

the statutory text and the legislative history to have included some type of clear statement of congressional intent. The WCA regulates the manner in which the U.S. Armed Forces may conduct military operations against the enemy; as such, it potentially comes into conflict with the President's Commander in Chief power under Article II of the Constitution. As we have advised others earlier in this conflict, the Commander in Chief power gives the President the plenary authority in determining how best to deploy troops in the field.<sup>22</sup> Any congressional effort to restrict presidential authority by subjecting the conduct of the U.S. Armed Forces to a broad construction of the Geneva Convention, one that is not clearly borne by its text, would represent a possible infringement on presidential discretion to direct the military. We believe that Congress must state explicitly its intention to take the constitutionally dubious step of restricting the President's plenary power over military operations (including the treatment of prisoners), and that, unless Congress clearly demonstrates such an intent, the WCA must be read to avoid such constitutional problems.<sup>23</sup> ~~As Congress has not signaled such a clear intention in this case, we~~ conclude that common Article 3 should not be read to include all forms of non-international armed conflict.

## II. Application of WCA and Associated Treaties to al Qaeda

It is clear from the foregoing that members of the al Qaeda terrorist organization do not receive the protections of the laws of war. Therefore, neither their detention nor their trial by the U.S. Armed Forces is subject to the Geneva Conventions (or the WCA). Three reasons, examined in detail below, support this conclusion. First, al Qaeda's status as a non-State actor renders it ineligible to claim the protections of the Geneva Conventions. Second, the nature of the conflict precludes application of common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions. Third, al Qaeda members fail to satisfy the eligibility requirements for treatment as POWs under Geneva Convention III.

*Al Qaeda's status as a non-State actor renders it ineligible to claim the protections of the treaties specified by the WCA.* Al Qaeda is not a State. It is a non-governmental terrorist organization composed of members from many nations, with ongoing operations in dozens of nations. Its members seem united in following a radical brand of Islam that seeks to attack Americans throughout the world. Non-governmental organizations cannot be parties to any of the international agreements here governing the laws of war. Al Qaeda is not eligible to sign the Geneva Conventions – and even if it were eligible, it has not done so. Common Article 2, which triggers the Geneva Convention provisions regulating detention conditions and procedures for trial of POWs, is limited only to cases of declared war or armed conflict “between two or more of the High Contracting Parties.” Al Qaeda is not a High Contracting Party. As a result, the U.S. military's treatment of al Qaeda members is not governed by the bulk of the Geneva Conventions, specifically those provisions concerning POWs. Conduct towards captured

<sup>22</sup> Memorandum for Timothy E. Flanigan, Deputy Counsel to the President, from John C. Yoo, Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legal Counsel, *Re: The President's Constitutional Authority to Conduct Military Operations Against Terrorists and Nations Supporting Them* (Sept. 25, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Public Citizen v. Department of Justice*, 491 U.S. 440, 466 (1989) (construing Federal Advisory Committee Act to avoid encroachment on presidential power); *Ashwander v. TVA*, 297 U.S. 288, 346-48 (1936) (Brandeis, J., concurring) (stating rule of avoidance); *Association of Am. Physicians & Surgeons, Inc. v. Clinton*, 997 F.2d 898, 906-11 (D.C. Cir. 1993) (same).

members of al Qaeda, therefore, also cannot constitute a violation of 18 U.S.C. § 2441(c)(1) or § 2441(c)(2).<sup>24</sup>

*Second, the nature of the conflict precludes application of common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions.* Al Qaeda is not covered by common Article 3, because the current conflict is not covered by the Geneva Conventions. As discussed in Part I, the text of Article 3, when read in harmony with common Article 2, shows that the Geneva Conventions were intended to cover either: a) traditional wars between Nation States (Article 2), or non-international civil wars (Article 3). Our conflict with al Qaeda does not fit into either category. The current conflict is not an international war between Nation States, but rather a conflict between a Nation State and a non-governmental organization. At the same time, the current conflict is not a civil war under Article 3, because it is a conflict of "an international character," rather than an internal armed conflict between parties contending for control over a government or territory. Therefore, the military's treatment of al Qaeda members captured in that conflict is

<sup>24</sup> Some difference in the language of the WCA might be thought to throw some doubt on the exact manner in which the statute incorporates these treaty norms. It might be argued, for example, with respect to the Hague Convention IV, that the WCA does not simply incorporate the terms of the treaty itself, with all of their limitations on application, but instead criminalizes the conduct described by that Convention. The argument starts from the fact that there is a textual difference in the way that the WCA references treaty provisions. Section 2441(c)(2) defines as a war crime conduct "prohibited" by the relevant sections of the Hague Convention IV. By contrast, § 2441 (c)(1) makes a war crime any conduct that constitutes a "grave breach" of the Geneva Conventions, and § 2441(c)(3) prohibits conduct "which constitutes a violation" of common Article 3 of the Geneva Convention. It might be argued that this difference indicates that § 2441(c)(2) does not incorporate the treaty into federal law; rather, it prohibits the conduct described by the treaty. Section 2441(c)(3) prohibits conduct "which constitutes a violation of common Article 3" (emphasis added), and that can only be conduct which is a treaty violation. Likewise, § 2441(c)(1) only criminalizes conduct that is a "grave breach" of the Geneva Conventions - which, again, must be a treaty violation. In other words, § 2441(c)(2) might be read to apply even when the Hague Convention IV, by its own terms, would not. On this interpretation, an act could violate § 2441(c)(2), whether or not the Hague Convention IV applied to the specific situation at issue.

We do not think that this interpretation is tenable. To begin with, § 2441(c)(2) makes clear that to be a war crime, conduct must be "prohibited" by the Hague Convention IV (emphasis added). Use of the word "prohibited," rather than phrases such as "referred to" or "described," indicates that the treaty must, by its own operation, proscribe the conduct at issue. If the Hague Convention IV does not itself apply to a certain conflict, then it cannot itself proscribe any conduct undertaken as part of that conflict. Thus, the most natural reading of the statutory language is that an individual must violate the Hague Convention IV in order to violate Section 2441(c)(2). Had Congress intended broadly to criminalize the types of conduct proscribed by the relevant Hague Convention IV provisions as such, rather than as treaty violations, it could have done so more clearly. Furthermore, the basic purpose of § 2441 was to implement, by appropriate legislation, the United States' treaty obligations. That purpose would be accomplished by criminalizing acts that were also violations of certain key provisions of the Annex to Hague Convention IV. It would not be served by criminalizing acts of the kind condemned by those provisions, whether or not they were treaty violations.

Nothing in the legislative history supports the opposite result. To the contrary, the legislative history suggests an entirely different explanation for the minor variations in language between §§ 2441(c)(1) and 2441(c)(2). As originally enacted, the WCA criminalized violations of the Geneva Conventions. See Pub. L. No. 104-192, § 2(a), 110 Stat. 2104, § 2401 (1996). In signing the original legislation, President Clinton urged that it be expanded to include other serious war crimes involving violation of the Hague Conventions IV and the Amended Protocol II. See 2 Pub. Papers of William J. Clinton 1323 (1996). The Expanded War Crimes Act of 1997, introduced as H.R. 1348 in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, was designed to meet these requests. Thus, § 2441(c)(2) was added as an amendment at a later time, and was not drafted at the same time and in the same process as § 2441(c)(1).

not limited either by common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions or 18 U.S.C. § 2441(c)(3), the provision of the WCA incorporating that article.<sup>25</sup>

*Third, al Qaeda members fail to satisfy the eligibility requirements for treatment as POWs under Geneva Convention III.* It might be argued that, even though it is not a State party to the Geneva Convention, al Qaeda could be covered by some protections in Geneva Convention III on the treatment of POWs. Article 4(A)(2) of the Geneva Convention III defines prisoners of war as including not only captured members of the armed forces of a High Contracting Party, but also irregular forces such as "[m]embers of other militias and members of other volunteer corps, including those of organized resistance movements." Geneva Convention III, art. 4. Article 4(A)(3) also includes as POWs "[m]embers of regular armed forces who profess allegiance to a government or an authority not recognized by the Detaining Power." *Id.* art. 4(A)(3). It might be claimed that the broad terms of these provisions could be stretched to cover al Qaeda.

This view would be mistaken. Article 4 does not expand the application of the Convention beyond the circumstances expressly addressed in common Articles 2 and 3. Unless there is a conflict subject to Article 2 or 3 (the Convention's jurisdictional provisions), Article 4 simply does not apply. As we have argued with respect to Article 3, and shall further argue with respect to Article 2, the conflict in Afghanistan does not fall within either Articles 2 or 3. As a result, Article 4 has no application. In other words, Article 4 cannot be read as an alternative, and far more expansive, statement of the application of the Convention. It merely specifies, where there is a conflict covered by the Convention, who must be accorded POW status.

Even if Article 4, however, were considered somehow to be jurisdictional as well as substantive, captured members of al Qaeda still would not receive the protections accorded to POWs. Article 4(A)(2), for example, further requires that the militia or volunteers fulfill the conditions first established by the Hague Convention IV of 1907 for those who would receive the protections of the laws of war. Hague Convention IV declares that the "laws, rights and duties of war" only apply to armies, militia, and volunteer corps when they fulfill four conditions: command by responsible individuals, wearing insignia, carrying arms openly, and obeying the laws of war. Hague Convention IV, Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land, Oct. 18, 1907, 36 Stat. 2277. Al Qaeda members have clearly demonstrated that they will not follow these basic requirements of lawful warfare. They have attacked purely civilian targets of no military value; they refused to wear uniform or insignia or carry arms openly, but instead hijacked civilian airliners, took hostages, and killed them; they have deliberately targeted and killed thousands of civilians; and they themselves do not obey the laws of war concerning the protection of the lives of civilians or the means of legitimate combat. Thus, Article 4(A)(3) is

<sup>25</sup> This understanding is supported by the WCA's legislative history. When extending the WCA to cover violations of common Article 3, the House apparently understood that it was codifying treaty provisions that "forbid atrocities occurring in both civil wars and wars between nations." 143 Cong. Rec. H5865-66 (remarks of Rep. Jenkins). The Senate also understood that "[t]he inclusion of common article 3 of the Geneva Conventions . . . expressly allows the United States to prosecute war crimes perpetrated in noninternational conflicts, such as Bosnia and Rwanda." 143 Cong. Rec. S7544, S7589 (daily ed. July 16, 1997) (remarks of Sen. Leahy). In referring to Bosnia and Rwanda, both civil wars of a non-international character, Senator Leahy appears to have understood common Article 3 as covering only civil wars as well. Thus, Congress apparently believed that the WCA would apply only to traditional international wars between States, or purely internal civil wars.

inapt because al Qaeda do not qualify as "regular armed forces," and its members do not qualify for protection as lawful combatants under the laws of war.

### III. Application of the Geneva Conventions to the Taliban Militia

Whether the Geneva Conventions apply to the detention and trial of members of the Taliban militia presents a more difficult legal question. Afghanistan has been a party to all four the Geneva Conventions since September 1956. Some might argue that this requires application of the Geneva Conventions to the present conflict with respect to the Taliban militia, which would then trigger the WCA. This argument depends, however, on the assumptions that during the period in which the Taliban militia was ascendant in Afghanistan, the Taliban was the *de facto* government of that nation, that Afghanistan continued to have the essential attributes of statehood, and that Afghanistan continued in good standing as a party to the treaties that its previous governments had signed.

We think that all of these assumptions are disputable, and indeed false. The weight of informed opinion strongly supports the conclusion that, for the period in question, Afghanistan was a "failed State" whose territory had been largely overrun and held by violence by a militia or faction rather than by a government. Accordingly, Afghanistan was without the attributes of statehood necessary to continue as a party to the Geneva Conventions, and the Taliban militia, like al Qaeda, is therefore not entitled to the protections of the Geneva Conventions. Furthermore, there appears to be substantial evidence that the Taliban was so dominated by al Qaeda and so complicit in its actions and purposes that the Taliban leadership cannot be distinguished from al Qaeda, and accordingly that the Taliban militia cannot stand on a higher footing under the Geneva Conventions.

#### A. Constitutional Authority

It is clear that, under the Constitution, the Executive has the plenary authority to determine that Afghanistan ceased at relevant times to be an operating State and therefore that members of the Taliban militia were and are not protected by the Geneva Conventions.<sup>26</sup> As an initial matter, Article II makes clear that the President is vested with all of the federal executive power, that he "shall be Commander in Chief," that he shall appoint, with the advice and consent

<sup>26</sup> This is *not* to maintain that Afghanistan ceased to be a State party to the Geneva Conventions merely because it underwent a change of government in 1996, after the military successes of Taliban. The general rule of international law is that treaty relations survive a change of government. See, e.g., 2 Marjorie M. Whiteman, *Digest of International Law* 771-73 (1963); J.L. Brierty, *The Law of Nations* 144-45 (6<sup>th</sup> ed. 1963); Eleanor C. McDowell, *Contemporary Practice of the United States Relating to International Law*, 71 Am. J. Int'l L. 337 (1977). However, although "[u]nder international law, a change in government alone generally does not alter a state's obligations to honor its treaty commitments . . . [a] different and more difficult question arises . . . when the state itself dissolves." Yoo, *supra* n.17, at 904. Furthermore, we are *not* suggesting that the United States' nonrecognition of the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan in and of itself deprived Afghanistan of party status under the Geneva Conventions. The general rule is that treaties may still be observed even as to State parties, the current governments of which have been unrecognized. See *New York Chinese TV Programs v. U.E. Enterprises*, 954 F.2d 847 (2d Cir.), *cert. denied*, 506 U.S. 827 (1992); see also *Restatement (Third) of the Foreign Relations Law of the United States* at § 202 cmts. a, b; Egon Schwelb, *The Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and International Law*, 58 Am. J. Int'l L. 642, 655 (1964) (quoting statements of President Kennedy and Secretary of State Rusk that participation in a multilateral treaty does not affect recognition status).

of the Senate, and receive, ambassadors, and that he "shall have Power, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, to make Treaties." U.S. Const., art. II, § 2, cl. 2. Congress possesses its own specific foreign affairs powers, primarily those of declaring war, raising and funding the military, and regulating international commerce. While Article II, § 1 of the Constitution grants the President an undefined executive power, Article I, § 1 limits Congress to "[a]ll legislative Powers herein granted" in the rest of Article I.

From the very beginnings of the Republic, this constitutional arrangement has been understood to grant the President plenary control over the conduct of foreign relations. As Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson observed during the first Washington Administration: "The constitution has divided the powers of government into three branches [and] . . . has declared that 'the executive powers shall be vested in the President,' submitting only special articles of it to a negative by the senate."<sup>27</sup> Due to this structure, Jefferson continued, "[t]he transaction of business with foreign nations is Executive altogether. It belongs then to the head of that department, *except* as to such portions of it as are specially submitted to the Senate. *Exceptions* are to be construed strictly."<sup>28</sup> In defending President Washington's authority to issue the Neutrality Proclamation, Alexander Hamilton came to the same interpretation of the President's foreign affairs powers. According to Hamilton, Article II "ought . . . to be considered as intended . . . to specify and regulate the principal articles implied in the definition of Executive Power; leaving the rest to flow from the general grant of that power."<sup>29</sup> As future Chief Justice John Marshall famously declared a few years later, "The President is the sole organ of the nation in its external relations, and its sole representative with foreign nations. . . . The [executive] department . . . is entrusted with the whole foreign intercourse of the nation. . . ."<sup>30</sup> Given the agreement of Jefferson, Hamilton, and Marshall, it has not been difficult for the executive branch consistently to assert the President's plenary authority in foreign affairs ever since.

On the few occasions where it has addressed the question, the Supreme Court has lent its approval to the executive branch's broad powers in the field of foreign affairs. Responsibility for the conduct of foreign affairs and for protecting the national security are, as the Supreme Court has observed, "'central' Presidential domains."<sup>31</sup> The President's constitutional primacy flows from both his unique position in the constitutional structure, and from the specific grants of authority in Article II that make the President both the Chief Executive of the nation and the Commander in Chief.<sup>32</sup> Due to the President's constitutionally superior position, the Supreme Court has consistently "recognized 'the generally accepted view that foreign policy [is] the province and responsibility of the Executive.'"<sup>33</sup> This foreign affairs power is independent of Congress: it is "the very delicate, plenary and exclusive power of the President as sole organ of

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Opinion on the Powers of the Senate Respecting Diplomatic Appointments* (1790), reprinted in 16 *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* 378 (Julian P. Boyd ed., 1961).

<sup>28</sup> *Id.* at 379.

<sup>29</sup> Alexander Hamilton, *Pacificus No. 1* (1793), reprinted in 15 *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton* 33, 39 (Harold C. Syrett et al. eds., 1969).

<sup>30</sup> 10 *Annals of Cong.* 613-14 (1800).

<sup>31</sup> *Harlow v. Fitzgerald*, 457 U.S. 800, 812 n.19 (1982).

<sup>32</sup> *Nixon v. Fitzgerald*, 457 U.S. 731, 749-50 (1982).

<sup>33</sup> *Department of the Navy v. Egan*, 484 U.S. 518, 529 (1988) (quoting *Haig v. Agee*, 453 U.S. 280, 293-94 (1981)).

the federal government in the field of international relations – a power which does not require as a basis for its exercise an act of Congress.<sup>34</sup>

Part of the President's plenary power over the conduct of the Nation's foreign relations is the interpretation of treaties and of international law. Interpretation of international law includes the determination whether a territory has the necessary political structure to qualify as a Nation State for purposes of treaty implementation. In *Clark v. Allen*, 331 U.S. 503 (1947), for example, the Supreme Court considered whether a 1923 treaty with Germany continued to exist after the defeat, occupation and partition of Germany by the victorious World War II Allies. The Court rejected the argument that the treaty "must be held to have failed to survive the [Second World War], since Germany, as a result of its defeat and the occupation by the Allies, has ceased to exist as an independent national or international community."<sup>35</sup> Instead, the Court held that "the question whether a state is in a position to perform its treaty obligations is essentially a political question. *Terlinden v. Ames*, 184 U.S. 270, 288 [(1902)]. We find no evidence that the political departments have considered the collapse and surrender of Germany as putting an end to such provisions of the treaty as survived the outbreak of the war or the obligations of either party in respect to them."<sup>36</sup>

Thus, *Clark* demonstrates the Supreme Court's sanction for the Executive's constitutional authority to decide the "political question" whether Germany had ceased to exist as a Nation State and, if so, whether the 1923 treaty with Germany had become inoperative. Equally here, the executive branch should conclude that Afghanistan was not "in a position to perform its treaty obligations" because it lacked, at least throughout the Taliban's ascendancy, all the elements of statehood. If the Executive made such a determination, the Geneva Conventions would be inoperative as to Afghanistan until it was in a position to perform its Convention duties. The federal courts would not review such political questions, but instead would defer to the decision of the Executive.

### B. Status as a Failed State

There are ample grounds that demonstrate that Afghanistan was a failed State. Indeed, the findings of the State and Defense Departments, of foreign leaders, and of expert opinion overwhelmingly support such a conclusion.

International law recognizes many situations in which there may be a territory that has no "State." A variety of situations can answer to this description.<sup>37</sup> Of chief relevance here is the

<sup>34</sup> *United States v. Curtiss-Wright Export Corp.*, 299 U.S. 304, 320 (1936).

<sup>35</sup> *Id.* at 514.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.*; see also *id.* at 508-09 (President might have "formulated a national policy quite inconsistent with the enforcement" of the treaty).

<sup>37</sup> It is entirely possible in international law for a territory (even a populated one) to be without any State. In the *Western Sahara Case*, Advisory Opinion, 1975 LCJ. 12 (Advisory Opinion May 22, 1975), the General Assembly requested the ICJ to decide the question whether the Western Sahara at the time of Spanish colonization was a territory belonging to no one. The question would have had no meaning unless there could be Stateless territory without a State. See D.J. Harris, *Cases and Materials on International Law* 113 (1991). The Transkei, a "homeland" created for the Xhosa people by the Republic of South Africa in 1976, was also a territory not internationally recognized as a State. See *id.* at 110-11.

category of the "failed State." The case of Somalia in 1992, at the time of the United States' intervention, provides a clear example of this category.

A "failed State" is generally characterized by the collapse or near-collapse of State authority. Such collapse is characterized by the inability of central authorities to maintain government institutions, ensure law and order or engage in normal dealings with other governments, and by the prevalence of violence that destabilizes civil society and the economy. The Executive can readily find that at the outset of this conflict, when the country was largely in the hands of the Taliban militia, there was no functioning central government in Afghanistan that was capable of providing the most basic services to the Afghan population, of suppressing endemic internal violence, or of maintaining normal relations with other governments. Afghanistan, consequently, was without the status of a State for purposes of treaty law, and the Taliban militia could not have qualified as the *de facto* government of Afghanistan. Rather, the Taliban militia would have had the status only of a violent faction or movement contending with other factions for control of that country.

We want to make clear that this Office does not have access to all of the facts related to the activities of the Taliban militia and al Qaeda in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, the available facts in the public record support our conclusion that Afghanistan was a failed state – including facts that pre-existed the military reversals suffered by the Taliban militia and the formation of the new transitional government pursuant to the Bonn agreement. Indeed, the departments best positioned to make such a determination appear to have reached that conclusion some time ago. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, for example, declared at a November 2, 2001 press conference that the "Taliban is not a government. The government of Afghanistan does not exist today. The Taliban never was a government as such. It was a force in the country that is not substantially weakened – in many cases cloistered away from the people."<sup>38</sup>

The State Department has taken the same view. Near the start of the conflict, the Bureau of South Asian Affairs found that "[t]here is no functioning central government [in Afghanistan]. The country is divided among fighting factions. . . . The Taliban [is] a radical Islamic movement [that] occupies about 90% of the country."<sup>39</sup>

Prominent authorities and experts on Afghan affairs agree that Afghanistan was a failed State. As one leading scholar of international law has written, "[t]he most dramatic examples of the decline in state authority can be found in countries where government and civil order have virtually disappeared. Recent examples are Liberia, Somalia, and Afghanistan. The term 'failed states' has come to be used for these cases and others like them."<sup>40</sup> Lakhdar Brahimi, the United Nations mediator in Afghanistan and a former Algerian Foreign Minister, described Afghanistan

<sup>38</sup> Secretary Rumsfeld Media Availability en Route to Moscow (Nov. 2, 2001), available at [http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/sept.11/dod\\_brief64.htm](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/sept.11/dod_brief64.htm) (visited Nov. 8, 2001).

<sup>39</sup> Background Note (October, 2001), available at <http://www.state.gov/s/psa/bgrv/index.cfm?docid=5380> (visited Oct. 25, 2001), prepared by the Bureau of South Asian Affairs. See also Reuters AlertNet - Afghanistan, Country Profiles ("There are no state-constituted armed forces. It is not possible to show how ground forces' equipment has been divided among the different factions."), available at <http://www.alertnet.org/thefacts/countryprofiles/152478?version=1> (visited Nov. 1, 2001).

<sup>40</sup> Oscar Schachter, *The Decline of the Nation-State and Its Implications for International Law*, 36 Colum. J. Transnat'l L. 7, 18 (1997).

under the Taliban as a "failed state which looks like an infected wound."<sup>41</sup> Tony Blair, the Prime Minister of Great Britain, on a visit to that country this month, declared that "Afghanistan has been a failed state for too long and the whole world has paid the price."<sup>42</sup>

Traditional legal analysis also makes clear that Afghanistan was a failed State during the period of the Taliban militia's existence. A State has failed when centralized governmental authority has almost completely collapsed, no central authorities are capable of maintaining government institutions or ensuring law and order, and violence has destabilized civil society and the economy.<sup>43</sup> A failed State will not satisfy some or all of the three traditional tests for "statehood" under international law:

- i) Does the entity have a defined territory and population?
- ii) Are the territory/population under the control of its own government?
- iii) Does the entity engage in or have the capacity to engage in formal relations with other States?<sup>44</sup>

In another version of the traditional formulation, the State Department has identified four tests for "statehood":

- i) Does the entity have effective control over a clearly defined territory and population?
- ii) Is there an organized governmental administration of the territory?

<sup>41</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil & Fundamentalism in Central Asia* 207 (2001).

<sup>42</sup> Philip Webster, *Blair's mission to Kabul*, in *The Times of London* (Jan. 8, 2002), 2002 WL 4171996.

<sup>43</sup> "States in which institutions and law and order have totally or partially collapsed under the pressure and amidst the confusion of erupting violence, yet which subsist as a ghostly presence on the world map, are now commonly referred to as 'failed States' or 'États sans gouvernement.'" Daniel Thurer, *The failed State and International Law*, *International Review of the Red Cross* No. 836 (Dec. 31, 1999), available at <http://www.icrc.org/eng/review> (visited Oct. 22, 2001). Somewhat different tests have been used for determining whether a State has "failed." First, the most salient characteristic of a "failed State" seems to be the disappearance of a "central government." Yoram Dinstein, *The Thirteenth Waldemar A. Solf Lecture in International Law*, 166 *MIL. L. REV.* 93, 103 (2000); see also *id.* ("All that remains is a multiplicity of groups of irregular combatants fighting each other."). Closely related to this test, but perhaps somewhat broader, is the definition of a "failed State" as "a situation where the government is unable to discharge basic governmental functions with respect to its populace and its territory. Consequently, laws are not made, cases are not decided, order is not preserved and societal cohesion deteriorates. Basic services such as medical care, education, infrastructure maintenance, tax collection and other functions and services rendered by central governing authorities cease to exist or exist only in limited areas." Ruth Gordon, *Growing Constitutions*, 1 *U. PA. J. CONST. L.* 528, 533-34 (1999). Professor Thurer distinguishes three elements (respectively, territorial, political and functional) said to characterize a "failed State": 1) failed States undergo an "implosion rather than an explosion of the structures of power and authority, the disintegration and destructuring of States rather than their dismemberment;" 2) they experience "the total or near total breakdown of structures guaranteeing law and order;" and 3) there are marked by "the absence of bodies capable, on the one hand, of representing the State at the international level and, on the other, of being influenced by the outside world." Thurer, *supra*.

<sup>44</sup> See *Restatement (Third) of the Foreign Relations Law of the United States*, at § 201; see also 1933 Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States, art. I, 49 *Stat.* 3097, 28 *Am. J. Int'l L. Supp.* 75 (1934).



iii) Does the entity have the capacity to act effectively to conduct foreign relations and to fulfill international obligations?

iv) Has the international community recognized the entity?<sup>45</sup>

Based on these factors, we conclude that Afghanistan under the Taliban militia was in a condition of "statelessness," and therefore was not a High Contracting Party to the Geneva Conventions for at least that period of time. The condition of having an organized governmental administration was plainly not met. Indeed, there are good reasons to doubt whether *any* of the conditions was met.

First, even before the outset of the conflict with the United States, the Taliban militia did not have effective control over a clearly defined territory and population. Even before the United States air strikes began, at least ten percent of the country, and the population within those areas, was governed by the Northern Alliance. A large part of the Afghan population in recent years has consisted of refugees: as of June, 2001, there were an estimated 2,000,000 Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and as of December, 2000, an estimated 1,500,000 were in Iran.<sup>46</sup> These figures demonstrate that a significant segment of the Afghan population was never under the control of the Taliban militia. It is unclear how strong was the hold of the Taliban militia before the conflict, in light of the rapid military successes of the Northern Alliance in just a few weeks.

Indeed, the facts appear to show that Afghanistan appears to have been divided between different tribal and warring factions, rather than by any central state as such. As we have noted, the State Department has found that Afghanistan was not under the control of a central government, but was instead divided among different warlords and ethnic groups. The Taliban militia in essence represented only an ethnically Pashtun movement, a "tribal militia,"<sup>47</sup> that did not command the allegiance of other major ethnic groups in Afghanistan and that was apparently unable to suppress endemic violence in the country. As a prominent writer on the Taliban militia wrote well before the current conflict began, "[e]ven if [the Taliban] were to conquer the north, it would not bring stability, only continuing guerrilla war by the non-Pashtuns, but this time from bases in Central Asia and Iran which would further destabilize the region."<sup>48</sup>

Second, again even before the United States air strikes and the successes of the Northern Alliance, an organized governmental administration did not exist in Afghanistan. One expert on the Taliban concluded that the country had

ceased to exist as a viable state and when a state fails civil society is destroyed. . . . The entire Afghan population has been displaced, not once but many times over. The physical destruction of Kabul has turned it into the Dresden of the late twentieth century. . . . There is no semblance of an infrastructure that can sustain

<sup>45</sup> Eleanor C. McDowell, *Contemporary Practice of the United States Relating to International Law*, 71 *Am. J. Int'l L.* 337 (1977).

<sup>46</sup> See CNN.com *In-Depth Specials, War Against Terror*, available at <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2001/trade.com/cr/refugee.map.html> (visited Nov. 1, 2001). Other estimates are lower but still extremely large numbers. See, e.g., Goodson, *supra*, at 149 (estimating 1.2 million Afghans living in Pakistan).

<sup>47</sup> Goodson, *supra*, at 115.

<sup>48</sup> Rashid, *supra*, at 213.

society — even at the lowest common denominator of poverty. . . . The economy is a black hole that is sucking in its neighbours with illicit trade and the smuggling of drugs and weapons, undermining them in the process. . . . Complex relationships of power and authority built up over centuries have broken down completely. No single group or leader has the legitimacy to reunite the country. Rather than a national identity or kinship-tribal-based identities, territorial regional identities have become paramount. . . . [T]he Taliban refuse to define the Afghan state they want to constitute and rule over, largely because they have no idea what they want. The lack of a central authority, state organizations, a methodology for command and control and mechanisms which can reflect some level of popular participation . . . make it impossible for many Afghans to accept the Taliban or for the outside world to recognize a Taliban government. . . . No warlord faction has ever felt itself responsible for the civilian population, but the Taliban are incapable of carrying out even the minimum of developmental work because they believe that Islam will take care of everyone.<sup>49</sup>

Another expert reached similar conclusions:

Afghanistan today has become a violent society, bereft of political institutions that function correctly and an economy that functions at all. When this is coupled with the destruction of population and the physical infrastructure. . . , it becomes clear that Afghanistan is a country on the edge of collapse, or at least profound transformation. . . . With the Taliban, there are few meaningful governmental structures and little that actually functions.<sup>50</sup>

The State Department also came to such conclusions. In testimony early in October 2001 before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee on Near East and South Asian Affairs, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Christina Rocca explained that:

[t]wenty-two years of conflict have steadily devastated [Afghanistan], destroyed its physical and political infrastructure, shattered its institutions, and wrecked its socio-economic fabric. . . . The Taliban have shown no desire to provide even the most rudimentary health, education, and other social services expected of any government. Instead, they have chosen to devote their resources to waging war on the Afghan people, and exporting instability to their neighbors.<sup>51</sup>

Rather than performing normal government functions, the Taliban militia exhibited the characteristics of a criminal gang. The United Nations Security Council found that the Taliban militia extracted massive profits from illegal drug trafficking in Afghanistan and subsidized terrorism from those revenues.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup> *Id.* at 207-08, 212-13.

<sup>50</sup> Goodson, *supra*, at 103-04; 115.

<sup>51</sup> United States Department of State, International Information Programs, *Rocca Blames Taliban for Humanitarian Disaster in Afghanistan* (Oct. 10, 2001), available at <http://www.usinfo.state.gov/regional/nea/sasia/afghan/text/1010rocca.htm> (visited Oct. 19, 2001).

<sup>52</sup> See U.N. Security Council Resolution 1333 (2000), available at [http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/sent\\_11/unsecres\\_1333.htm](http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/sent_11/unsecres_1333.htm) (finding that "the Taliban benefits directly from the cultivation of illicit opium by