middle-level Taliban whose desperation was deeply moving when they explained at Provincial Peace Council meetings that they had surrendered their weapons as part of their reconciliation, but that now they were in poverty because they had to buy new guns to protect themselves from murder by both their former enemies and their former comrades. They confronted an unusually acute security dilemma at the micro level that cascaded into renewed macro-level violence.

**Proposition 6:** Refugee and IDP flows further cascade violence. Violence cascades when those displaced by violence displace others from spaces to which refugees flee. Refugee camps become nodes of hopelessness and resentment for those they trap. This makes them ideal recruiting grounds for those with weapons and cash to enrol bereft young refugees into armed groups. In turn, these recruitment practices inside refugee camps make camps targets for atrocity by enemies of the recruiters.

The Balochistan camps at Girdi Jungle and Bramchah housed 150,000 refugees in squalor. They were awash with weapons and literally off limits to the Pakistani police and security personnel. Bramchah straddled both sides of the border and was a well-known conduit for drug smugglers. The camps had become breeding grounds for crime and religious militancy. (Khan 2011: 130)
There are millions of Afghans living in Pakistan and Iran. With rising terrorist attacks and decreasing foreign aid, the Pakistani Government pushed to repatriate nearly 3 million Afghan refugees, including an estimated 1 million undocumented Afghans. There is some evidence that most young Afghans who were imbued with the jihadi imaginary in Taliban training camps were recruited from the Afghan refugee community in Pakistan. However, radicalisation is a complex phenomenon that thrives on grievances, both real and imagined. Kind words (as the example in Box 9.2 illustrates), sympathy and financial support generate loyalty in extremely vulnerable populations. Young refugees and IDPs are at increased risk of being recruited by extremist groups and targeted by enemies of those same groups.

Box 9.2 Al-Qaeda seduction of refugees in Peshawar

From about 1979, Arab leaders, prominently Dr Abdullah Azzam [a Palestinian who taught Osama bin Laden in Jeddah and invited him to Peshawar] and Dr Ayman al-Zawahiri [bin Laden’s successor], set themselves up opposite the entrance to the main UNHCR reception point for refugees in Peshawar. The refugees arrive beginning to fill out some forms. UNHCR tells them to wait with a large number of waiting people sitting along the side of the road and on a railway line. Dr Abdullah would then send out someone who was very kind and empathic, unlike the overwhelmed UN bureaucrats, and someone who spoke the same language and was from the same ethnic group, the same tribe. They said: ‘Look come to our place and have a cup of tea while you’re waiting and we have a man at the front who will listen for your number being called to make sure that you don’t miss being called.’ Unlike at the UN, they would come into this warm and inviting room with a large traditional carpet and no security checks to go through. Families could sit down together and food would be brought out quickly. Then someone would say what do you need? They would often say tents, food, implements and clothing. The staff would then make a call and by the time they finished the meal someone would have arrived from the store with all of these things. Then he would say you can take these and also take anything the UN gives you. And here is our number. Come to us with any needs that you have, for example with the education of your children. And this was the start of the enrolment of them into madrassas. Dr Zawahiri had a very kindly manner. He tended to their bullet wounds and other wounds and health problems in a hospital he built for them. There were two hospitals funded by the Arabs. The doctor spoke the language humbly and with love and empathy. One of the hospitals was called the Mercy Hospital, which made it seem like a Christian hospital to some. They also established orphanages for all orphans from the Afghan war and Kashmir. Intermarriage was also important for the Arabs in building acceptance. The Arabs also provided money for constructing or reconstructing any mosque that was falling down.

Source: John Braithwaite’s notes from interview with Peshawar Pashtun leader, 2013, No. 051343.

One of the paradoxes of US military strategy in Afghanistan was that, as it succeeded in killing middle-level Afghan-born commanders, they were replaced with more fundamentalist, younger talib commanders who had
been born, educated and radicalised in Pakistani madrassas (Braithwaite and Wardak 2011, 2013; Rashid 2010b). Box 9.2 is from our fieldwork notes of an interview in Peshawar with a senior Pashtun UN leader. It illustrates how sophisticated the enrolment of disenfranchised Afghan refugees was from the beginning of the jihad against the communist regime.

**Proposition 7:** Cascades of violence that disintegrate the capabilities of one legitimate monopoly of force to dominate all other armed groups in a territory create conditions of anomie. No one knows any longer what the rules of the game are; no one knows who is legitimately in charge. Anomie cascades further violence.

During our fieldwork in Afghanistan, we had several experiences of travelling on helicopters that the United Nations contracted with Russian pilots. The Western troops who accompanied us on these trips complained of how the Taliban would be firing on them, but, as soon as they headed towards the Russian helicopter to provide protection to a UN group, the Taliban would cease firing on them. They alleged this was because the Russians bribed the Taliban. It is also widely reported in the literature that US taxpayer funds find their way into Taliban pockets in a massive way because the contractors who drive trucks with supplies and weapons for the US military inside Afghanistan pay the Taliban to guarantee them safe passage (e.g. Braithwaite and Wardak 2011, 2013). Some of the same Pakistani contractors were also involved in paying for Taliban protection to truck opium harvests out of Afghanistan from which leading members of the Afghan Government profited. These are just some examples of how complicated the rules of the game can become in conditions of protracted warfare.

This complexity allows sophisticated players of the game who turned war into a business to reap fortunes that sometimes motivated them to frustrate effective peacebuilding that might end the war economy. Anomie in this book means living in a society where one is continually unsure of what the rules of the game are. In such a world, one is never sure that one is not doing something that has the effect of funding the very people who are seeking to kill you. When anything goes, everyone has to survive through

---

3 ‘We’ in this case was John Braithwaite and Ali Wardak, from whom we learnt so much about Afghanistan. See Braithwaite and Wardak (2011, 2013) and Wardak and Braithwaite (2013) for a much more detailed treatment of many of the issues in this chapter.
whatever it takes. Secure pacification of a violent society requires clear rules of the game. When British prime minister Tony Blair in 2001 made so much of justifying the invasion by the desire to shut down the Afghan opium trade that supplied much of the world’s heroin market, he could not have imagined that, a decade on, this would have increased to supply 92 per cent of that market (Paoli et al. 2009; UNODC 2010: 7) and that British forces would be tolerating mass opium production that would fund both the untold wealth of the ruling families they were propping up and the weapons of the Taliban.

Plate 9.1 Afghan National Army sergeant patrolling in a poppy field, Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan, 2013.

In previous chapters, we have seen that anomie was the very condition in Kandahar province that brought the Taliban to local power from 1994. The Taliban became popular at first by allowing farmers and truckers to get crops to market without paying off many different mujahidin groups who set up roadblocks along the route and by preventing undisciplined fighters and criminal gangs from harassing women. In pacifying the chaos of Kandahar and replacing anomie with its oppressive rule of Sharia law, the Taliban attracted trucking interests and ordinary people alike to fund and support it at first (Rashid 2010b).
**Proposition 8:** Cascades of violence recursively cascade militarisation and domination. Militarisation and domination recursively risk further cascades of violence.

Of course, when the Taliban pacified Kandahar from 1994, it pacified the province with guns. Ultimately, we saw in Part I that this caused the ISI to switch its military support to the Taliban as a group that it perceived might credibly take over all of Afghanistan as a pro-Pakistan regime. In the same process, donors from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries, including Osama bin Laden, also provided weapons and fighters to support the Taliban.

Hence, the dynamic at play here was that criminal gangs harassing farmers and women in Kandahar cascaded Taliban militarisation in the 1990s. This cascaded to a great variety of dominations that the Taliban perpetrated against its enemies, including crimes of mass atrocity against other armed groups and civilians who refused to submit to Taliban military domination (e.g. Afghanistan Justice Project 2005; Grossman 2006).

**Proposition 9:** Crime often sparks cascades to war and war to crime. As crime–war–crime cascades from hotspot to hotspot, violence becomes less shameful and easier to excuse. When rape and violence become less shameful, this further cascades rape and violence.

Under the previous two propositions, we have already described how the crimes of gangs in Kandahar cascaded to a civil war that later cascaded to an interstate war with the NATO invasion. One of the ironies of this was that the first funder of the Taliban was the Quetta-based transport and smuggling mafia who had the same concerns as ordinary farmers about their trucks being taxed dozens of times along roads to Kandahar (Rashid 2010b: 191).

The war-to-crime cascade with the Taliban is a much less convincing proposition. The Taliban really did seem to clean up a great deal of petty street crime and serious crimes against women such as rape, though not of course rape within marriage:

> So long as you did not break their religious rules, you could walk safely anywhere. You could not do that before they took over and you cannot do that today. (Interview with Kabul civil servant, 2011, No. 071101)
The Taliban courts were brutal in killing rapists even when Taliban fighters perpetrated the rape. This is not to say that Afghanistan’s civil wars were free of rape. It is to say that there is no comparison between the Taliban wars and the widespread mass rape that occurred in Pakistan’s war in East Pakistan/Bangladesh (Chapter 7), in Sri Lanka’s civil wars (Chapter 8), in Nepal and Myanmar (below in this chapter) or indeed in most civil wars. Although Western forces perpetrated atrocities in Afghanistan, there is no evidence that mass rape counted among them.

There are certainly many threats and vulnerabilities that women and girls experience in Afghanistan as a result of the war. There were, before and after the war against the Taliban, many women imprisoned for ‘moral crimes’—women who were ‘guilty’ of running away from home as a result of domestic violence (sometimes undoubtedly fostered by war), having had extramarital relationships or having been sexually abused. As oppressive as they are, it is likely that these forms of domination are slightly improved compared with the time before the war against the Taliban, but worse than they were in communist times before the war against the Soviet occupation.

The crime that cascaded most was terrorist targeting of civilians through suicide and roadside bombs. The Taliban had never engaged in suicide bombing anywhere until after the US occupation of their country in

---

4 The complicity of local communities and state authorities, morally legitimised by patriarchal prescriptions invoked in the name of either tradition or religion, increases women’s insecurity (D’Costa 2015). The Afghan Government enacted the Law on Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW Law) in August 2009. The EVAW Law bans 22 different harmful practices against women and girls, including rape, physical violence, child marriage, forced marriage and the denial of rights to education or work. The Afghan Parliament held a debate in which some members criticised portions of the EVAW Law as ‘un-Islamic’—specifically, the law’s prohibition of child marriage and forced marriage and restrictions on women’s access to health care and education. The EVAW Law, signed by president Karzai, was never ratified by parliament and some activists fear the legislative body could amend or overturn it in the future. A recent UN study noted, ‘negative attitudes towards the EVAW Law as well as a reluctance to apply it’ among many judicial and law enforcement officers, which ‘discouraged women from reporting violence perpetrated against them’ (UNAMA 2013: 26). The report revealed that 650 incidents of violence against women and girls were reported to authorities across 18 Afghan provinces between October 2012 and September 2013, representing a 28 per cent increase from the previous year. The Afghan Department of Women’s Affairs tracked far more cases than those reported by the police and prosecutors, recording an additional 1,019 incidents of violence against women and girls. ‘This gap’, according to the report, ‘suggests that many Afghan women (and their families) still remained reluctant to approach police and prosecutors with their complaints’ (UNAMA 2013: 4). Most incidents of violence against women remain largely under-reported, especially in rural areas, due to social norms and cultural constraints (UNAMA 2013).

5 But not much improved, with Afghanistan ranking 101 out of 102 countries on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Centre’s Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI 2016).
2002, although Osama bin Laden and his network, who were enjoying the hospitality of the Taliban, had of course done so. Such acts of terror ceased being shameful to Taliban members. Indeed, they became matters of pride rather than shame and a just path to paradise in the redefined imaginary of jihad against the infidel and his accomplices. The other kind of crime that cascaded from 2002 was criminalisation of the state. The United States put criminals in charge; many were criminals in the sense of being not only war criminals, but also expert practitioners of corruption, extortion, embezzlement, tax evasion, bank fraud and living off the profits of the opium trade (Afghanistan Justice Project 2005; Braithwaite and Wardak 2013; Grossman 2006; Nordland 2012). A UN survey concluded that Afghans paid an equivalent to 23 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) in bribes during 2009 (UNODC 2010: 25).

The war in Afghanistan from the 1990s also promoted a degree of criminalisation of the Iranian state, with the Revolutionary Guards and the state-run industrial foundations counting among the beneficiaries of the stupendous profits from smuggling (especially of petrol into Afghanistan and Pakistan). From the 1990s until the early 2000s, 3,700 Iranian police lost their lives in firefights with opium smugglers exporting through Iran to Europe, but also to Iran’s 3 million heroin addicts (Ashouri and Rahmdel 2003; Paoli et al. 2009: 238). The resultant Iranian ‘war on drugs’ further cascaded the authoritarianism of its state, with Iran becoming second only to China in the absolute number of state executions (mostly for drug offences), probably a higher per capita execution rate than China and an unknowable degree of extrajudicial assassination of drug traffickers.

**Proposition 10:** When war produces a cascade of violence that moves to many new spaces that bite back at a combatant nation, the costs of shutting down the violence in all those spaces can quickly exceed the benefits of winning the war. It can then be rational to cut one’s losses by pulling out of the war, leaving a festering cascade of violence behind, unresolved. The contemporary war economics of cascades therefore sustains cascades of violence (as we saw with cut-and-run policies in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya).

Chapter 4 has already advanced the analysis that the war in Afghanistan became exceptionally costly for US, UK, German and other taxpayers and costly in the blood of their soldiers. As the emotional suffering of the families of those troops endured for more than a decade, as their treasuries craved the fortunes poured into Afghanistan after the Global Financial
Crisis, one coalition partner after another exited, at first over the strenuous objections of the United States, until the Obama administration itself decided to cut its losses from a conflict that had cascaded beyond its capacity to manage at affordable cost.

Nepal

If the bloody rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan was an exception—in making contributions to rape prevention (Proposition 9)—the Nepalese civil war not only was one that cascaded a shocking epidemic of rape, but also was a case where this rape shaped a distinctive gender politics in the character of the war. The history of Nepal is like many countries in the sense that from 1769 a monarchy (the house of Gorkha) unified disparate feudal fiefdoms into a nation-state through superior military capability. What is distinctive about Nepal is that the royal palace continued to dominate national politics and enjoyed control of the Royal Nepalese Army until April 2006, when the king stood down to end the monarchy after 19 days of massive mobilisation of people power on the streets.

This was preceded by six decades of struggle between the king and left-of-centre political parties that had been campaigning for parliamentary democracy since the end of the British Raj. The most prominent of these was the Nepali Congress, a party of democratic socialist provenance, which, like all significant leftist parties in Nepal, and like the Indian Congress Party, became less socialist and more corrupt as it tasted power. To the left of the Nepali Congress was a multitude of communist parties. One of these, the Communist Party of Nepal–Unified, coalesced a number of Marxist–Leninist parties to accept multiparty democracy and compete electorally. It became the major competitor to the Nepali Congress. Its successor as the dominant Marxist party was the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist) (CPN-UML), which has shared power with the Nepali Congress for much of the time across recent decades. These political parties enjoyed many victories over the king in advocating that he step back to become a constitutional monarch. They demanded

---

6 This reached US$10 billion a month for the United States alone in the late years of the previous decade and the early years of the current decade.

7 John Braithwaite interviewed 68 individuals for the Nepalese case study of Peacebuilding Compared, mostly in Kathmandu and Rolpa, but also in New Delhi, Beijing, at the United Nations in New York and elsewhere, and mostly in 2014. For a longer paper on this fieldwork in Nepal that provides much more information about source materials, see Braithwaite (2015).
parliamentary elections and successive constitutional reforms to edge Nepal towards democracy. At each turn until 2006, the palace, backed by the army, succeeded in winning power back from the parliamentary parties—indeed, in dismissing prime ministers—after recurrent periods of unstable, corrupt and unpopular elected governments.

Enter the Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist (CPN-M) in 1996, leading the People’s Liberation Army after a period when it fared poorly in winning parliamentary seats. It drew part of its imaginary from the Naxalite/Maoist uprisings across the border in north-eastern India. Indian government security analysts argued that Maoists began a process of laying a revolutionary corridor, otherwise known as the Compact Revolutionary Zone, extending from Nepal across many Indian states, including Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh (see Chapter 5: Figure 5.1). Nepalese and Indian Maoists met at Siliguri, West Bengal, in August 2001 to organise the Compact Revolutionary Zone. The CPN-M was also an inspiration in the formation of the Communist Party of Bhutan (Marxist–Leninist–Maoist). The Nepalese revolutionary imaginary was Maoist rather than Leninist in that it sought to cascade its military control of the countryside from remote rural areas until it encircled the capital. This it accomplished, coming to control 80 per cent of the territory. It established the People’s Government in those domains of its rural control. Its revolution started in the remote mid-western districts of Rolpa and Rukum where initial raids on police posts captured its first weapons. Some 13,000 people died in its ‘people’s war’.

A unilateral ceasefire by the CPN-M was embraced by a war-weary people who surged on to the streets in a movement beginning in 2005, and culminating in the people’s victory of April 2006.\(^8\) The Maoists agreed to participate in a multiparty democracy and successfully demanded a UN peacekeeping operation to monitor the cantonment of its troops and those of the Royal Nepalese Army. The newly nonviolent Maoists became sufficiently popular to become the dominant elected party. Their commander-in-chief, Prachanda (Pushpa Kamal Dahal), became the first post-conflict prime minister until he unconstitutionally sought to oust

---

\(^8\) An earlier attempt by the alliance of seven parliamentary parties to mobilise a mass people’s movement against the monarchy failed because the parties did not have the trust to lead it, but also because the people overwhelmingly wanted democracy and peace, not just the reinstatement of democracy without peace (Dixit 2011: 124).
the defence chief, causing his own demise in 2009, but then returning to power until the time of writing and serving again as prime minister in 2016 and 2017. The Maoists continued to wield influence as the largest parliamentary party until they lost most of their seats at the second post-conflict election, in November 2013. At the time of writing, they are back in power in coalition with the Nepali Congress.

King Gyanendra, Nepal’s last king, was unpopular. People were suspicious about how he came to power after his brother, the popular former King Birendra, and 10 other members of the royal line were murdered in the royal massacre of 2001. In 2005, Gyanendra dismissed the elected prime minister and re-established royal autocracy. At first, the Royal Nepalese Army fell in behind their new king, as did the entire international diplomatic community. The major regional powers—India and China—supported Gyanendra and his war. The United States post 9/11 classified the CPN-M as a terrorist group and particularly strongly supported the new king and the Royal Nepalese Army. India, in contrast, was playing a more complex game than the other international players. It hedged its bets for the future by helping the Royal Nepalese Army with hardware and training to fight the Maoists, while also protecting Prachanda and the other Maoist leaders who were running their war from New Delhi. In the early years of the war, until Maoist domination of much of the Nepalese countryside, the Maoists also maintained training camps in India and supplied their operations across an open border (Dixit 2011: 270). Dozens of arms manufacturing units are reported to have been operating in the India–Nepal border districts during the war (Upreti 2010: 242). Civil society leaders of the people-power movement that resulted in the return of parliamentary democracy and a new constitution in 1990 went to New Delhi to succeed ultimately in persuading Indian intelligence and the Maoist leaders, in 2005, to join forces with what became the Citizens’ Movement for Democracy and Peace (CMDP)9 and with the old democratic parties in deposing the king with a genuine multiparty democracy.

The CMDP was an umbrella for other umbrella organisations such as the All Nepal Peasant Federation, the All Nepal Women’s Association and the Professional Alliance for Peace and Democracy that mobilised lawyers, teachers, engineers, professors, doctors, journalists and, importantly, stars

---

9 Also known as Jana Andolan II, with the 1990 citizens democracy movement being Jana Andolan I.
of the stage and screen. In 2003, seeing how unpopular the king had become, India hijacked the peace talks, moving them from the Maoist capital in Rolpa to New Delhi, excluding the Nepalese civil society leaders who had convened the talks to that point. As so often occurs in peacemaking, international players who speak a vernacular of inclusion impose a practice of exclusion when they have an opportunity to shape the peace with a narrow group of party and military leaders. One of the remarkable terms of the peace that India secretly secured from the Maoist leadership was a signed undertaking that any future Maoist government of Nepal would not act against Indian interests (Braithwaite 2015)! By April 2006, India’s peace talk leadership had brought the international community to consensus behind a peace package in which parliamentary democracy would return and the king would step back to being a constitutional monarch. This was a miscalculation by the diplomatic community in Kathmandu, which was out of touch with the level of feeling on the street. The CMDP would not compromise with the king; the Maoists were prepared to exploit chaos by returning to the people’s war; the army and the international community blinked—deserting the king, who eventually resigned in favour of a transitional government of the Maoists and the democratic parties.

A remarkable feature of this war and this transition to peace is that it embraced women as fighters to a degree that no other war in the Peacebuilding Compared database has seen to date. Estimates of the proportion of the Maoist fighters who were women vary from 20 per cent, recorded by the United Nations, from a count of the numbers who entered cantonment (an undercount because of the way Maoist commanders told women to return to care for their children and families at war’s end), to more than 40 per cent. The policy of the People’s Liberation Army was to achieve a fighting force that was 33 per cent female. It probably achieved this, as it claims to have done. Yami (2006: 5) may have the numbers too high when she asserts women were 30–50 per cent of the People’s Liberation Army, and even higher in Maoist militias. The fighting started out as a predominantly male affair between 1996 and 1998. The Maoists did not make great progress until they broadened their Maoist class appeal to advocacy of women’s rights, indigenous rights and liberation of landless castes, particularly Dalits (Untouchables), from oppression by landlords. Almost all of the Maoist fighters came from these three groups, though the party elite was predominantly upper-caste males.
Among the 40 demands the Maoists put to the government as conditions for not embarking on the people’s war was an explicitly feminist demand: ‘Patriarchal exploitation and discrimination against women should be stopped. The daughter should be allowed access to property.’ Women and excluded indigenous and caste groups achieved some quite decisive gains at the historical moment of peace—such as reservation of 33 per cent of parliamentary seats for women; a progressive new law on domestic violence and a national campaign against domestic violence after a ‘black petticoat’ movement on the streets; a law criminalising rape within marriage; and reform of laws that granted rights to inheritance and citizenship only through the male line (Nepal Citizenship Act, 2006).

Plate 9.2 A Maoist rebel leader speaks to about 4,000 villagers from the surrounding areas of Piscar, a remote mountain village about 200 km east of the Nepalese capital, Kathmandu, 2001.
Source: Ujir Magar/Associated Press.

Women’s organisations submitted 116 gender discriminatory laws to the Supreme Court after the abolition of the monarchy, arguing that these were laws inconsistent with republican democracy, with equal rule of law and with Nepal’s obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The court
found for the women’s groups. This was reform newly translated into the vernacular of republican rule of law. The most disadvantaged caste group, Dalits, also won symbolic gains, such as the declaration of the abolition of the caste system in the interim constitution and a law criminalising untouchability and class-based discrimination (Caste Based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offence and Punishment) Act, 2011) combined with the more concrete gain of significantly increased Dalit representation in the Constituent Assembly of 2008. As with women, Dalit parliamentary representation fell back slightly in 2013, although the fall was still to a level substantially higher than that before 2008.

The proportional elements of the post-conflict voting system guaranteed 59 indigenous groups at least one elected representative in the parliamentary and constitution-writing Constituent Assembly—no mean accomplishment of electoral engineering. The politically decisive mass citizen uprising that delivered this outcome was preceded by a decade-long Maoist armed struggle in which women, disadvantaged indigenous peoples and Dalits had unusually high representation in the People’s Liberation Army. The prominence of women and Dalits in the Maoist army helps explain their gains through the ultimate decisiveness of the nonviolent citizen uprising of 2006.

The policy of the parallel People’s Government until 2006 across its local administration—that the People’s Courts and its army were to have 33 per cent women—was carried forward into the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, in which it was stipulated that 33 per cent of the legislature and constitutional assembly (the Constituent Assembly) would be female. This was institutionalised and achieved in the 2008 election, though it slipped back to 30 per cent in 2013 as a result of technical failures in the electoral machinery. A positive step forward for women was the election in 2015 of Bidhya Devi Bhandari, chair of the All Nepal Women’s Association, as Nepal’s first female president.

The Peace Agreement also stipulated that 33 per cent of the civil service and of the security forces would be women. These two objectives remain a long way short of implementation, although there has been some progress. For women, the new constitution (2016) guarantees 33 per cent of political representation at the federal level and 40 per cent at the local level (DIPD 2015). Furthermore, to ensure that women are in decision-making roles, the constitution demands that either the speaker or the deputy speaker of both the federal and state parliaments and the
upper house has to be female at any given time (Malla 2015). Likewise, reservations for Dalits across these spheres have achieved significant progress (there were 50 Dalits in the 2008 Constituent Assembly), despite falling far short of proportional representation. Both educational opportunities and informal discrimination against Dalits have improved according to interviews with Dalit activists. However, finalisation of the constitution deepened divisions across ethnic cleavages (IFES 2016).

Plate 9.3 President Bidhya Devi Bhandari, 2015, the first female president of Nepal, former leftist student leader, Chair of the All Nepal Women’s Association and Vice-President of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist).

Rolpa, the district that became headquarters for the Maoists, achieved what our interview informants asserted was the highest percentage of female fighters. Estimates of the peak percentage of female fighters in Rolpa ranged from ‘exceeding our policy of 33 per cent, but I don’t know by how much’ to ‘50 per cent (or more)’ (the most common kind of answer) to ‘60 per cent’. There are no surviving authoritative records from war-ravaged Rolpa. The upper-range estimate came from the most authoritative sources of the top male Maoist military commanders in Rolpa, so it seems possible that the majority of fighters in Rolpa District after the early years of the conflict were women.

Our Rolpa interviews suggest that targeted rape may have been the most important reason for the percentage of female fighters being highest there. Because Rolpa District was a first mover into sustained armed conflict and became host to the headquarters of the People’s Liberation Army, the security forces targeted the daughters, wives and sisters of Maoist fighters particularly savagely with rape. Rolpa was also targeted earlier, by Operation Romeo, in November 1995, which drove Maoist men into the jungle to escape police atrocities (Gautam et al. 2011: 343). After many men were killed, women stepped in to take their places, partly to avenge family killings and rapes and partly because they concluded it was better to get up into the hills and fight than wait in the valleys to be raped.

Menon and van der Meulen Rodgers (2015), using three waves of data, showed that there was a pay-off from the conflict in increased paid female employment—as opposed to dependence on remittances and subsistence work—during the war. Valente (2013) showed that districts that experienced more conflict violence during the Maoist war also had the highest increases in educational attainment of girls during the war. Contrary to the negative effects of war on schooling recorded in countless other countries, war intensity in Nepal also increased male educational attainment, though not as strongly or robustly as for females. This was true even though Maoist abductions of children were found to have a negative effect on educational attainment during the war (Valente 2013: 2). In 2011, only 5 per cent of women aged over 40 had some secondary education, while 50 per cent of women between 15 and 20 years of age (who mostly entered high school during the war) had some secondary education (Engel et al. 2013: 27). Maoists policed the problem of teacher absenteeism in remote rural schools and used the People’s Courts to confront parents who allowed truancy by their children. During the war, between 1996 and 2006—when the majority of the population
came under Maoist rural governance—Nepal’s maternal mortality ratio fell by 47 per cent (Engel et al. 2013: 4), an indicator that normally rises sharply during civil wars. Neonatal mortality, mortality of children under five years of age and many other health outcomes also improved markedly during the war. Remarkably, too, for a major war, overall life expectancy improved at about twice the rate during the war as during the previous two decades of peace (Engel et al. 2013: 9). Part of this was the change from a shorter life expectancy for women than men before the war to women living longer than men by war’s end—a change assisted by a successful female community health volunteers program.

Plate 9.4 Empowerment through post-conflict livelihood.

John Braithwaite interviewed these Rolpa women who had built and owned a successful textile weaving factory by pooling the reintegration funds most of them received as Maoist fighters for handing in their weapons to UN peacekeepers.

Source: John Braithwaite, fieldwork photograph, 2014.

Nepal is a rural economy where landlessness is a dominant driver of poverty. The two demographic groups with the highest rates of landlessness are women and Dalits (Nepali 2008). Murshed and Gates (2005) found that variation in the intensity of armed conflict across Nepal’s 75 districts between 1996 and 2001 was a function of the incidence of landlessness and the Human Development Index. Macours (2011) shows that Maoist
recruitment through abductions of young people to fight was most intense in districts where the growing inequality between the landless and the landed had widened most.

Nepal et al. (2011) argue that, in a village society, the village is the best specified level of analysis for exploring inequality effects, rather than the district or national level. This is because groups must overcome the costly collective action problems to organise for revolt against the state machinery, and, in village society, it is at the village level that organisation for collective action is most possible. Indeed, it is true that the initial attacks on police posts to acquire the insurgency’s first weapons did not arise nationally, but were a result of local uprisings in certain villages in the remote districts of Rolpa and Rukum. Nepal et al. (2011) found large, robust effects after measuring for endogeneity of inter-group inequality explaining resistance, especially inequality between upper and lower castes (and disadvantaged indigenous groups). That is, across 3,857 villages, when inter-group inequality was high, Maoist killings were high.\(^\text{10}\)

The foregoing narrative account of the structural drivers and impacts of Nepal’s war and the peace will play an important part in our conclusion in Part III. Now we turn to a proposition-by-proposition assessment of the starting theory against the Nepalese civil war.

**Proposition 1:** As coercion escalates, both deterrence and defiance increase. The deterrence effect exceeds the defiance effect only at high levels of coercion. During the large range of values of coercion when defiance effects are steeper than deterrence, violence cascades.

In all accounts of the movement to civil war led from Rolpa and nearby districts, the targeting of those districts by the police atrocities of Operation Romeo in November 1995 is important (Gautam et al. 2011: 343). Likewise, the killing of its men and the campaign of police rape in Rolpa engendered more defiance than deterrence, decisively shaping the gendered character of this conflict. One reason the war reeled out of control is that it began in a small way at a time when the political contest that mattered was between the king and the parliamentary parties. The king tacitly supported the revolutionary tactics of the Maoists in

---

10 The work of Nepal et al. (2011) is also an important methodological advance in the study of intragroup inequality effects on the intensity of war because a cross-national study of inequality effects across 100 societies suffers massive institutional heterogeneity problems with wars of local origin and local resilience.
killing their (and his) political competitors in the parliamentary parties. This was why the police (who were under the control of the executive government of the parliamentary parties) fought the war in the early years. The army was loyal to the king and, under the constitution, the king was their commander-in-chief. The king held the army back from fighting until the civil war had cascaded to the point where it was difficult for the army to dominate the 80 per cent of the territory by then controlled by the Maoists. Military deterrence therefore never reached the point where it overwhelmed defiance.

**Proposition 2:** Violence cascades when violent imaginaries are modelled; nonviolent resistance cascades when diffusion of nonviolence grasps the imagination of the public. Both are most likely to occur when architectures of extreme coercion begin to crack or cleavages in a society begin to open.

As discussed above, the violent imaginary that cascaded from nearby Naxalite struggles in India and from Chairman Mao’s *Little Red Book* was Maoist. Peru’s Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) Maoists were also an influence on the ‘Prachanda Path’ doctrine for combining Marxism, Leninism and Maoism. In the aftermath of systematic policies of rape, feminism also became central to the ‘Prachanda Path’ imaginary. At the decisive moment of transformation, however, the imaginary that surged millions on to the streets of Nepal’s cities in 2006 to demand that the king step down was of nonviolent people power in which a nonviolent women’s movement was momentous. As discussed in more detail in Part III, like Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo in South Africa and Xanana Gusmao and José Ramos-Horta in East Timor (Braithwaite et al. 2012), the Maoist leadership in Nepal opted to shift strategy from armed struggle to nonviolent resistance in a way that swept them to a post-conflict electoral victory.

**Proposition 3:** Violence cascades through alliance structures when a cleavage motivates mobilisation of alliances or unsettling of power balances.

The cleavages that opened up to enable the rise of Maoist civil war and the rise of the victorious CMDP were between the king and the political parties and, ultimately, between the king and the Government of India (which protected the Maoist leadership in New Delhi and supported the Nepalese democracy movement). The empirical research of Nepal et al. (2011) is important in suggesting that, in the initial rise of the insurgency, the depth of local village-level cleavages between upper-caste landlords
and the lower-caste landless was decisive. The Nepalese case therefore supports Autesserre’s (2010, 2014) and Kalyvas’s (2003) analyses on the importance of how local cleavages enrol national ones (and international ones, such as between India and the Nepalese king) and vice versa.

Proposition 4: Disintegration of the capacity of a single legitimate armed force to pacify a space through its domination over all competing armed groups enables the cascading of violence across that territory.

We have already argued that this war was unusual in that, for most of its duration, it was fought by a militarised police force with the army on the sidelines. A militarised police controlled by the executive government and an army controlled by the king did not make a great formula for winning the war. When the Maoist army grew to a force of perhaps 10,000,\textsuperscript{11} the fragmentation of the state monopoly of force was profound. This fragmentation was compounded by major political parties controlling violent youth wings that terrorised their political opponents and mobilised violence against village leaders who refused to organise their village to vote for their party sponsors. This problem has continued since the peace of 2006. Luitel et al. (2010) found it worsened post conflict in some ways, reporting 15 different militant youth groups formed by political organisations, some with countrywide influence and at least nominal memberships of hundreds of thousands of youths. They report that some ethnic, caste and religious groups have also established militarised youth wings to advance their political objectives. Luitel et al. (2010: 196) dub this ‘societal militarisation’, as opposed to state militarisation: a ‘militarisation of [Nepalese] youth’. They report that problems such as rape associated with state militarisation are also associated with societal militarisation through youth wings, noting at the same time that politically active young women have not been militarised since the cantonment and reintegration of the Maoist army. A demographic youth bulge with high youth unemployment enabled this societal militarisation.

Proposition 5: Once cleavages put alliance cascades on the march, security dilemmas can further accelerate the cascade.

\textsuperscript{11} This is the number currently coded in Peacebuilding Compared from various sources. It may be revised in future years, however, as better sources are documented.
The Nepalese civil war is coded in Peacebuilding Compared as one in which the contribution of security dilemmas as a factor in the onset of conflict was ‘low’. The war did not start because the downtrodden were in a security dilemma. So this proposition of the theory is not supported for this case. One could say that women fearing rape joined the war at a later stage because they were in a security dilemma whereby they chose to fight before they were raped. Upreti (2010: 248) identifies the militarisation of youth wings of political organisations as a potential post-conflict driver of future security dilemmas.

**Proposition 6:** Refugee and IDP flows further cascade violence. Violence cascades when those displaced by violence displace others from spaces to which refugees flee. Refugee camps become nodes of hopelessness and resentment for those they trap. This makes them ideal recruiting grounds for those with weapons and cash to enrol bereft young refugees into armed groups. In turn, these recruitment practices inside refugee camps make camps targets for atrocity by enemies of the recruiters.

Refugee camps were not critical sites of Maoist recruitment. IDPs, however, certainly became more available for Maoist recruitment than villagers whose homes were not being burnt to the ground. From 1967 onwards, many minority Nepalese were driven by communal violence from various troubled north-eastern Indian states to become refugees in Nepal, but we have not seen evidence that this was important to Maoist recruitment or insurgency creation. In the Peacebuilding Compared database, the numbers of refugees and IDPs were not high in Nepal compared with other armed conflicts to date, and certainly not compared with the other South Asian conflicts included in this book. This proposition of our theory is therefore also not supported for this case.

**Proposition 7:** Cascades of violence that disintegrate the capabilities of one legitimate monopoly of force to dominate all other armed groups in a territory create conditions of anomie. No one knows any longer what the rules of the game are; no one knows who is legitimately in charge. Anomie cascades further violence.

Nepal was a classic case of Durkheimian anomie. Not knowing what the rules of the game were and not knowing who was in charge afflicted everyone, particularly in areas in transition from government control to control by the United People’s Revolutionary Committees.
A telling example is how anomie afflicted the Royal Nepalese Army. With its proud Gurkha tradition, this army sat on its hands for years while unusual rules of the game were played out in which its civil war was fought by the police. Both the Indian intelligence agency (Research and Analysis Wing, RAW), which had great influence over the Royal Nepalese Army, and the king wanted the army to stay out of a civil war that had effectively been between the democratic parties and the Maoists. With the murder of the king by one of his sons in 2001, there were different views within the officer corps about the royal massacre and about loyalty to the new king. When the crunch came in 2006, the army supported the overthrow of the monarchy by the CMDP. The important qualification to our hypothesis in the final act of this saga is that, ultimately, anomie cascaded on the streets to a nonviolent democratic people-power transformation. This was a unifying moment and movement towards a new normative settlement. This qualification to Proposition 7 will be a focus of analysis in Chapter 11.

**Proposition 8:** Cascades of violence recursively cascade militarisation and domination. Militarisation and domination recursively risk further cascades of violence.

Even though the military stayed out of the civil war until 2002, ultimately, the war did cascade to militarisation in this way. Moreover, by then, the police had been radically militarised to the point where it was functionally a second military within Nepal's borders (though a less able one than the Gurkhas in the Royal Nepalese Army). The militarised police cascaded torture, rape, disappearances and other forms of domination that brutalised the oppressed people of rural Nepal, driving forward recruitment into the People’s Liberation Army. After the 2006 peace agreement, armed groups morphed into 119 armed criminal gangs involved in kidnapping, extortion and robberies in the Tarai region, some supported by Indian interests. A great success of Nepal's peacebuilding has been that most of the leaders of these armed gangs have now been persuaded by enforcement, peace negotiations or both to surrender their weapons (Interviews with police chief and home secretary, Kathmandu, 2013, No. 031426). Nepal's homicide rate was less than half the world average by 2013, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC 2013), falling further,

---

12 This is the number according to interviews with police. It was 107 and 109 armed criminal gangs, according to our interviews with academic experts.
to almost one-third of the world average by 2014. On our analysis in Part III, the war-to-crime cascades have been moderated by the nonviolent people power of Nepal’s transformative peace.

**Proposition 9:** Crime often sparks cascades to war and war to crime. As crime–war–crime cascades from hotspot to hotspot, violence becomes less shameful and easier to excuse. When rape and violence become less shameful, this further cascades rape and violence.

Our introduction to this section emphasised rape and other crimes of violent domination at the village and district levels as explaining why some villages became local hotspots of a civil war that cascaded between hotspots and joined up hotspots of violence. Ghimire and Upreti (2010: 211) argue that war cascaded to crime via the proceeds from annual sales of illegal drugs growing post conflict to a value twice the level of the government funding allocated to its security agencies. As we have just discussed, there was a very large post-conflict criminal gang problem associated with former combatants for a few years after the end of the war. For the security sector, the war strategy defined rape of Maoists as patriotic rather than shameful.

**Proposition 10:** When war produces a cascade of violence that moves to many new spaces that bite back at a combatant nation, the costs of shutting down the violence in all those spaces can quickly exceed the benefits of winning the war. It can then be rational to cut one’s losses by pulling out of the war, leaving a festering cascade of violence behind, unresolved. The contemporary war economics of cascades therefore sustains cascades of violence (as we saw with cut-and-run policies in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya).

Proposition 10 does not fit the Nepalese war and peace in the way it does Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. There were no imperial French, British, American or Russian invaders to cut and run after they concluded that their losses no longer justified continuing the war. There is also a much more profound sense in which Proposition 10 does not fit Nepal. It is not that the Royal Nepalese Army had been bled to the point that it was in a hurting stalemate with the Maoist army. Rather, after it took over the conduct of the war from the police in 2002, it began to make progress that had eluded the police during its conduct of the long campaign since 1994. After 11 September 2001 and the US listing of the People’s Liberation Army as a terrorist organisation, the Royal Nepalese Army was enjoying a new flush of US military aid to renew its firepower.
The denouement of the conflict had nothing to do with cascading to the point where superior firepower succeeded or failed in delivering deterrence effects that exceeded defiance effects. Rather, the denouement was about conflict transformation led from Nepalese civil society. Nepalese civil society, as opposed to Nepalese political parties, transformed the conflict from a violent struggle for a Maoist revolution to a nonviolent democratic struggle for a republican revolution.

The next critical thing was how India responded to this transformative initiative from the streets of Nepal. India had been playing a double game of supporting both the king and the Maoists—actually, a triple game of also cultivating the non-Maoist parliamentary parties. Ultimately, India responded to the CMDP by cutting off its support for the king and urging the Maoists to declare a unilateral ceasefire. India also urged the Maoists and the parliamentary parties to work together for the first time to support the CMDP, and to craft a new republican constitution that would see the Maoists as credible electoral competitors in the aftermath of their unilateral termination of the war. When this was accomplished, India persuaded the Royal Nepalese Army to side with the people and the political parties rather than the king. The icing on the people-power cake came when the United States and the entire Kathmandu diplomatic community, which had been pushing the impossible compromise of a constitutional monarchy, defected from the king to the people and urged a reluctant and resistant king to relent by abdication.

Hence, Nepal is a nonviolent people-power story of conflict transformation rather than a Proposition 10 story. In Chapter 11, we argue that there is much to learn from this. We argue that, at many points since 2001, the Taliban and the governments of the United States, Afghanistan and Pakistan might have realised that interminable continuation of the Afghan war would ultimately prove too costly for all of them. A peace process early on that perceived a long-run likelihood of hurting stalemate would have been a profoundly rational perspective for all these key parties. The policy conclusion of Chapter 11 is that nonviolent conflict transformation—people power combined with unilateral ceasefires—is a policy package that makes sense for making Proposition 10 untrue in a wide range of cases beyond Afghanistan and Nepal.
CASCADeS of ViolenCe

Myanmar13

When China sneezes, the Irrawaddy floods.
— Bamar proverb, cascade metaphor

Modern Myanmar differs from other smaller countries of the region—Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and the Maldives—in being much less under the influence of India (Butler 1932: 647; Wilson 2007: 89) and shaped more by China. Even with Bangladesh and Afghanistan, India has had a more profound influence than China in shaping their histories. While Myanmar and India share a long border, Indian influence is buffered by Bangladesh between them. Fear of Chinese invasion has been a constant of Myanmar’s history, though full-scale Chinese conquest of the capital happened only once, when the Mongol rulers of China invaded the old capital, Bagan, in 1287. Failed Chinese invasions occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and there have also been surgical Chinese incursions. Chairman Mao Zedong allowed an important Chinese intervention in 1968 to back the Communist Party of Burma. In our 2015 interview (No. 071519) with the then speaker of Myanmar’s upper house, Khin Aung Myint, he recounted an experience as a young officer fighting the Communist Party of Burma. He captured three Chinese soldiers and found in their possession maps indicating that Burma was a rebel province of China. On interrogation, the Chinese troops actually believed this to be true. Myanmar in the current decade seeks to balance its continued and considerable domination by China through becoming an active member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and through partial democratisation and then more complete democratisation when Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy (NLD) came to power in the 2015 election. This democratisation engaged American power as another counterbalance against China.

Myanmar has long been a society with a master cleavage and many more local cleavages that feed and transform the master cleavage (Aung-Thwin 1989; Autesserre 2010; Kalyvas 2003). Until the November 2015 election, the master cleavage was between the democracy movement and continuing domination of the society by the inner circle of the old military junta (Wintle 2007). Military domination continues to be important today and this cleavage continues to be significant. The most influential institutional

13 John Braithwaite, Naing Ko Ko and Bina D’Costa conducted 136 interviews, some with more than one person present, for the Myanmar case, most of them in Myanmar in 2015 and 2017.
foundation of the democracy movement is the NLD. Secondary cleavages include ongoing autonomy struggles between regional ethnic armies and military control from the centre. Interethnic clashes also continue in less deadly ways at many hotspots. Before the rise of the NLD in 1989, the primary cleavage was between the junta and the Communist Party of Burma. Two dozen secondary ethnic insurgencies sometimes supported the communists against the military, were sometimes coopted to support the military against the communists, sometimes coopted by China and sometimes coopted China (Aung-Thwin and Aung-Thwin 2012; Lintner 1990a, 1990b; O’Hara and Selling 2012; Oo 2006; Seekins 2002; Shee 2002; Smith 1994; Steinberg 2013). Before that, the primary cleavage was between British colonial power and pro-independence armed groups led by General Aung San.

Before British colonialism (from 1885), the master cleavages were what are today’s secondary ethnic cleavages. Domination of the state by Bamar kingdoms displaced domination by kings of other major ethnic groups, who continued to push back against Bamar sovereignty. Right up until 1949, there was an attempt by the Karen National Union to conquer the country and supplant Bamar with Karen hegemony. The army of the second largest ethnic group went close to taking the capital, Yangon. The Bamar-dominated state might not have survived without other ethnic armies, such as that of the Kachin, joining the defence of the state against the Karen National Union.

In 1961 (and earlier), prime minister U Nu’s government alienated the Kachin by allowing itself to be captured by a tertiary (religious) cleavage. Myanmar has recurrently seen powerful factions of unarmed Buddhist monks set against other elements of the society. We saw this with the Saffron Revolution of 2007, when monks led mass protests on the streets of Yangon and when large sections of Buddhist society joined hands with the democracy movement. By 1961, more conservative factions of Buddhist monks who supported the government persuaded it to declare Burma a Buddhist state. The Christian Kachin in the north took up arms in response. This was the start of dozens of ethnic autonomy wars against the centre. A number of these continue at the time of writing. The Kachin conflict between perhaps one-third of the Myanmar military (one of the largest in the world, which boasted 400,000 personnel at its peak) and 20,000 Kachin Independence Army fighters in 2015–16 was the bloodiest conflict. The Buddhism cleavage that initially cascaded to this has a contemporary echo in the capture of elements of the Myanmar
military and state by the ‘969 movement’ of Islamophobic Buddhist monks. The movement has agitated for driving Muslim Rohingyas from Rakhine State across the border to Bangladesh and into the sea in boats (Burma News International 2013: 11; Farrelly and Hossain 2015). This has led to the recruitment of some angry young Rohingya Muslims to the Pakistani Taliban and Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (Burma News International 2014: 19).

The morphology of modern Myanmar conflict has always had a primary cleavage (over colonialism, Marxism, democracy/militarism), many ethnic secondary armed cleavages and unarmed tertiary cleavages with a religious character. What has been in constant flux is the content of these cleavages.

**Proposition 1:** As coercion escalates, both deterrence and defiance increase. The deterrence effect exceeds the defiance effect only at high levels of coercion. During the large range of values of coercion when defiance effects are steeper than deterrence, violence cascades.

Christian Kachin defiance of Buddhist Bamar domination, when it moved up a notch to the attempted declaration of Burma as a Buddhist state, is one of dozens of examples of ethnic armies manifesting the defiance part
Various empires—from ancient to early modern Myanmar history (Aung-Thwin and Aung-Thwin 2012), as well as the late-modern Bamar, British, Japanese and junta dominations of Myanmar territory—were all accomplished by levels of deterrence that suppressed defiance. The defiance of the Communist Party of Burma collapsed after it no longer had the support (Ball 1994) of a power greater than the junta (China’s People’s Liberation Army). The party completely disappeared in 1989 when its ethnic minority fighters mutinied and reorganised as breakaway ethnic armies with Chinese support (Smith 1994: 60). The Communist Party of Burma went into liquidation as a criminal enterprise in 1989; it was taken over by Chinese gangster syndicates, who turned it into ‘the most heavily armed drug trafficking organisation in Southeast Asia, outnumbering and outgunning even the hitherto most powerful opium warlord in Burma, Zhang Qifu, alias Khun Sa’ (Lintner 1999: 472). In sum, we conceive the support for Proposition 1 as strong in the Myanmar case.

**Proposition 2:** Violent cascades when violent imaginaries are modelled; nonviolent resistance cascades when diffusion of nonviolence grasps the imagination of the public. Both are most likely to occur when architectures of extreme coercion begin to crack or cleavages in a society begin to open.

The transition in the model of resistance from Aung San to his daughter Aung San Suu Kyi is one from an imaginary of armed resistance to an imaginary of unarmed resistance. The nonviolent imaginary of the democracy movement has been effective—albeit slowly—in accomplishing a partial, then a more substantial, transition towards democracy (Pedersen 2008; UN Special Rapporteur 2012). The new step forward was Aung San Suu Kyi becoming the most powerful figure in the NLD Government that assumed power in 2016. Yet the violent imaginary of the Bamar general, the ethnic army and the communist insurgent is the dominant one in Myanmar’s history. We interpret this as a reason for the high level of violence in Myanmar’s history, and today. Each time the architectures of coercion—by colonial power or by junta power—have begun to crack, violence has cascaded. The current conjuncture is a good example. As Min Zin (2015: 2) wrote in late 2015, ceasefire agreements between the government and the major ethnic armies are being signed ‘when more people are fighting and dying in Burma’s internal wars than at any other time in recent memory’ (although hardly as many as were dying before the mid-1990s) (see also Ball and Farrelly 2013).
Plate 9.6 Dau Aung San Suu Kyi gives a speech to supporters at Hlaing Thar Yar Township in Yangon, Myanmar, 2011.
Source: Wikimedia. Photograph by Htoo Tay Zar.
**Proposition 3:** Violence cascades through alliance structures when a cleavage motivates mobilisation of alliances or unsettling of power balances.

The introduction to this Myanmar analysis attempted to encapsulate how different kinds of cleavages have unsettled power balances. Ethnic armies in particular have aligned at different times with and against each other and with and against master cleavages over colonial control, junta control, communist and anti-communist (Kuomintang) control of spaces. At other times, secondary ethnic cleavages have driven alliances concerning Buddhist tertiary cleavages (as we see with the Rohingya conflict today, for example). The Myanmar experience is therefore quite a good fit with this proposition.

**Proposition 4:** Disintegration of the capacity of a single legitimate armed force to pacify a space through its domination over all competing armed groups enables the cascading of violence across that territory.

The Myanmar military, with far more active personnel than France and the United Kingdom combined,\(^{14}\) has the capability to dominate any single armed group in the country. But because it has confronted dozens of credible armed groups, some with as many as 20,000 hardened fighters (the Kachin Independence Army) or even 30,000 (the United Wa State Army) (Maung 2014: 246; Selth 2013: 14), it has ceded control over a significant part of the country to economic and military domination by the United Wa State Army and some other ethnic armies. This is because state forces only have the capacity to take on a small number of these ethnic armies at one time (Selth 2013). That is also the context in which the consensus position of all the major ethnic armies in ceasefire negotiations with the government in late 2015 was to refuse disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration. Rather, their position was to demand a ‘federal army’ of which the dominant militaries of major ethnic groups—such as the Kachin, Shan, Karen and Mon—become state armies that are component parts of the federal whole. A narrative of broken promises drives this negotiating position: in the past, ceasefires were signed with promises to move on to a political settlement that never happened, and then government forces launched attacks in breach of the ceasefire. Hence, the Myanmar reality remains that disintegration of the capacity of a single legitimate armed force to pacify the country through its domination over all competing armed groups drives continued cascading of violence.

**Proposition 5:** Once cleavages put alliance cascades on the march, security dilemmas can further accelerate the cascade.

Propositions 1–4 provide a better account of the root causes of conflict in Myanmar than the security dilemmas invoked in Proposition 5. Nevertheless, a history of ceasefires that have often been broken by both sides frequently causes armies to perceive imminent attack, so they calculate that the next time it should be they who breach the ceasefire first. In this way, there are certain secondary security dilemma dynamics in Myanmar’s violence. Compared with some other cases, however, here we see the centrality of the security dilemma explanation of conflict as limited. One way to eliminate the considerable future risk of security dilemmas reigniting old conflicts may be international peace monitoring with a trust-building mandate.

**Proposition 6:** Refugee and IDP flows further cascade violence. Violence cascades when those displaced by violence displace others from spaces to which refugees flee. Refugee camps become nodes of hopelessness and resentment for those they trap. This makes them ideal recruiting grounds for those with weapons and cash to enrol bereft young refugees into armed groups. In turn, these recruitment practices inside refugee camps make camps targets for atrocity by enemies of the recruiters.

There is explanatory power in refugee and IDP camps as places of despair that fuel recruitment to insurgencies (Oo 2006; South 2007: 61). For the most part, this has been, however, a second-order factor that accelerated conflicts that have deeper causes. A genuine peace process in Myanmar that crafted compromises on these primary causes, which we conceive as about cascades of domination, could aim to close all the refugee and IDP camps and the secondary impetus to violence that they drive. A major difference between Myanmar refugee camps in Thailand and Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan is that the latter have not been the incubus of a nonviolent democracy movement as an alternative to transformation through insurgency. Refugee camps in Thailand, in contrast, trained many to lead nonviolent democracy campaigns that have been constitutive of the master cleavage of Myanmar politics (Banki 2014; Naing 2017).

The contemporary Rohingya crisis, however, raises a growing challenge of displacement and disenfranchisement. It is such a currently dangerous example of a Proposition 6 cascade that we now give it detailed consideration. As explained in Chapter 4, trapped populations in times of
conflict can become recruiting grounds for armed groups. Now, in the age of the ‘global war on terror’, refugees are no longer welcome and are seen as security threats. Illegal immigrants, refugees, stateless people and IDPs create moral dilemmas for states. Identity differences can be accentuated and refugees left with nowhere to turn. This has been the case in recent times in Rakhine state. The International Crisis Group (ICG 2016) worries that the ongoing crisis involving the Rohingya population could give rise to a new insurgency movement in South Asia.

The multilayered political, social and psychological trauma of violence and displacement has also generated multifaceted anxiety in Myanmar, which could unravel stability. The immediate priorities to create stable democratic and economic institutions, to address the culture of impunity and to restore peaceful coexistence of a multiethnic society have also meant some of the deeper challenges of identity politics have been overlooked. In this environment, initiating an inclusive conversation with the Rohingya ethnic group and revisiting their citizenship status have simply not been priorities.

On 9 October 2016, nine border guards were killed in three attacks along Myanmar’s north-western border with Bangladesh. The president’s office held a previously unknown Rohingya group liable. Soon after troops started to arrive in Maungdaw, a regional curfew was declared and 400 area schools were closed. Villages have been torched, many people have been killed, including babies, elderly and children burnt alive, and soldiers have carried out gang rape (OHCHR 2017). Pierre Peron, a spokesman for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Myanmar, estimated that over 30,000 people were displaced by the attacks (Slodkowski 2016), increasing over the next year to 90,000 (OHCHR 2017: 7). During the months when this book was in the copy-editing process in late 2017, this number may have cascaded to perhaps 700,000 driven across the border by further violence and rape. Rohingya activists and international media are referring to this current crisis as a genocidal conflict, despite the Myanmar Government’s repeated denial of genocide.

The Muslims of Myanmar’s west coast identify themselves as Rohingya, a name derived from Rohang, the ancient name of Arakan (now Rakhine State). Realising the deeply embedded prejudice the term carries with it, many Rohingyas in recent decades preferred to be labelled simply as Arakan Muslims. In all formal and most of our informal discussions
in Myanmar, the widely used term for Rohingyas is ‘Bengali Muslims’ or ‘illegal Bangladeshis’. During our interviews in Myanmar, we heard that the key problems of legitimacy and citizenship are linked to this debate about what exactly to call these persecuted people. Many of our respondents from Myanmar did not even recognise the right of Rohingyas to be called by their preferred name.

All identity groups should have the right to name their own group. Yet census programs, textbook revisions and the systematic silencing of Rohingyas in broader public discourse have wiped them from the living memory of modern Myanmar. This erasure occurred against the backdrop of Myanmar’s protracted conflict that touched all ethnic groups in the country. Myanmar, through its 1982 Citizenship Law, recognises the Kaman and Bamar Muslims in its Muslim populations. Its population also includes Chinese Muslims and Indian Muslims. However, the largest Muslim population living in Rakhine State, the Rohingyas, is not recognised in the list, which has effectively rendered them stateless.

Exclusion policies worsened sharply with the 1962 military coup, after which freedom of movement was restricted. The restrictions on movement continue to be oppressive, with massive numbers of Rohingyas even denied the right to enter Rakhine towns, greatly truncating their access to education and healthcare institutions. Then there was promulgation in 1974 of the *Emergency Immigration Act*, which was designed to prevent people entering from India, China and Bangladesh; the census program Operation Nagamin, to check identification cards and take action against illegal aliens, in 1977; and, finally, the 1982 Citizenship Law, following the 1978 exodus, when many Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh were starved through deprivation of food rations by the Government of Bangladesh to force Rohingya to return or attempt to return to Myanmar.

Electoral politics prior to the 2015 general election contributed to further disenfranchisement of the Rohingyas. The right to vote of an estimated 700,000 Rohingyas and other minority groups holding temporary identity cards was revoked in May 2015 (UNHRC 2016: 3). The new parliament has no Muslim members. Systematic persecution, extreme poverty and alienation have led Rohingyas to seek asylum in other countries.
An OCHA report estimates that 2,000 Rohingyas and Bangladeshis died at sea between 2012 and 2015. While there are no reliable figures, there are reports that many of these deaths were of children.

By March 2015, there were already 146,500 internally displaced people in Rakhine State and 662,400 in all Myanmar (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2015). The Rakhine IDPs are mostly Muslims, some Buddhists, and almost all live in camps. Following the renewed crackdown, these camps have been severely affected. In northern Rakhine, one-fifth of children under the age of five suffer acute malnutrition. Food and medical supplies in the camps provided by international organisations have had many restrictions placed on them or have been completely stopped, contributing to the further vulnerability of refugees. Sexual abuse and lack of proper sanitation and medical supplies have affected the sexual and reproductive health of girls and young women.

Widespread accusations of rape of Rohingya girls and women were either denied or shrugged off by the authorities. Some 24 per cent of the Rohingya refugee women interviewed by the United Nations in 2017 reported having been raped and 52 per cent subjected to some form of sexual violence (OHCHR 2017: 9–10). Some of the responses to rape accusations indicate how deeply the Rohingyas are despised. For example, Aung Win, the chairman of a Rakhine investigation committee, in his interview with the BBC, laughed and stated that the soldiers would never rape Rohingya women because ‘they are very dirty’. These responses clearly show how Rohingyas, especially women and girls, can be quickly dismissed from any recourse to justice. During informal conversations, even with activists from other ethnic groups, we were told (at least twice) that Rohingya women and girls were not sufficiently ‘beautiful and attractive’ to be raped by security forces.

Children are also vulnerable when they are crossing treacherous borders to seek refuge. The vulnerabilities of children, and the sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls, have angered young Rohingya men. The crisis has broader regional implications. The Leda camp in Bangladesh, which shelters 30,000 Rohingyas, is close to a Rakhine village where only 120 Rakhine families live. People in this village are

---

worried that the intercommunal tension will spill across the border and there is grave concern that extremists will target the minority Buddhist community in Bangladesh, where minorities and indigenous populations have been attacked and displaced numerous times under a range of pretexts. It is reassuring to see that the Bangladesh Buddhist Federation condemned the ongoing repression of Muslim Rohingyas (Star Online Report 2016).

Faith-based restorative justice mechanisms could serve as important healing platforms in rebuilding trust between Rakhine Buddhist and Rohingyas in Myanmar and also in Bangladesh. There is certainly a need for civil society voices, particularly those from faith-based institutions who have symbolic authority, to speak up, unite diverse opinions and denounce hate speech. Myanmar also needs to prioritise intercommunal dialogue in Rakhine State. Part III of this book considers these options for making the Proposition 10 dynamic no longer true for desperate current cases such as the Rohingya.

**Proposition 7:** Cascades of violence that disintegrate the capabilities of one legitimate monopoly of force to dominate all other armed groups in a territory create conditions of anomie. *No one knows any longer what the rules of the game are; no one knows who is legitimately in charge. Anomie cascades further violence.*

Since the time of Myanmar’s first military coup in 1962, it has been clear who is in charge. Even the pecking order within the junta was always rather clearer than in most regimes. It was still clear in 2015 that a small group of former and current generals was in charge, and that had not changed hugely at the end of 2017. Today, it is clear that Aung San Suu Kyi is also in charge in a very top-down way, albeit in a distinctive kind of powersharing with the military. Leaders set the rules of the game and it has mostly been rather obvious to everyone what those rules were. Even though those rules and rulers had circumscribed legitimacy, Myanmar could not be conceived as fundamentally a case of anomie driving violence. Even the 20 years before the first coup (1942–62) have been described by Aung-Than and Aung-Than (2012: 33–4) as a period of ‘disorder with meaning’, which replaced the British colonial ‘order without meaning’ and was followed after the coup by a period of ‘order with meaning’. We might object that the meaning had shallow roots because of the politics of domination. The order was also fragile, and limited to the core
of the country, while its peripheries recurrently fractured into violence. It remains to be seen whether NLD rule might produce another era of ‘disorder with meaning’ or settle to ‘order with meaning’.

**Proposition 8:** Cascades of violence recursively cascade militarisation and domination. Militarisation and domination recursively risk further cascades of violence.

A vast literature documents how violence, militarisation and domination have been mutually reinforcing in Myanmar (Aung-Thwin and Aung-Thwin 2012; Burma News International 2013, 2014; Callahan 2005; Cheesman 2014; Farrelly 2013, 2014a; Fink 2001; Kachin Women’s Association Thailand 2014; Lintner 1990a; Maung 2014; Myanmar Peace Monitor 2013; Selth 2015; Smith 1994; Steinberg 1981; Seekins 2002). The surprise has been how the military leadership of the country voluntarily loosened the screws of its domination by releasing most political prisoners (Selth 2013: 16) and by a variety of partial steps towards democratisation this decade (Cheesman 2014; UN Special Rapporteur 2012). Myanmar is a useful puzzle for our consideration of cascades of nonviolence, liberation and demilitarisation in Chapter 11. It is also a case of cascades of humiliation, as we sought to illustrate with the plight of the Rohingya.

**Proposition 9:** Crime often sparks cascades to war and war to crime. As crime–war–crime cascades from hotspot to hotspot, violence becomes less shameful and easier to excuse. When rape and violence become less shameful, this further cascades rape and violence.

Specific crimes were not so important in the onset of Myanmar’s ethnic wars. Specific policies of domination, Bamarisation, denial of autonomy and broken promises were recurrent provocations. Likewise, the rise of the armed resistance to British colonialism and the creation of the Communist Party of Burma (whose first elected general-secretary in 1939 was General Aung San) do not seem to have been sparked by any specific crime. When it comes to the rise of the democracy movement as a mass nonviolent movement, however, specific crimes that were ignition points were quite important. There is a difference between Aung San and his politically sophisticated friends calling a meeting to form the Communist Party of Burma and a cascade of growing numbers of angry ordinary people who had had enough with the regime and who surged on to the streets in a massive way for the first time in 1988. This started with a fight/assault
in a teashop on 12 March 1988 over the issue of whether rock or Burmese music should be played (Aung-Thwin and Aung-Thwin 2012: 256; Fink 2001; Lintner 1990a; Maung 2000). It was near the Yangon Institute of Technology and a university student was injured. His alleged assailant was arrested but released because of his alleged contacts with the regime. This brought students on to the streets in protest over the police handling of the matter. The police fired on the demonstrators and killed two of them. This escalated the youth mobilisation. Riot police surrounded the Yangon Institute of Technology. Monks joined the protests. By August, there was a general strike and president Ne Win had announced his resignation as Burma Socialist Programme Party Chairman. Myanmar’s long march of people power had begun, even though the military retook control of the streets that September. The NLD was formed after August 1988. The firing of live ammunition during the ‘Saffron Revolution’ in September 2007 was a state crime that cascaded a mass democratic uprising that the state could hardly contain. This helped persuade the junta to move gradually towards democratic reforms and limited powersharing (Interviews with two senior junta generals, Yangon and Naypyidaw, 2015, Nos 081522 and 071519).

The war-to-crime part of the crime–war–crime nexus is more pervasively supported by the Myanmar case than crime-to-war. Interview informants claimed there were many hundreds of armed groups in Myanmar. How could there be so many? Most of them are incapable of fighting even a very local civil war. What they are capable of is a little localised violence in pursuit of criminal objectives.

Major insurgent groups such as the Communist Party of Burma had many splits over ideology and strategy, as well as some breakaway regional parties (Lintner 1990b). The intelligence services often aided and abetted such splits as a strategy to weaken the insurgency. Frequently, they encouraged splits by promising the breakaway faction control of a particular territory or control of a legal or illegal part of the economy, without interference from the state, so long as they refrained from attacking state forces. Even insurgent cartels controlling markets in legal commodities were often criminally enforced at the point of a gun. The most common lucrative deals, however, granted impunity in illegal drug markets (Ball 1999; Meehan 2011). This criminal business model took off in northern Myanmar, led by Chinese Kuomintang troops who fled there after their defeat by Chairman Mao’s communist forces.
(Steinberg 2010: 59). In this case, the heroin trading business model was aided and abetted by the governments of Taiwan and the United States (through the Central Intelligence Agency, CIA) (McCoy 1972: Chs 3–4).

Alfred W. McCoy’s (1972) work laid the foundation for an understanding of how war in places such as Indochina, the Middle East, Colombia, Burma and Afghanistan cascaded drug production from control by one warlord after another in different regions of the world, each protected and supported by one major power after another. With each war-induced move of the dominant site of drug production, another region of the world became afflicted with an out-of-control scourge of drug addiction. Had policymakers recognised this cascade dynamic and the impossibility of suppressing drug production in a war zone, the more sensible option of legalising regulated production in one stable part of the world might have been considered. The world today might, as a result, have only a fraction of the addiction it has and a major source of funding for civil wars might have been eliminated.

More than half a century later, endless emulation by others of the Kuomintang drug lord business model has left Myanmar with one of the most drug-addicted populations in the world (Kachin Women’s Association Thailand 2014) and as one of the top-three drug-exporting nations in the world (Burma News International 2013: 11). Indeed, during some periods of the past half-century, it was the top exporter (Ball 2003: 12). This pattern continues today. While Kachin State has experienced one of the worst civil war in recent years, the consensus there among many informed actors we interviewed was that ‘[m]ore Kachin youth have died from drugs than from the war’ (Kachin Independence Army Brigade commander, quoted in Kachin Women’s Association Thailand 2014: 38).

In Kachin State, one of the things promised by governments to factions that break away from the Kachin Independence Army is impunity for trading in methamphetamine and opiates (Kachin Women’s Association Thailand 2014). In historical periods when fighting spiked, drug production and drug abuse spiked in Shan as well as Kachin states (Kachin Women’s Association Thailand 2014: 16). The combination of war, poverty and drug addiction traps women in violent family relationships:

> When my husband wants more drugs, he threatens me with a knife … I have run away many times. But as I had nothing to eat, I was very hungry. (Kachin Women’s Association Thailand 2014: 28)
Even this is not the principal way so many hundreds of armed groups came into existence. One common path is that a businessman will see an opportunity to make money in a conflict-ravaged area where opportunities for moneymaking are few. The businessman discusses that opportunity with the local military commander (Interviews in Mon State, 2015, Nos 081501 and 081502). They agree together to persuade a local indigenous leader to use weapons provided by the military to grab the land on which the business opportunity is located—be it a tourist resort, factory or mine—and drive off the existing operator. The indigenous leader, with support from the local military commander, then applies to be listed as an armed group with a grievance that this land was his people’s traditional land. The armed group then seeks to participate in the ceasefire negotiations with the government. Until it is decided whether the group will be given any participation rights in ceasefire negotiations, the military commander is able to say to displaced businesspeople who complain of being driven off their property that his hands are tied until a decision is made on the status of the claim lodged to the ceasefire negotiations in Yangon.

Civil war cascades to crimes of this kind with countless variations. Often the military will work with a business partner and an insurgent partner not on the basis of an indigenous land claim, but based on ideological dissent from a mainstream insurgent group (Interviews, 2015, Nos 081501 and 081502). Ironically, the Bamar-dominated military may aid and abet dissent based on anti-military, anti-Bamar racism and ethnic chauvinism, on the claim that the mainstream armed group has become too close to the military and its cronies. Commonly, the new group that conspires to grab the business opportunity while registering to become a participant in ceasefire negotiations will promote itself as the true defender of the full autonomy or independence of their people. They brand themselves as an alternative to the corrupt compromisers of the mainstream group. This marketing resonates and therefore lays a good foundation for the criminal enterprise. Hence, we might say that the primary military/democracy-movement cleavage, the secondary ethnic army cleavages and the tertiary unarmed religious cleavages are complemented by even more numerous (though less politically significant) quaternary criminal enterprise cleavages.

Obviously, this kind of war-to-crime dynamic under Proposition 9 also reinforces the militarisation dynamic in Proposition 8, as it depends on the military domination of a local military commander. This dynamic enriches the most dominating and criminal military leaders.
Military power has consistently protected rapists when the rape was perpetrated by soldiers or political supporters of the junta. The militarised Myanmar state has therefore bequeathed a society in which the shamefulness of rape, like that of the other military-sponsored crimes we have discussed, has been undermined.

**Proposition 10:** When war produces a cascade of violence that moves to many new spaces that bite back at a combatant nation, the costs of shutting down the violence in all those spaces can quickly exceed the benefits of winning the war. It can then be rational to cut one’s losses by pulling out of the war, leaving a festering cascade of violence behind, unresolved. The contemporary war economics of cascades therefore sustains cascades of violence (as we saw with cut-and-run policies in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya).

In Myanmar, there is little semblance of the great power cut-and-run tactics that so devastated the people of Afghanistan, Vietnam, Iraq and Libya (or Kashmir). There is not even a semblance of the major deployment of a regional power like India that left a mess with its cut and run from Sri Lanka’s civil war. There is no support for the Proposition 10 dynamic here. China’s approach has been to govern Myanmar ‘at a distance’. Even when Chairman Mao chose to give the junta a deterrent lesson by allowing tangible military support to the Communist Party of Burma in 1968, the Chinese troops who went into Burma to fight with local communists were said to be locals and were limited in numbers. In another alternative narrative, they were said to be the troops of rogue People’s Liberation Army generals. The most consequential Chinese support involved the training and equipping of Myanmar nationals and the provision of cross-border safe havens inside China. This is government at a distance in the sense of seeking to manage an impression in the art of (transnational) government that locals are self-governing (Foucault 1991). The reality is self-government designed to please the Chinese state, or at least designed not to offend it. Moreover, when the Chinese Government decided to cut off all support for the Communist Party of Burma, this did not cause a cascade of violence. Quite the reverse: it put the communist insurgency on the track to total collapse. Its demise in 1989 was a spectacle of the power of Chinese government at a distance, a lesson in why all Myanmar factions must take the Chinese art of government seriously. One might say that under the Obama administration, ‘principled engagement’ (Pedersen 2008) or ‘constructive engagement’ (Bunyanunda 2002) with Myanmar moved the United States towards a more Chinese style of governing Myanmar at a distance. ‘Principled engagement’ is government
more through hegemony than through threat, through carrots more than sticks, but with the stick of sanction reinstatement hovering in the background as a Sword of Damocles, likely to fall only in extreme circumstances. Myanmar largely made its own mess of crisscrossing civil wars; it is not a case where great power oscillation between domination and disengagement bears the major responsibility for disintegrating the society.

**Conclusion: Wars of the periphery**

South Asian warfare since the 1940s has been a pattern of peripheries against the centre. When General Aung San was organising insurgency against centralised colonial power in the 1940s, it is alleged by many in Myanmar that Britain encouraged the Karen National Union to rise up against Bamar domination of the state and against the Bamar-dominated independence movement. Faced with an uprising at the periphery of its Raj, Britain may have helped cascade a further uprising of a periphery of that periphery. The Sikh Punjab periphery waged a conflict for an independent Khalistan from 1986 to the mid-1990s. Muslim Kashmiris waged more bloody wars for the separation of Kashmir from India. Early on, potentially larger conflicts in Andra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu were moved from a war trajectory to a peace-with-autonomy path by recognising an autonomous role for Sharia courts and other concessions in Andra Pradesh and Tamil language and other claims in Tamil Nadu. Concessions to the Tamil minority at the Sri Lankan periphery of the Raj were less generous; civil war there was more bloody and protracted. Pashtun peripheries waged wars against the ethnic peripheries in Afghanistan; indeed, Pashtuns in control at the centre waged many wars against their own Pashtun periphery.

---

17 In an interview we had with one retired lieutenant general, junta member and senior minister, he said: ‘Western sanctions were definitely useful in creating pressure of change. The international pressure increased rather than decreased with the release of Dau Suu [Aung San Suu Kyi]. The second big cause of pressure was the people movement. So it was joint pressure from the people, from the US and from the UN. These were the three key pressures’ (Interview, Yangon, 2015, No. 081522).

18 Steinberg (2010: 59), in suggesting British support for the Karen, also finds Indian support for the Karen and for the Kachin, Chinese support for Kachin and Naga insurgents as well as the Burma Communist Party, Bangladeshi support for Rohingyas, US support for the Kuomintang and Thai support for various ethnic armies.
The Marxist Janathā Vimukthi Peramuṇa (JVP) uprisings in Sri Lanka were wars of class peripheries, alliances of youthful intellectuals from universities and impoverished caste and class groups and peasants who were marginalised from state power. This kind of alliance was evident in the Naxalite (Maoist) conflicts that have afflicted half the states of India in recent decades, the Maoist conflict in Nepal and the long civil war of the Communist Party of Burma. These Nepalese, Indian and Myanmar conflicts were much more determinedly Maoist than the Sri Lankan JVP conflict in the way Maoists in Nepal, India and Myanmar built support in rural areas where landlords were most exploitative of peasants on the theory that Maoism would eventually take over the entire countryside to surround the capital. The communist takeover of Afghanistan in 1978 was, like the JVP uprisings in Sri Lanka, more classically Leninist, though the Soviet-backed Leninists had competition from Chinese-backed Maoists in Kabul. Afghanistan’s Leninist overthrow of feudalism was led from Kabul. It quickly came to antagonise tribal peripheries in the rural areas more totally than the king had ever done. It was defeated because it was so arrogantly unresponsive to decentralised power, it was seen as atheistic by devout Muslims, as pushing too far in bringing women into the centre of power in Kabul and as guilty of many other sins of the centre against the periphery. Then, when the Taliban became the next ideology to consolidate power in that long-suffering country, it pushed women back further to the periphery of society than they had ever been, and it perpetrated atrocities against non-Pashtun ethnic peripheries, Shia and other infidels of its periphery.

Hence, the focus of this chapter on countries that are on the geographical fringe of the massive core societies of South Asia adds to that broader picture of South Asian war being about struggles pursued from peripheries and peripheries of peripheries. When Rohingyas from Myanmar move to fight from and in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and oppress indigenous peasants there with violence, tax collection and protection rackets, the Myanmar periphery joins up with the cascade of peripheries discussed in Chapter 7: Pakistan pulling away from the centre in New Delhi, Bangladesh pulling away from Islamabad, the CHT tearing away from Dhaka and subordinated indigenous groups in the CHT resisting the dominant indigenous periphery, the Chakma. The Rohingyas became just another armed group struggling against exclusion and another criminal group operating as a remote rural borderland periphery to Chakma as well as state power.
One important difference between the geographical core of South Asian megastates—India, Pakistan and Bangladesh—and the geographical peripheries beyond them is that these peripheries suffered less of the bloodshed of Partition than Kashmir, Bengal or Punjab. In effect, the British Raj had forged effective alliances with the dominant ethnic groups of peripheral states in a deal of transition from indirect to direct governance by the dominant group: Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, Pashtuns in Afghanistan, Nepalese in Nepal, Bhutanese in Bhutan and Bamar in Myanmar (though it toyed with a switch to Karen allegiance there). In each case, we have seen that terrible conflict broke out in South Asia’s periphery between subordinated ethnic minorities and the group whose domination Britain enabled. Only in Bhutan did the Nepalese–Bhutanese conflict fail to cascade eventually to a bloody civil war, although it did cascade to violence, suicide and terrible exclusion.

Fundamentally, however, the post–World War II history of South Asia—with its geographical peripheries that cascade across to South-East, Central and West Asia and the Middle East—is the history of the entire planet. After World War II, warfare shifted decisively towards being predominantly civil wars (Kaldor 1999). Until 1945, ‘World Wars’, a Russian Revolution that was in important ways a war to constitute a wider Soviet empire, Napoleonic wars, wars to crush the Ottoman Empire and other wars of various kinds of empires dominated the shaping of history. After 1945, the mapping of conflict was shaped by postcolonial warfare, peasant uprisings, civil wars at the fringes of both Russian and NATO power (such as Ukraine today) and wars of ethnic and religious independence, from Northern Ireland to Mindanao. While the shift to these kinds of warfare becoming predominant is more decisive in South Asia than for the rest of the globe, the neglect of South Asia in the Western imaginary of warfare cascades has come at a cost to Western strategic analysis.

For example, regulating drugs in the Golden Triangle would not have been such a difficult challenge in the 1950s and 1960s had major powers such as France and the United States decided not to protect and feed the drug trade as part of their anticommunist strategy (McCoy 1972). The war in Kashmir should not have been so difficult to resolve in the 1940s and 1950s, before it cascaded in the crippling ways described in Chapter 5. But the West had no staying power; Western mobilisation of its enormous diplomatic and economic power was limited in pressuring the then weak states of India and Pakistan to negotiate a permanent peace across their borders. It seemed in the West a minor conflict at the margins of the
margins. In retrospect, we can see it as a conflict that incubated a jihad that spread to Afghanistan and, ultimately, to the geopolitical centre: Manhattan and the oilfields under Western hegemony in the Middle East (Rashid 2010b). It has been a conflict that caused the worst and most dangerous breakout from the strictures of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, threatening China more than South Asia with the deaths that would occur in the fallout from a nuclear catastrophe in Kashmir, and perhaps even effectively putting mobile nuclear weapons at the disposal of Saudi Arabia. A. Q. Khan's Pakistani network has assisted nuclear weapon development in Iran, North Korea, Libya, Iraq and Myanmar (Ball 2009). Kashmir seemed unimportant to the West in the decades after World War II because the Western imaginary of war prevention was about preventing World War III. The West lacked the cascade imaginary needed to suppress new wars (Kaldor 1999).

Today, the time is ripe to grasp that imaginary. It is harder to bring a permanent positive peace to Kashmir today than it was in the 1950s. Untangling South Asia's nuclear knots is difficult. The neoliberal ideologies of donors and state econocrats make it harder than ever to mobilise land reforms that give justice to peasants who are still attracted to Maoism because they are still oppressed by landlords. Even so, ‘principled engagement’ of the West, China and ASEAN with Myanmar has meant that its nuclear weapons program never took off (Naing 2010) and probably never will. This, at least, is one story of better preventive diplomacy than occurred in Iraq. The cascade imaginary conceives of peacebuilding to mop up messy wars of the periphery as being more expensive for the West than preventive diplomacy and economic diplomacy to stop them before they start. That challenge is a theme of Part III. Chapter 10 moves into that challenge by integrating the findings of this chapter about the many turning points towards violence and nonviolence on the periphery of South Asia with the findings of earlier chapters about turning points in the core of South Asia.