

Monetization and Marketization: A Critical Study of the Concept of Modern War in *Green on Blue*

¹ **Ubaid Ullah**, M. Phil in English, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan & Lecturer in English, Government Degree College No. 2 Mardan. Email: khanubaid5002@gmail.com

² **Dr. Abdul Waheed Qureshi** [Corresponding Author], Assistant Professor, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan. Email: waheedqureshi@awkum.edu.pk

³ **Dr. Mahrukh Shakir**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Abdul Wali Khan, University, Mardan. Email: mahrukh@awkum.edu.pk

⁴ **Dr. Irfan Ullah Khan**. Center for Non-Traditional and Peaceful Development Studies, School of Public Affairs, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China., Email: irfanullahkhan742@yahoo.com

Received: 25th July, 2021

Revised: 16th September, 2021

Published: 28th September, 2021

Abstract: The current research is a study of the economic aims behind the modern wars in the context of Elliot Ackerman's (2015) *Green on Blue* as modern wars are marketized in different ways. Different perspectives on the nature and existence of war are considered such as peace and security, poverty, injustice, national interests, political ends, and so on. Philippe Billon's (2000) theory of 'The Political Economy of War' provided the necessary theoretical perspective and guidance for the study. The research study is a qualitative and dialectical one, which is why it has used close reading as a method of data analysis. The data analysis in the context of the novel enabled the researchers to infer that modern wars are fought for benefits and material gains and not for inherent enmity or as natural occurrence. These wars are a market product where there are many sellers and buyers.

Keywords: *Economy; Marketization; National Interests; Political Aims; Terrorism; War*

Introduction

There is no denying of the fact the 21st century is facing many challenges such as global warming, climate change, Islamophobia, pandemics, political instability, poverty, inflation, scarcity of natural resources, wars, and terrorism etc. among which the last two have shaken the peaceful coexistence of humans. Aside from the countries directly involved in wars, majority of other nations and countries are also affected in one way or the other. Historically, wars were fought for genuine causes but nowadays, majority of them have specific economic or political goals and to pursue these goals, they are manufactured as commodities to be sold and introduced in a free market economy, much like other products. Abid Mustikhan (2020) argues that World War II, which engulfed the entire world, had many economic and political reasons. The British Empire's participation in the world's deadliest conflict was largely motivated by economic interests and expansionism, giving rise to the adage that "the sun never sets on the British Empire" (para. 4). The chaos and unending nature of war had left many nations helpless. The superpowers and countries who manufacture arms are more interested in the

marketization of wars, as a great deal of their GDP growth is dependent on the export of arms and weapons. They normalize war and use the deadly weapons strategically and as trade products or commodities, exported for the purpose of boosting their economies. The world's strongest economies like US, Russia, Germany, France, China, UK, Israel, Italy, South Korea, and Ukraine are also the biggest arms suppliers ("The 10 Countries that Export", 2017). The normalization of war for economic benefits can also be called the "trade on war" Nikolaos Tzifakis (n.d., para. 8) which means that armed conflicts are complex circumstances that result from a combination of factors political, economic, historical, and psychological and are rarely able to be defined in terms of a single cause. The term 'economic reasons' may refer to any material factors and incentives that lead to employ force to achieve their goals. Depending on the nature of the conflict at hand that is, whether it crosses international boundaries "international vs. internal conflict" (para. 1) and whether its opponents are "state or "non-state actors"(para. 1), economic reasons might fluctuate greatly. Access to far-off marketplaces and limited assets, expansionism, worries for the effects of economic interdependence, and population growth have generally been the utmost economic reasons of the occurrence of global conflicts, although "greed and exacerbation of grievances" (para. 1) are thought to be the key inspirations for interior clashes. The interest of different nations in a war clearly describes the concept of modern warfare, which describes modern warfare as economic and marketed war.

Summary of the Novel

Green on Blue (2015) is a fictitious work set in modern-day Afghanistan. The story of the novel revolves around Aziz, the main character, who is forced to join the American-founded militia called 'The Special Lashkar' to take revenge on his injured brother Ali. The militia is led by Sabir, who motivates the soldiers on the notions of 'Nang' (a Pashto word for honor) and to take 'Badal' (a Pashto word for revenge) from his ironic opponent Gazan. During his journey, Aziz discovers that both Sabir and Gazan are financially supported by the Americans, and when he questions the nature of this war, Sabir turns down his question and tells him that the war is a source of their income. If they quit the war, what he and his family member will eat, therefore, he is supposed to supply weapons and food to the opponent to get the war going. Towards the end of the story, when Aziz becomes a wealthy man, he returns to meet his brother Ali, who is skeptical about his income source. Meanwhile, Sabir calls him and says that as Gazan is dead and that Ali is a valuable person to him, he will become the new chief of Gazan's army. Beneath the surface, the story also explores the destruction brought through the manipulation of war, responsibilities, revenge, love, and loss.

Statement of the Research Problem

Noam Chomsky (2002) rightly says that "Everyone's worried about stopping terrorism. Well, there's really an easy way: Stop participating in it" ("First Run Features, n. d., para. 1"). The contemporary world is witnessing war and violence in different forms. A lot of researchers have worked on the mystifying nature of these wars. The interest of different powerful states and arms-selling companies shows that modern wars are not wars for honor, patriotism, nationalism, etc.; rather, the interest of stakeholders has made these wars a source of income and a means of strengthening the economic sectors of a country. Different groups take part in sponsored war in the novel, totally unaware of the causes. These sponsored wars and terrorism have been commercialized in some way and the present study is an attempt to uncover the hidden agendas of economic gains behind the waging of wars by exploring the participants' perceptions regarding the wars.

Significance of the Study

In the era of wars and terrorism, it is very significant to write about the ontology of wars as majority of people have blindly followed and participated in them. In Pakistani context, the study is significant because the notion of 'Jihad' is misrepresented and people are convinced and forced to accept terrorism as a holy war. This manipulation of the term 'Jihad' and terrorism have considerably contributed to rise of Islamophobia. The research is significant in spreading awareness in the people regarding the economic interest based wars.

Method for Data Analysis

Close reading method has been used for analyzing data. According to Diana Varenik (n.d.) a close reading is an extremely thorough, and meticulous study of a brief text. This text can be an excerpt from "a novel, a poem, an image, a short story, etc." (para. 1). The examination closely studies what is occurring in the brief text, but it is not always isolated from allusions made elsewhere. For instance, a close reading of a portion of a book may allude to or refer to the book as a whole, but it concentrates its analysis and main point on just that one small section. The thesis of a close reading must, above all else, explain why and how this reading is significant in a context outside of the text. Beers and Probst (cited in Sandy Wisneski, 2019), are of the view that close reading will entail paying close attention to the text, the reader's pertinent and prior information, reasoning, and memory, other readers' reactions and interpretations, and the relationships between those elements. To focus only on one of them while ignoring the rest is just dumb. Because disregarding one component will make it more difficult to extract the meaning; readers should read carefully and give careful thought to several aspects, which will aid them in deciphering the meaning on various levels of a complicated text. In the same fashion, the researchers in the current study have also used close reading because it has helped them analyze various level of meaning, figurative and rhetorical devices and different allusionsto explore the implied meanings in small chunks keeping in view the broader setting of the novel as a whole.

Research Objective

The central aim of this study is to explore the nature of modern wars with reference to *Green on Blue* (2015).

Research Question

How are modern wars marketized/commercialized in the context of *Green on Blue* (2015)?

Literature Review

Modern day world is facing many conflicts in different forms one of which is war. War happens when the conflict of interest of different agents clashes. Majority of modern wars are driven by certain personal, political, economic, and national interest. For example, Paul Jabber (2001) argues that in the Middle East, with its political, military, economic, and social components, the United States today maintains an enormous and steadily rising involvement. The region encompasses long-established fundamental US national interests and safety standards for a variety of essential states that the reader knows everything about, serving their country's interests is their ultimate goal. Besides the national interest, the interest in politics is also involved in instigating a war. The approach to political economy, according to Philippe Billon et al. (2000), frequently emphasizes that the end of sustaining conflict may become the end itself. The practice of force to gain or maintain commercial and governmental

dominance is permitted and justified by the presence of war. In addition, he claims that there might be clear 'winners' in war who benefit from it without necessarily winning it. This kind of conflict results in the ongoing buildup of violence, fear, and rage for the losers. According to Billonet al. (2000), a state of conflict provides opportunities for the parties involved that neither peace nor victory can provide in terms of economics and politics. They, therefore, engage in armed conflict to obtain resources.

Donald Stoker (2019) realizes that the governmental purpose or goals of the fighters is more crucial than anything else in a war. This is the justification for the conflict; it explains why belligerent nations and terrorist organizations like the Islamic State shed blood and spend money. There is always some sort of political interest hidden beneath the rhetoric, even when the goal is obscured by terms of religion or ideology. States go to battle to protect their resources or to obtain the things they desire. Carl von Clausewitz (1997) establishes the foundation for understanding all conflicts by stating that war can be of two kinds, in that either the objective is to topple the opponent (an unlimited aim)—to render him politically powerless or militarily helpless, thus forcing him to accept whatever peace we want; or merely to take some of his frontier-districts (a limited aim) so that we might annex them or use them as blackmail during the peace negotiations. von Clausewitz (1997) maintains that both martial and political leaders must understand the political aim to comprehend the nature of the war being fought. He also offers the following warning that no one should start a war—or rather, no one in his senses should do so—without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it. The conclusion of the passage exemplifies a critical factor that makes understanding the political purpose so important. From this, everything else follows i.e., the political object—the initial justification for the war—will thus determine both the military objective to be attained and the degree of effort required: “War is not merely a political act but a real political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, a carrying out of the same by other means” (1997, p. 87). Clausewitz (1997) suggests that war should be viewed as a tool for achieving the political objectives that states establish for themselves. Instead of winning the competition, their objective is what winning will bring. Conflict cannot be detached from political goals, and anytime this happens in our minds about a war, the many linkages that unite the two parts are wrecked, leaving us with something worthless and senseless. If victory alone were the goal, the war would be an activity in itself and lack a greater purpose. The dynamics of war may be unique, but the reason why it exists is external. Its language, indeed, may be unique, but not its logic. War is incomplete by itself; it must be considered as a component of some other totality. This other totality is called policy. Niklas Karlén (2017) argues that very rarely are civil conflicts merely internal disputes. Numerous intrastate armed conflicts serve as examples of broader global tensions and links that cut across state boundaries. While governments no longer frequently engage in direct combat, proxies are nevertheless used to a significant extent in indirect conflicts (Melander, Pettersson, & Themnér, 2016). States frequently become involved in civil disputes by giving the opposing sides outside assistance to change their course and conclusion. This aid can take the form of direct military action or the delivery of vital supplies such as weapons, training, money, safe havens, intelligence, and logistics. In reality, to recruit troops and fund their operations, about two-thirds of all rebellious groups lively since World War II have gotten their funding from state sponsors (Belgin San-Akca, 2016). Similarly to this, numerous regimes involved in interior wars have depended on foreign nations to provide military equipment and support for counterinsurgency operations (Karlén, 2016). To address the complicated civil wars of today, scholars, politicians, and experts must all take into account these broader transcontinental and transnational relationships.

The researchers' perspective is that, besides national interest, political economy, and interest in political influence, poverty, injustice and other causes, modern wars are highly marketized for economic interest. States' interest in plundering resources like the British invasion of the colonized countries and its entry into the World Wars, is a clear example of waging wars for economic gains. Similarly, Wilson's denial of working to stop World War I had economic causes—the affected states would get into debt, and the European rich would come to America for business. America's involvement in the Afghan war also marketized wars in the modern era experimenting with new weapons, planes, and bombs; taking benefit from companion groups and the UN on the tag of 'war on terror'; utilizing Afghanistan's resources; advertising weapons and attracting customers to buy them by constantly sponsoring terrorism in neighboring countries (Kendrick Clements, 2004). All these ends have economic interest and lead to the marketization of war i.e., entering, participating, and gaining from war.

Theoretical Perspective

The 'Political Economy of War' provided the project with the necessary framework that guides and contextualize the study. Billon (2000) argues that decolonization and the close of the Cold War did not usher in a new era of international stability. A new or recurring war still leaves whole areas and enormous peoples in anguish and doubts, despite the 1990s' numerous peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts. This is due to the newly interventionist international agenda. What fuels these ongoing hostilities that cause such severe humanitarian crises? And considering that relief efforts themselves can be exploited and may escalate a dispute, how can they respond efficiently? The assistance community can profit from the perceptions provided by a governmental economics tactic to the war to grapple with these two fundamental problems. According to Billon (2000), this entails examining how wealth, power, and poverty are produced and distributed throughout military clashes to reveal the motivations and accountability of those engaged, within a historic framework. It is customary to highlight the political causes of wars, such as national dominance or independence. Some, however, contend that modern wars are anarchistic and do not have a strong political objective. He further says that the 'political economics' perspective on war emphasizes how the distribution of money and power is impacted and has broad ramifications for humanitarian aid. There are winners and losers in battle. The political economy of war is the center of these two straightforward arguments. It is important to comprehend how losers are vulnerable as a result of their lack of authority. A governmental economy viewpoint emphasizes how the continuation of war can turn into a goal unto itself. A war affected state permits and validates the practice of violence to achieve or maintain monetary gain and 'political influence. Without 'the conflict is winning' in the conventional sense, there may be clear winners in that they benefit from it. Billon (2000) provides another illustration of how constructivists go beyond the realm of the material by considering how ideologies and worldviews influence international politics. This suggests that reality is always being constructed, which opens the door to change. In other words, meanings can change throughout time depending on the ideas and beliefs that actors have. For the losers in such a struggle, abuses, despair, and frustration never cease to accumulate. Complex global political and economic processes have an impact on how the advantages and costs of conflict are distributed. This investigation focuses on the changing nature of war and terrorism in terms of meaning construction (Billon, 2000).

Data Analysis and Interpretation

"The militants fought to protect us from the Americans and the Americans fought to protect us from the militants, and being so protected, life was very dangerous".(Ackerman, 2015: p. 14)

Set in modern-day Afghanistan (Orgun), the passage sets the tone of the whole story. The setting is important for understanding the entire scenario created in the story because it provides context and makes it understandable. By narrating the story through the first-person narrator Aziz, Ackerman explains his personal experiences of the Afghan war, as he remained a part of the Marine Corps Special Operations Team. Being a part of the exposition, the passage has a significant role in the development of the plot of the story. All the following events support and are based on this statement. The gloomy and ironic tone leaves the readers in a state of perpetual complexity. Aziz narrates the events that happened after the arrival of America. As soon as America arrived in Afghanistan on the mission of war against terrorism, they founded a group called 'the militants', also known as 'Special Lashkar', to combat the terrorists, whose existence is a matter of question. The irony in the passage is that the Americans are fighting the militants to protect the interests of the people and the founders, while the militants are fighting the Americans to protect the people from their sponsored terrorists. Both are fighting against each other to safeguard the lives, interests, and property of the people from each other. The novel reveals that the Americans supply both weapons and food to the militants to get the war going. The passage jeopardizes the United States' sacred claims of combating and eliminating terrorism around the world because it demonstrates that the terrorist organization was founded and funded by them. Interestingly, both groups have the same motto 'protecting people and promoting peace'. The implied meaning in the passage is revealed through its ironic nature i.e., protecting the people from themselves or the terrorists who are sponsored and supported by them. There could be several goals behind this practice — their long involvement in the war gave them plenty of time to plunder and enjoy Afghan resources, advertise and experiment with newly manufactured weapons on occasion, and develop an interest in Afghan politics while collecting aid from partner countries and the UN, among other things. The militant group also has economic aims to pursue through this war. They made the war a source of income: *"the war sustains us. It can be a life"* (Ackerman, 2015, p. 104). They commercialized the war and practiced it for personal benefit. Both the Americans and their friends and foes (the militants) have certain economic aims, which is why they used the war on terror as an instrument of economic gain: *"Now the cause is war for advantage, war for profit, not a future"* (Ackerman, 2015, p. 133).

"They're feral men, I answered. You've kept them hungry and you give them just enough to be controlled. Food, weapons, an enemy, I know you give all that to them..."

"War is a contest of wills. If I supply my opponent, I control his will, and the war with it." A thing such as this never ends. Are you fighting this war to end it? ..., the Americans will no longer need us. How do we survive then?"(Ackerman, 2015: p. 167)

The setting of the passage is 'Special Lashkar's Headquarters' in Afghanistan. A heated conversation between Aziz, the protagonist whose journey reveals the commercialized and mystified nature of war, and Sabir, commander of the US-funded militia 'The Special Lashkar' shows that they fight the war for economic gains. The pronoun 'they' refers to members of the opposing group, which is led by another character named Gazan. The first-person narrator Aziz used the word 'feral' to show their uncivilized and barbaric nature. Sabir controlled their psyches by keeping them in the dark and supplying them with weapons and food to make them act the way he wanted. That is why he uses the words 'contest of

wills' for war. War has been used to control the people and their mentalities to act in a particular way to compete the supremacy through economic means. Sabir controls the war by supplying the people with their basic needs, i.e., food. The parameter he sets for giving food is picking weapons to fight with the enemy they do not know. Controlling and manipulating the mentality of people has the aim of controlling and continuing the war. The word 'thing' is used for war and it is called a thing because of its nature in the context of the novel: an economically constructed war for personal benefits by both the locals of Afghanistan and the Americans. Sabir's visionary statement—if peace prevails, there will be no need for them, no income, and then what will they do—demonstrates that the Afghan war was a marketized war fought for economic gains. He considers peace as a bargaining of loss which is shown in the lines: "Gazan has wanted to leave this war for some time. He is tired, but Sabir keeps him fighting for his own purposes. Sabir wants to build an outpost in our village. He says it's for our protection, but the construction contracts will fill his pockets. To justify the outpost, Sabir secretly supplies Gazan and keeps him on the attack, mortaring our village and mining our roads. Gazan, all respect to him, can do nothing against this. He must feed his fighters and make a living. Sabir can control him because he has money from you and the other Americans"(Ackerman, 2015: p. 184).The Americans are also interested in this war, and they fund and sponsor people and groups to hinder peace and keep the war alive. They also controlled the will of people to practice and keep intact their supremacy and thirst for economic growth by getting aid and praise from different countries. Their investment in war has an economic interest; otherwise, nobody is mad to such an extent as to fund terrorist groups: "You will be well cared for. By whom? Asked Gazan. By us, said Mr. Jack. You and your men will have better food, better weapons, and better pay. The supplies should still go through Sabir, but it is all by us. Of course, you will be compensated separately for the information you provide, and when you decide to leave, you'll have money to do so" (Ackerman, 2015: p. 185).Their self-made and funded opponent questions the ontology of real wars, as modern wars are based on the concept of economic gain, and to pursue this gain, war is made a market product—buy and sell material. In the novel's context, Americans are the sellers, and local terrorists are the buyers.

Conclusion

The Afghan war and the Afghans are manipulated in the name of honor, revenge, and patriotism in the context of *Green on Blue*(2015). They are used as fuel in a war that has only economic goals for Americans and their funded adversary militia groups. The character of Aziz is crucial, as he discovered and revealed the mystified nature of the war. After joining the 'Special Lashkar', he discovers that their opponent is also supplied by their leaders. The people they are fighting get aid, weapons, and food from their leader, who in turn gets these things from the Americans. Sabir, the commander, says that he is doing this—supplying and supporting both sides—to get the war going and not let the peace to flourish. War is treated as a commodity, and the bargaining of war shows that it is commercialized by different groups in the best interest of their greed for economic purposes and earning wealth.

References

- Ackerman, E. (2015). *Green on Blue*.New York: Scribner.
- Billon, L, P. (2000). The political economy of war: What relief agencies need to know.London: Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN).Retrieved from <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/97205/networkpaper033.pdf>
- Billon, P. L., Macrae, J., Leader, N., & East, R. (2000). *The political economy of war: What relief agencies need to know*.London, United Kingdom: Humanitarian Practice Network.

Monetization and Marketization: A Critical Study of the Concept of Modern War in *Green on Blue*

- Chomsky, N. (2002). Power and terror: Post-9/11. Talks and Interviews.
- Clements, K. (2004). Woodrow Wilson and World War I. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 34(1). Center for the Study of the Presidency.
- First Run Features. (n.d.). Power and terror: Noam Chomsky in our times. Retrieved from <https://firstrunfeatures.com/powerandterror dvd.html>
- Jabber, P. (2001). Impact of the war on terror on certain aspects of US policy in the Middle East: A medium-term assessment. *The National Intelligence Council*. Retrieved from https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/warterror_2001.pdf
- Karlén, N. (2016). Historical trends in external support in civil wars. *SIPRI Yearbook 2016: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Karlén, N. (2017). Sponsors of war. State support for rebel groups in civil conflicts. Retrieved from <https://uu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1150424/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Melander, E., Pettersson, T., & Themnér, L. (2016). Organized violence, 1989–2015. *Journal of Peace Research* 53(5), pp. 727–742.
- Mustikhan, A. (2020, January 27). Economic interests – the basis of all wars. *The Express Tribune*. Retrieved from <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2144711/economic-interests-basis-wars>
- San-Akca, B. (2016). States in disguise: Causes of state support for rebel groups. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stoker, D. (2019, September 16). What are we fighting for? The political aim in war and the American civil-military divide. *Modern War Institute*. Retrieved from <https://mwi.usma.edu/fighting-political-aim-war-american-civil-military-divide/>
- The 10 countries that export the most major weapons. (2017, February 22). Aljazeera. Retrieved from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/2/22/the-10-countries-that-export-the-most-major-weapons>
- Tzifakis, N. (n.d). Economic motivation for armed conflicts. *Encyclopedia Princetoniensis*, Preston University. Retrieved from <https://pesd.princeton.edu/node/386>
- Varenik, D. (n.d.). Close reading for English literature assignments. *Haverford English Department*. Retrieved from <https://www.haverford.edu/sites/default/files/Office/Writing-Center/How-to-Write-a-Close-Reading.pdf>
- von Clausewitz, C. (1997). *On War* (M. Howard & P. Paret, Ed. & Trans.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Wisneski, S. (2019, November 26). Close reading strategies. *Middle Web*. Retrieved from <https://www.middleweb.com/6994/close-reading-strategies/>