The End of War in Papua New Guinea: "Crime" and "Tribal Warfare" in Post-Colonial States

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Abstract: The contemporary Pacific is a region of colonial and post-colonial states, the nature of which poses challenges to envisioning "the end of war." Although prevailing global discourses commonly equate post-colonial and nation states, differences in the evolutionary dynamics and histories of the two differ in ways that cast doubt on whether pre-colonial war ever really ended in many post-colonial polities and how easily it might be brought to an end. These issues are discussed with reference to "crime" and "tribal warfare" in contemporary Papua New Guinea.

Keywords: war, violence, crime, post-colonial states, Papua New Guinea, Pacific

Résumé : La région Pacifique contemporaine est une mosaïque d'États coloniaux et postcoloniaux, dont la nature constitue autant de défis à la possibilité de voir une « fin de la guerre ». Même si le discours mondial prédominant tient généralement pour synonymes États-nations et États post-coloniaux, les histoires et les dynamiques d'évolution comportent des différences qui jettent le doute sur le fait que les guerres précoloniales aient bel et bien pris fin avec les institutions politiques postcoloniales, et sur la facilité avec laquelle on pourrait y mettre fin. Nous discutons ces enjeux en référence au « crime » et à la « guerre tribale » en Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée contemporaire.

Mots-clés : guerre, violence, crime, États postcoloniaux, Papouasie-Nouvelle-Guinée, Pacifique

Introduction

War is one of the more terrible plagues of humanity, and putting an end to it is so desirable a goal that it is difficult to pay the issue too much attention. In considering the ends of war in the contemporary Pacific, however, the task carries a burden that I do not think has been adequately addressed. Contemporary Oceania is a region of colonial and post-colonial states, and, where the latter creations are concerned, there is a problem with the very idea of "the end of war." Although prevailing global discourses commonly equate post-colonial and nation states, differences in the evolutionary dynamics and histories of the two differ in ways that cast doubt on whether pre-colonial warfare, which "pacification" appeared to terminate in many post-colonial states, can really be said to have ended.

To detail this argument, I shall consider the decline and subsequent resurgence of "tribal warfare" in parts of highland Papua New Guinea (PNG) and its apparent decline, post-pacification, in parts of the lowlands.[1] Appearances notwithstanding, I argue that war is actually resurgent in these parts of the lowlands but the fact is disguised by politico-jural schemas embedded in Euro-American definitions of the state. To recognize what is going on—and to appreciate the difficulties associated with an end to war in PNG—closer attention needs to be paid to differences in the structure and developmental dynamics of post-colonial states like PNG and other kinds of states, notably those that colonized and imposed upon them their own structural forms.

The Return of Tribal Warfare in Highland New Guinea

To go by surface appearances, the *Pax Australiana* had very different effects on highland and lowland Papua New Guinea. In many parts of the highlands, pacification and the statehood project essentially failed. Although the region saw a few decades of post-pacification peace, the middle to late 1970s saw a sudden resurgence of

tribal warfare in regions such as Enga, Simbu and the Eastern, Southern and Western Highlands (Burton 1990; Gordon 1983; Podolefsky 1984; Strathern 1977, 1992; Westermark 1984; Wormsley 1987). This contrasts with the country's lowlands, which have seen little in the way of resurgent warfare since pacification and certainly nothing to rival the conflicts that have periodically devastated parts of the highlands.

The resurgence of war in the highlands took much the same form that it had in pre-colonial times. Contact-era New Guinea warfare assumed three main forms: small-scale surprise attack, which I shall call *ambush* or *ambushing*; large-scale surprise attack, hereafter *raid* or *raiding*; and *open battle*, in which combatants simply confronted one another across an open battlefield, leaving the element of surprise moot. The particular combination of these forms that any one community deployed and the emphasis it placed on each, however, varied markedly. Along the southwest coast, for instance, the principal form of Marind-anim warfare involved huge headhunting raids into the interior, though from time to time travellers from beyond Marind-anim territory and even members of other Marind-anim villages might be ambushed (van Baal 1966:676–764; Vertenten 1923). In the Maprik region, by contrast, ambush was the primary form of war, interspersed with the occasional set-piece, open battle.[2]

In most areas of the highlands where tribal warfare has resurged, warriors reversed the Maprik combination: open battle was the principal form of war, with ambush a supplementary form.[3] In contrast to many other areas of New Guinea, where warfare was a permanent state of affairs, warfare in these highland areas was also episodic, periods of fighting alternating with periods of peace. Cutting into this cycle at a point when peace prevailed, war would first loom on the horizon as an atmosphere of rising tensions and conflicts between particular individuals or, more usually, descent-group factions within two larger political communities. In Enga and the Western, Central and Southern Highlands, tensions might then escalate to provocation and self-redress. Provocation might involve, as Bergmann (1971, vol. 1:183) notes for the Central Chimbu, something as superficially trivial as "indecent behaviour in word and deed" or something more serious, such as thievery, the abduction of a pig or an assault on a woman.

Sometimes, provocation or self-redress progressed rapidly to full-blown, pitched battle; at other times, it might be followed by a series of reciprocal ambush killings—often in the middle of the night—until hostilities had so proliferated that the entire membership of one or both communities had been pulled into the conflict and one side or the other called for or decided upon the signature form of highlands warfare, open battle.[4] The precise manner in which a battle opened varied, but, however it started, the two sides soon ended up facing and firing at one another from the farther range of their projectile weaponry, closing from time to time to fight at closer quarters.

Rarely did a single day's combat decide a war. Usually, battle followed battle in an extended sequence, commonly interspersed with attempts at ambush. Combatants might return to the field on as many as four consecutive days, but hostilities could then lie fallow for as long as a month or two while participants attended to the funerals of fallen warriors, other rituals or their neglected gardens.[5] A war usually lasted for at least several days, but progressing in fits and starts it could last as long as a year or, occasionally, longer.[6] It ended in one of two ways. It could end decisively if one side managed to muster a marked numerical superiority or pull off a brilliant tactical manoeuvre on the field, putting the other side to flight. The victors would then chase the vanquished back to their settlements, attempting to massacre whomever they could, put the rest to flight and, with the help of their wives and other non-combatants following behind, destroy the losers' settlements, gardens and other property.[7] More commonly, though, a war dragged on indecisively, battle following battle, week after week, month after month, until the two sides had had enough and concluded a peace.[8] In the Eastern Highlands, war sequences were similar, though in some areas raiding was practised along with ambush and open battle.[9]

The wars once again being fought in the contemporary highlands resemble their pre-colonial antecedents in many respects but differ in some others. As in days gone by, wars are episodic rather than permanent. The largest confrontations are open battles that typically involve whole tribes or alliances of tribes on each side, and they can last for months, occasionally even years. As in earlier days, open battles are supplemented with periodic ambushes and, in some areas, large-scale raids. And they can still end in massacre, destruction and large-scale flight, though far more commonly the outcome is indecisive, the two parties agreeing to peace negotiations and peacemaking ceremonies that produce a tenuous peace (e.g., Burton 1990; Gordon 1983; Podolefsky 1984; Strathern 1977, 1992; Westermark 1984; Wiessner 2006; Wormsley 1987).

The main differences between the battles of old and those of today are that the range of motives for waging war has expanded; pacification can induce a false sense of security, allowing one side to attack another unex-

pectedly; and firearms (including M19s and AK47s) have entered the armoury, along with novel tactical adaptations, some imported from scenes in the Rambo films. Burton (1990:226–227) witnessed a contemporary confrontation in the Wahgi valley (see also Muke 1993:229–262) that illustrated some of these changes:

> The date: 11 December 1989. The place: Minj Station and District Office, inside Konumbka territory. The occasion: a Kondika war party descends from an overlooking ridge and swoops down on an unarmed crowd, firing guns on the run. Two hundred people flee for their lives. Some are forced to dive full length to avoid shotgun pellets. One old man falls into a ditch and the Kondika front line warriors jump over his outstretched body. The police, out-gunned and out-numbered, withdraw in their blue vehicles. For ten minutes the station area is at the mercy of the attackers, who circle round shooting in the vague direction of the Konumbka heartland across the old airstrip but, on this occasion, they don't have the numbers to hold the position. The Konumbka are surprisingly slow to react, but finally group together in sufficient numbers to run the Kondika off the station and back into their own territory ... Perhaps twenty gunshots have been fired ... It is just fifteen minutes since the raid began.

The Return of the Ambush: War in Lowland New Guinea

Although warfare has reappeared in the highlands, there appears, on the surface at least, to have been no parallel development in the lowlands. To be sure, lowlanders have sporadically ambushed one another, occasionally provoking open confrontations, but there is nothing to match the scale, frequency and deadliness of renascent warfare in the highlands. Why should this be so? Why should lowland PNG have seen the "end of war," yet not the highlands? These questions are seldom addressed, and if we take them at face value, they have no obvious answer. Are highlanders somehow more warlike than lowlanders? Do they have interests in waging war that are absent from the lowlands? Is state control somehow weaker in the highlands than in the lowlands? Is the answer a combination of these factors? A convincing case has yet to be made for any of these possibilities.

In the early 1990s, however, during my third field trip to lowland Yangoru, I came to doubt the surface appearance. War, it seemed, was resurgent in the lowlands just as it was in the highlands but the manner in which states (and their post-colonial progeny) conceptualize the state, war and crime had led non-Melanesian observers—and the jural architecture of the PNG state—to identify as crime in the lowlands what they were identifying as war in the highlands.

In interpreting physical violence, states bring two distinctive conceptions to bear (Roscoe 2004). The first is a conception of the state as an autonomous entity that claims a monopoly on physical force within a particular territory (Weber 1968:56, 905)—an idea that seems accurate enough so long as we are "careful to accentuate 'claim'... and ... recognize that the territorial element may be quite ill-defined" (Giddens 1985:18–19). The categorization of physical force as war or crime then follows. The deployment of (organized) physical force *between* states or other forms of autonomous polity is war (e.g., Malinowski 1941:522; Mead 1968:215; Otterbein 1973:923); the deployment of physical force *within* a state is a challenge to the state's monopolistic claims to force and is therefore defined as a crime. The second conception that states—or European states, at least—have of physical violence sees war as open battle. Indeed, the set-piece, open battle is commonly designated "the Western way of war," with military historians in particular enthusiastically linking its adoption to the rise of Western civilization (e.g., Carman 1999:40; Hanson 1989, 2001; Keegan 1993).

Modern PNG inherited these conceptions as part of the state apparatus imposed on it by its Australian colonial masters. Confronted with the return of large-scale, open battles in the highlands, therefore, it sees war; more specifically, it sees civil war, civil unrest. For one thing, these confrontations take the form that the state tacitly recognizes as real warfare; for another, they are symmetric confrontations, acts of will on the part of two large political factions that manifestly no longer recognize themselves as parts of the same political entity. From the perspective of the state, these battles may not constitute war per se, but they resemble civil war, the kind of war that breaks out once a state has fissioned from a single entity into two separate entities.

The forms of pre-contact warfare in the lowlands were the reverse of those in the highlands, and this difference has significant implications for how a state would recognize and respond to it if it were to reappear. Whereas highlanders practised open battle, supplemented in most places by small-scale ambush, lowlanders relied mainly on small-scale ambush or (in some lower-density areas) raiding, with open battle a subsidiary form at most. Many lowland societies, in fact, did not practice open battle at all, and even those that did placed greater emphasis on surprise attack.[10] Had warfare resurged in the lowlands, therefore, it would have taken the form of small-scale ambush and it is doubtful that the state would recognize and respond to it as war or civil war.

Because it is small-scale violence, because it does not resemble the state's way of war, because it is asymmetric, offensive warfare by one side rather than a mutually agreed upon act between two, and because it is an act internal to the state, the state would likely recognize it as crime, not resurgent warfare.

This, it seemed to me, was what happened in lowland Yangoru in the early 1990s. Not long after the resurgence of tribal fighting in the highlands, Yangoru experienced a sudden and dramatic rise in criminal activity or *raskolism*—a term derived from the Tok Pisin word *raskol*, meaning "criminal." As Harris (1988) notes in his examination of raskolism in the country's capital, Port Moresby, the term first emerged in the mid-1960s to describe young male migrants to urban centres who were given to spontaneous, high-spirited acts of petty crime. Though the term's English overtones of youthful scampery are still applicable to some *raskolism* today, nowadays it captures a more unfortunate reality, referring to a member of a predatory gang given to organized thieving, rape and murder (e.g., Hart Nibbrig and Hart Nibbrig 1992; Dinnen 2001, ch. 4).

The history of raskolism elsewhere in PNG is poorly known, but, by the mid-1980s, to judge from newspaper accounts, raskolism had appeared in Wewak, the capital of the East Sepik Province, about 40 kilometres east-north-east of Yangoru. By 1990, highway robbers were operating along several stretches of the East Sepik Highway, attacking police trucks and ambulances, as well as private cars and public motor vehicles (PMVs), and around the same time *raskolism* reached Yangoru (Roscoe 1999).

In the legal architecture of the post-colonial state, the rise of raskolism was not seen as a resurgence of lowland warfare. As small-scale violence internal to the state, it was classified as crime, the kind of interpersonal violence exemplified in Euro-American nations by soccer hooliganism, gang warfare and organized crime. But this was not how it appeared in Yangoru: here, it resembled a return of the ambush. To begin with, raskol attacks were mounted in much the same way as the surprise attacks of old. Ambushes occurred either at dawn or during the day. Attacks at dawn were targeted at enemy housing. A small band of attackers would infiltrate the settlement under cover of night, strike its target in the grey light of dawn and then flee before defenders had a chance to rally and cut off its lines of retreat (Roscoe 1996). Daytime ambushes targeted enemies when they were out and about their daily routines. Attackers would lie in wait on forest paths to catch enemies going about their daily rounds or move surreptitiously up on an unsuspecting party at work in its gardens or groves.

As in highlands fighting, there are both continuities and differences between the ambushes of old and the raskol attacks of today. Just as some ambushes were launched at enemies en route to their gardens or their relatives, so raskols (*ol raskol* is the plural form in Tok Pisin) today attack people walking the tracks of the Yangoru Subdistrict or travelling on PMVs along the East Sepik Highway. Just as other ambushes targeted houses, so raskols attack hamlets or bottle shops. And just as ambushes prompted revenge attacks in the past, so raskol activity can provoke retaliation today. In 1990, after the PMV belonging to my field village had been held up several times on the East Sepik Highway, three truckloads of young men from my village descended on the settlement of the offending gang, vandalized a tradestore and some houses and beat up one of the gang member's fathers. Furthermore, just as members of the same war confederacies aided one another in the past, so they may do today. A year after my field village had taken its revenge on one highway village, its PMV was again attacked and robbed by another. Within 24 hours, a third highway village leaked the names of several of the culprits. Its reason for supplying the intelligence was its common membership with my own village in the Samawung war confederacy, the confederacy that in the old days opposed the Lebuging confederacy to which the village of the robbers belonged.

There are certainly differences between ambushes and modern raskol attacks. Raskols favour firearms rather than the spear or war club and, if they can get their hands on them, walky-talkies or cell phones, rather than coded bird whistles. Raskol attacks frequently occur over a longer range. Whereas in the past, enemies usually lay less than a mile or two away, raskols sometimes operate against targets several miles away. As in contemporary highlands warfare, moreover, the motives for raskol attacks have expanded from those that motivated ambush in earlier days. Rather than to avenge a theft, seduction, rape, murder or other social delict or offence or to demonstrate bravery and prowess in the field, raskol ambushes are launched primarily to procure western material goods and cash and only to a lesser extent to rape, avenge a killing or gain prestige. The fact remains, however, that raskol attacks represent the same sudden and surprise deployment of violence for instrumental purposes as did the ambushes of old.

The most important similarity between the ambushes of yesteryear and the raskol attacks of today, however, is that, to Yangoru, they resemble war rather than crime because they occur across polity boundaries rather than within them. The quandary for a post-colonial state like PNG is its hybrid structure. In the space of a few

generations, the numerous, warring sovereign worlds and identities that existed before colonialism are by colonial fiat suddenly supposed to become a unified entity and single national identity. What were once thousands of "us's" and "thems" are, with the wave of the colonial wand, supposed to become a single united "us." In practice, of course, sovereign worlds and identities are not so easily erased. Andrew Strathern points to the implications:

> In contrast to many African societies, the small-scale societies of Papua New Guinea tended to be politically acephalous, and in the Highlands there were no established centralized chiefdoms which could have been used to graft indigenous politics onto the introduced colonial state. Big-men were leaders of groups, coalitions and factions in pursuit of competitive ends. When populations of this kind are introduced first to colonial and then to post-colonial power, we cannot expect them to invent overnight a respect for hierarchical authority. They obeyed the colonial power out of a combination of fear and self-interest. When fear is no longer there, they will continue to pursue the self-interest part of the equation unless curbed. In short, the national government, inheriting the colonial state apparatus in 1975, was not initially equipped with automatic legitimacy in the people's eyes. [1993:719]

This is not to deny that multiple agents and processes are at work in the post-colonial state of PNG, attempting to mediate or broker the contradictions between colonial and local structures. Developments in transportation and communication technologies and the expansion of lingua francae, for instance, link people together to a degree that was impossible in the past, innovations that both enable and are driven by other developments. Political relations expand in scale, offering local politicians and leaders novel opportunities to mediate the imposition of state forms and altering, in turn, the scale of people's political models. Economic developments and expansions of communication motivate and facilitate modernist cultural processes that recruit advertising (Foster 1995), national sports, the artwork on postage stamps and public buildings and so on to the job of forging a national identity.

The rise of raskolism in Yangoru occurred in just such a post-colonial milieu, a system that had only just begun a transition from pre-colonial forms. Prior to contact, the Yangoru polity was the village, an autonomous political community that attempted through diplomacy to maintain a precarious peace with a handful of other neighbouring village polities. The result was a landscape of allied polities permanently at war with other nearby sets of allied polities. As raskolism emerged in Yangoru, this structure still deeply influenced views of the social universe. In the wake of pacification, traditional peacemaking procedures had expanded the circle of neighbouring communities that were at peace with one another. But, beyond that expanded circle, people still viewed one another in much the same terms as in the past: with grave suspicion at the best of times and as targets of retaliation in kind under provocation.

The authority of the post-colonial state, meanwhile, had made limited inroads on these views and behaviours. "Who does he think he is?" demanded the councillor of my field village, when I told him in 1981 that the officer (Tok Pisin: *kiap*) at Yangoru Government Station, a national, would take a dim view of me overstaying my research visa by remaining in the village. "We talk here! If he objects, he can just roll up his blanket and leave!" Almost everyone in Yangoru knew they were affiliated to an entity they called "New Guinea—Papua," but beyond the educated minority, understandings of its architecture, its place in the world system and its implications for their lives were badly garbled. During the 1980 national parliamentary elections, for instance, people understood they were voting to select a "boy" (i.e., prime minister) who would periodically venture down to Sydney, the land of the dead, to receive the country's "orders" from the spirits of the dead. Seven years later, the national election was being described as the "last" election, the one that would institute "Fritan Independens," a millennial era in which the black and white peoples of the world would settle down together in equality. In the early 1990s, young people subscribed to a theory that Michael Somare (PNG's first prime minister) had gained control of "*blak paua*," which they understood to be some kind of magical stone or material with the power to usher in the end times.

In this post-colonial milieu, raskolism had a meaning that did not match the western category of *crime*. The effective political structure was still a set of allied, largely autonomous polities, the authority of the state little more than a brown-paper-and-string wrapping that kept things together in name only. In this milieu, crime was an offence against members of one's own village and, by extension, those to which it was allied. Beyond that realm, however, what the state defined as crime was, in Yangoru, categorized as fighting (*giau*), in effect an act of war. As long as raskols struck beyond the local political universe—something they were usually (though not always) careful to do—they were to their home community the structural equivalents of warriors rather than criminals. Conversely, raskols from other political universes that struck the home community were the structural equivalent of enemies, against whom one took

revenge if one could. Just as the open battles currently fought in the highlands are a form of tribal warfare, in other words, the rise of raskolism in Yangoru represented the return of the ambushes of old.

Aggressors, Defenders and Open Battle in the Lowlands

One further circumstance has conspired to obscure the resurgence of war in areas of the lowlands such as Yangoru: the effects of lowland terrain on the capacity to wage open battle. Although open battle was not a pronounced form of pre-contact warfare in the lowlands, it will be remembered that it did occur in some places. If resurgent warfare in the lowlands had taken this form rather than raskolism, we would have no hesitation in dubbing it war. Why then have we not seen open battles reappear in the lowlands?

For open battle to occur, it is commonly supposed, the combatants must agree to it. "There can be no engagement," von Clausewitz (1976:245) declared, "unless both sides are willing." According to Keeley, "*All* battles take place by mutual agreement" (1996:60). These claims, however, obscure a vital point. To say that battle is mutually agreed is not to say that it is the result of mutual *inclination*. If battle is to occur, one side at least has to want combat. But there is no necessary reason why the other side should feel equally inclined. One side might be spoiling for a fight to avenge a loss, for instance, but this does not mean the culprits are similarly provoked; all things considered, in fact, they might just as soon prefer to stay home, savouring their victory. One side might be so confident of rallying a numerical superiority that it is eager to press battle but, under these circumstances, the other side would have good reason to want to avoid it.

It follows that there are two paths to open battle. The first is via a mutual will to do battle, the path envisioned by the scholars cited earlier: if both sides are mutually agreed *and* mutually inclined, then provided there is also some mutually acceptable place where they can meet one another, battle will result. But what if just one party is inclined to battle? Under these circumstances, battle can occur only if two conditions are met. First, the side wanting battle—let us call it the aggressor—must be in a position to press battle on the reluctant side: it must be able to advance on the target of its ire without exposing itself to undue risk in the process. Second, the target has to agree to do battle even though it might not wish to.

This second path to the battlefield merits attention because the ability of a New Guinea aggressor to unilaterally impose battle on a reluctant foe depends on the military implications of the landscape over which the fighting will be prosecuted. Specifically, firm, open landscapes of the kind typical of the highland valleys allow an aggressor to impose battle unilaterally. By contrast, densely vegetated, rainforest terrain of the kind that characterizes most of the lowlands allows a reluctant foe to refuse battle even though its antagonists may be fuming at its metaphorical gates. On these landscapes, battle can occur only by mutual agreement and prior arrangement.

The key to these differences is the dangers that an obstructed terrain like a rainforest present to an aggressor bent on imposing battle on its enemy. On firm, flat, open terrain, an aggressing army can advance on the enemy's settlements with its lines of sight unobscured and its mobility unimpeded. It can do so in full, organized battle array, its fighting capacity optimized, and it need not fear that its enemy may be laying hidden, waiting to attack it at a propitious spot. There is no danger that a forest path or canyon will funnel its advance into a single file, allowing the enemy to block its path or, worse, box it in and annihilate it from above or in its flanks. On an obstructed landscape, such as a rainforest, matters are entirely different. An aggressor force must advance along narrow forest paths enclosed by dense vegetation on either side. With its line extended, its advance can then easily be blocked by a small party of enemy warriors, rather like Horatio at the bridge. Worse, the line is exceptionally vulnerable to attack. The enemy need only lie hidden in the vegetation on either side of the path, then block its advance at the appropriate moment and pour fire from cover into its flanks. And suppose the aggressor somehow beats back such an attack and the enemy retreats. The aggressors cannot be sure that their foes have not simply regrouped ahead of it and are again lying in wait. Indeed, it cannot even be sure that they have not faked their retreat to draw it on, surround it and destroy it.

To summarize: firm, open terrain of the kind that characterizes the highland valleys where tribal warfare is today resurgent allows an aggressor unilaterally to impose battle on an enemy. In contrast, the heavily obstructed landscapes of the lowlands exert a friction, so to speak, on an aggressor's desires. In the highlands, we find that battles began in one of three ways: with a massed invasion, the aggressor army pouring into enemy territory as night lifted (e.g., Meggitt 1977:85–99; Pospisil 1994:117); with one side unilaterally setting out toward or into its enemy's territory, prompting the enemy either to move out and meet it in open battle or flee (e.g., Vial 1939:17; Vicedom and Tischner n.d.:298 [cf. comment by Stürzenhofecker and Strathern in Strauss 1990:221]); or with one side marching to within

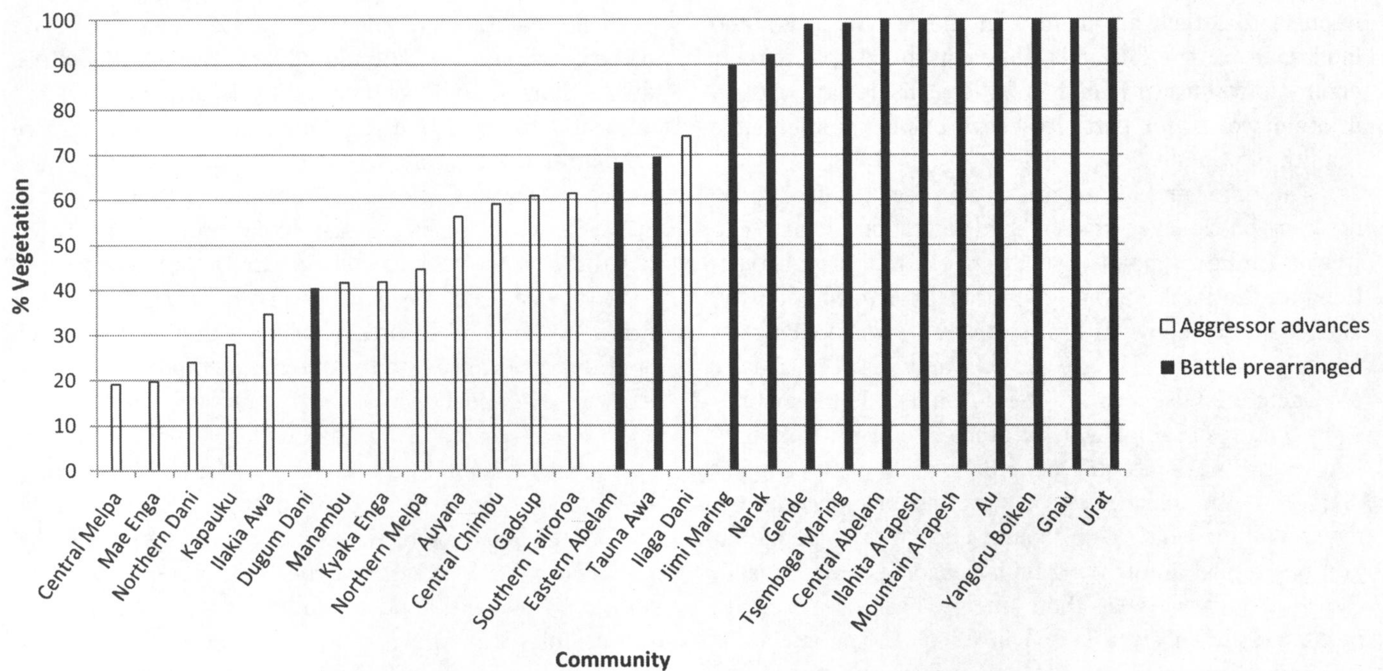

Figure 1: Vegetation Cover and the Onset of Battle
Sources: **Abelam (Central)**—Huber-Greub 1988:109, n. 113; Kaberry 1973:67; **Abelam (Eastern)**—Forge n.d.:4; **Arapesh (Ilahita)**—Tuzin 1976:47; **Arapesh (Mountain)**—Fortune 1939:32; **Au**—Philsooph 1980:143; **Auyana**—Robbins 1982:185; **Boiken (Yangoru)**—Roscoe n.d.; **Awa (Ilakia)**—Newman 1972:152; **Awa (Tauna)**—Hayano 1974:286; **Chimbu (Central)**—Bergmann 1971, vol. 1:189; Vial 1939:17; **Dani (Dugum)**—Broekhuijse 1967:254; Gardner and Heider 1968:136; Heider 1970:107; **Dani (Ilaga)**—Larson 1987:230; **Dani (Northern)**—Draper 1958:9; **Enga (Kyaka)**—Bulmer 1960:415; **Enga (Mae)**—Meggitt 1977:85–99; **Gadsup**—Du Toit 1974:83; **Gende**—Fitz-Patrick and Kimbuna 1983:132; **Gnau**—Craig et al. 2008:254; **Kapauku**—Pospisil 1994:117; **Manambu**—Harrison 1993:39; **Maring (Jimi)**—Lowman 1973:10; **Maring (Tsembaga)**—Rappaport 1968:119; **Melpa (Central)**—Vicedom and Tischner n.d.:298; **Melpa (Northern)**—Strathern 1971:75; comment by Stürzenhofecker and Strathern in Strauss 1990:221; **Narak**—Cook 1967:266; **Tairora (South)**—Hays 1971–72:1; Mayer 1987:67; **Urat**—Allen 1976:53–54.

sight of its enemies' settlement and then challenging them to come out and do battle (e.g., Mayer 1987:67; Robbins 1982:185).

On the obstructed landscapes of the lowlands, however, it would be folly for an aggressor to act in any such fashion. Here, if their enemies are disinclined to meet them, aggressors can only stay at home and fume. Battle is likely to occur only if *both* sides are disposed to fight—in other words, if the desire for confrontation is mutual. Moreover, if it is to occur, it must be prearranged (e.g., Tuzin 1976:47–48). The two sides must agree on a *time* to meet and a *place* for the confrontation. Absent such an agreement, a disgruntled side can simply refuse to appear, leaving its antagonist with an unappetizing choice between returning home or advancing on the enemy through the rainforest, which, as we have seen, is folly.

In the literature on small-scale warfare, the idea that open battle can be scheduled like a soccer match has commonly been taken as a signature of ritualized battle, a sign that "primitive" warfare (as it is frequently called) is more a game than the real or true warfare that supposedly occurs between states (e.g., Divale 1973:xxi; Gat 1999:572; Keegan 1993:99; Naroll 1966:17). This is simply wrong. Figure 1, which displays the manner in which battle began in 27 New Guinea communities, shows that prearranged battle was a function of terrain. Black bars are communities where open battle could be imposed—that is, where battle began with an invasion, an advance or a challenge to battle. White bars are communities where battle was prearranged. As Figure 1 shows, open battle could be unilaterally imposed on terrains with up to about 65 per cent of vegetation cover; above that level, the practice became too dangerous, and battle occurred only when it was prearranged.[11]

This relationship between vegetation and the onset of battle is strong and highly significant (the point-biserial coefficient of correlation is 0.80, $p < 0.0001$).[12] The importance of this relationship is its differential implications for the resurgence of war in lowland and highland New Guinea. Put simply, it means that aggressors in the firm, open valleys of the highlands can act on an

impulse to attack an enemy. In the heavily vegetated landscapes of the lowlands, they can do so only if their enemy is willing to join them. It is considerably easier, in other words, for battle to break out in the highlands than the lowlands.

The differences in terrain that affect the frequency of open battle also affect the devastation that it can wreak. In the highlands, the absence of military obstructions on the land allows a side that is victorious on the battlefield to follow up on its triumph, massacring its enemies and destroying their property. On the heavily obstructed landscapes of the lowlands, however, the same features that make an advance into enemy territory hazardous make pursuit of a defeated enemy equally dangerous. In dense rainforest, for instance, victors can never be sure that their fleeing enemy has not halted and regrouped and is lying under cover in wait. Indeed, they must worry that their enemy has not faked its flight with precisely this end in mind. In the lowlands, consequently, victors are well advised to content themselves with chasing the vanquished off the field and then going home. Not only is battle harder to prosecute in the lowlands than in the highlands, but also the potential rewards are minimal. Little wonder, then, that open battle has returned to the highlands but not the lowlands!

Conclusion

If the argument I have made for Yangoru is generalizable, then we have put an end to war in parts of PNG by inartfully defining it as "crime." Yangoru and, by extension, other urban and rural settings have seen a return to warfare in the guise of raskolism, but, through the lenses and legal frames of a state, it has been recognized and treated as crime, not warfare. The resurgence of warfare in the highlands, by contrast, has been recognized for what it is because it conforms to Euro-American concepts of how physical violence articulates with the structure of the state and because it takes the form of open battle, the Euro-American idea of what war should look like. Open battles were also part of the pre-colonial military repertoire beyond the highlands. They were not the primary form of war, as they were in the highlands, however, and their resurgence was checked by the military friction imposed by densely vegetated terrain. It is interesting to speculate whether, if this were not the case and open battles had once again appeared in the lowlands, the lowland ambushes currently defined as crime might not have been seen in a different light, viewed as they are in the highlands as ancillary acts in a resurgent tribal warfare.

This analysis has some relevance to a broader debate in the social sciences stimulated by Fearon and Laitin's (2003) claim, based on their analysis of a large cross-cultural data set, that the apparent increase of civil wars after the end of the Cold War was a consequence not of increasing ethnic or religious factionalism but rather of weak (mostly post-colonial) governments that have little in the way of political and military control to resist insurgencies or rural guerrilla warfare in rural areas. Fearon and Latin's conclusion that motives such as ethnic grievances and economic inequality mattered little in the generation of civil unrest attracted considerable criticism. Using another large data set, for instance, Cedermann et al. (2011) showed that grievances based on horizontal inequalities between politically relevant ethnic groups and states at large did promote civil war. The point I draw from the PNG case is that both motive (grievances) and opportunity (the weakness of post-colonial states) are relevant in accounting for civil unrest and war. Tribal warfare would not break out in the PNG highlands if the groups involved had no grievances against one another. The ambush would not have returned to the lowlands if it were not motivated by material, sexual and, occasionally, revenge motives. At the same time, in a state that exerted greater control over its periphery, the parties involved in these acts might think twice before acting on their grievances or other motives.

The broader point, perhaps, is that these discussions fail to engage the dysfunctional structure of the post-colonial state and the implications of its dislocated political topography for understanding both the generation of grievances within and the weaknesses of the post-colonial state. On the one hand, a post-colonial nation is a contrivance, an arbitrarily bounded agglomeration of quasi-autonomous polities that not so long ago were often at war with one another but are now expected somehow to get along. On the other, the political structure commanding them to unity is a foreign imposition, limited in the political and military control it can exercise.

What lessons might we draw from the PNG case? The first is disconcerting: in post-colonial states, the resurgence of war may be even more widespread than we suppose, embracing so-called "crime" as well as civil unrest. Second, in light of this, it may be more fruitful to consider the end of violence rather than the end of war. Third, to end violence in post-colonial states—or, to be more realistic perhaps, to reduce this violence—we need to consider both law-and-order, the political and military control of government and processes of individual and collective identity formation. Policy discussion is primarily focused on the former, even though

much of the problem arises "from structural factors and processes whose origins lie well beyond the law and justice sector" (Dinnen 2009:255). In an entity where the agents of state control are themselves subject to a collective identity problem, moreover, strengthening state control can easily have unintended consequences that exacerbate the problem, creating precisely the horizontal inequalities that Cedermann et al. (2011) find to be generating the rise of civil unrest since the end of the Cold War. In the long run, then, it may be more effective and less fraught to focus on the root problem, the decentralized identities that often characterize post-colonial states and processes that might bolster national identity and nationalism.

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Notes

1 The categories *highland* and *lowland* New Guinea are capacious in the number of cultural groups they embrace and poorly defined in terms of the divisions they suppose. Because space constraints prevent a comprehensive documentation and analysis of these regions as a whole, I here restrict my empirical focus to certain parts of the highlands and lowlands. In talking of the highlands, my principal exemplars are Enga, Simbu and the Eastern, Southern and Western Highlands; my lowlands data come primarily from the Sepik. Though based on circumscribed data sets, the conclusions I draw should nonetheless be broadly applicable to New Guinea as a whole.

2 **Abelam (Central)**—Huber-Greub 1988:109, n. 113; Kaberry 1939–40:67, 1941–42:344, 1973:67; **Abelam (East)**—Forge n.d.:4–5; **Arapesh (Ilahita)**—Tuzin 1976:46–49; **Boiken (Yangoru)**—Roscoe n.d.

3 **Chimbu (Central)**—Bergmann 1971, vol. 1:193, 195, 1971, vol. 2:74; Vial 1939:18; **Chimbu (Upper)**—Criper 1967:179; **Enga (Kyaka)**—Bulmer 1960:414–418; **Enga (Mae)**—Meggitt 1977:16–21, 30, 34–36, 40, 44, 74–76, 85–91, 96; **Melpa (Central)**—Ross 1936:347; Strathern 1972:36–39; Vicedom and Tischner n.d.:279, 283–285, 297–299, 306; **Melpa (Northern)**—Strathern 1971:75; Strathern and Stewart 2000:45; comment by Stürzenhofecker and Strathern in Strauss 1990:221; **Mendi**—Ryan 1958:249, 1961:228–235; **Wahgi (North)**—O' Hanlon 2000:49; **Wahgi (South)**—Muke 1993:88, 102.

4 **Chimbu (Central)**—Brown and Brookfield 1959:41; **Dani (Ilaga)**—Larson 1987:6, 164; **Enga (Mae)**—Meggitt 1977:71.

5 **Dani (Ilaga)**—Larson 1987:288; **Kapauku**—Pospisil 1958:92; **Mendi**—Ryan 1961:235.

6 **Chimbu (Central)** ("days or weeks")—Vial 1942:8; **Chimbu (Upper)** ("a few days to a few months")—Criper 1967:179); **Dani (Ilaga)** ("2 to 6 months"; "seldom ... more than three months")—Larson 1962:33; 1987:288; **Enga (Mae)** ("weeks or months")—Meggitt 1977:169; **Kapauku** ("a few days" to 11 months)—Pospisil 1958:89; 1994:121; **Wahgi (South)** ("several months or even years")—Muke 1993:112.

7 **Chimbu (Central)**—Bergmann 1971, vol. 1:187, 193–194, vol. 4:75–76; Vial 1942:8, 17; **Chimbu (Upper)**—Criper 1967:173; **Dani (Ilaga)**—Larson 1987:245, 428; **Enga (Kyaka)**—Bulmer 1960:416; **Enga, Central**—Kyakas and Wiessner 1992:145–146, 148, Wiessner and Tumu 1998:150–152; **Enga (Mae)**—Meggitt 1977:89–90, 111–112; **Huli**—Glasse 1959:285; **Kapauku**—Pospisil 1958:91; 1994:118–119; **Melpa (Central)**—Vicedom and Tischner n.d.:197, 302–303, 307, 309–311, 313–314; **Melpa (Kaugel)**—Bowers 1968:167; **Melpa (Northern)**—Strathern 1971:67; **Mendi**—Ryan 1961:146, 231; **Wahgi, South**—Muke 1993:241.

8 **Chimbu (Central)**—Bergmann 1971, vol. 1:192; **Chimbu (Upper)**—Criper 1967:179; **Dani (Ilaga)**—Larson 1962:33; **Enga (Mae)**—Meggitt 1977:115–116; **Huli**—Glasse 1968:98; **Kapauku**—Pospisil 1994:118; **Melpa (Kumdi)**—Brandewie 1981:164; **Melpa (Central)**—Vicedom and Tischner n.d.:275, 315, 330.

9 **Auyana**—Robbins 1982:185–188, 195–204; **Awa (Ilakia)**—Newman 1972:152, 263; **Awa (Tauna)**—Hayano 1974:286, 291, n. 6; **Bena Bena**—Langness 1964:105; 1972:178, 1973:306; **Gadsup**—Du Toit 1974:82–84; Flierl 1932:21; Nurton 1934a:1–2; 1934b:14, 17–18; **Gahuku-Gama**—Read 1965:19; **Huli**—Glasse 1959:92, 285; Taylor 1938–39, App. 5:15; TRI 1-52/53:27; **Tairora (Northern)**—Watson 1973:235, 237; 1983:31, 102; **Tairora (Southern)**—Hays 1971–72:1, 1981:4–5, 9; Mayer 1987:68–67, 70–73.

10 In referring to open battle, I refer to confrontations between enemy communities. Restrained forms of skirmishing that resembled open battle occurred in many lowland communities but, in contrast to open battle, these confrontations took place within a community or between allied communities; their aim was not to kill but only to wound; and they took a highly stylized form—for example, each side might alternate in throwing a projectile at the other.

11 For PNG, the extent of vegetation cover was measured using MapInfo GIS software from the Papua New Guinea 1:100,000 topographic series. For West Papua, it was measured from satellite images of varying resolution. For several reasons, the West Papua figures are likely less accurate than the PNG measurements.

12 The Dugum Dani are the one glaring exception to this generalization. Dugum Dani territory had only about 40 per cent vegetation cover and yet its battles were famously prearranged. The Dugum Dani, though, are the exception that proves the rule. Although their terrain was not heavily obstructed by vegetation, it was—in contrast to almost everywhere else in highland New Guinea—a waterlogged environment, a terrain that, as I have explained in more detail elsewhere (Roscoe 2011), presents the same kind of military obstacles as dense vegetation to the unilateral imposition of battle.

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