

**COMMUNICATING A PUBLIC MORAL ARGUMENT: A TEXTUAL
ANALYSIS OF SVETLANA ALEXIEVICH'S *ZINKY BOYS: SOVIET VOICES
FROM THE AFGHANISTAN WAR***

by

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THESIS

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Declaration

I declare that COMMUNICATING A PUBLIC MORAL ARGUMENT: A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF SVETLANA ALEXIEVICH'S ZINKY BOYS: SOVIET VOICES FROM THE AFGHANISTAN WAR is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledge by means of complete references and that this work has not been submitted before for any other degree at any other institution.



Pieter Samuel Nagel

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Abstract

This thesis explored the narratives of Soviet survivors of the Soviet-Afghanistan War that lasted from 1979 to 1989. The purpose of this exploration was to gain an understanding of the individual arguments that these survivors were making in a published work by Belarussian literary journalist Svetlana Alexievich, in her book *Zinky Boys: Soviet voices from the Afghanistan War*, that was originally published in 1989, and translated into English in 1992. The thesis purpose was to determine the central public moral argument that the published work is making at the close of the Soviet-Afghan War. The body of literature reviewed and discussed in Chapter 3 helped frame the interpretative context for the study. The themes that emerged and captured there are all external in origin to the core text of *Zinky Boys*, and served a triangulatory purpose to some of the emic data that emerged in the process of analysis of the core text.

One of the major influencers of the study is JC Behrends (2015b) who associated the concept of the *Gewaltraum* with the Soviet-Afghan War. The notion of agency that was advanced by Giddens in 1984 is equally of importance, as well as Milgram's (1984) ideas of the agentic state and Obedience to Authority Theory. As theorists, Habermas' (1991) advancement of the Theory of the Public Sphere and Fisher's (1984) Narrative Paradigm, contribute to and influence the theoretical grounding of the study.

The study followed the methodology of a textual analysis within the narrative turn, and utilised Fisher's fidelity and probability tests as proposed within his narrative paradigm to construct a set of thematic intertexts, which provided compelling good reasons to accept the narratives of the survivors. In addition, Fisher's (1984) differentiating features that set the public moral argument aside from reasoned discourse of the type used in more formal settings were applied

to ensure that the public moral argument as derived from the text of *Zinky Boys* meets the requirements of a public moral argument. As a published work, the public moral argument emerging from *Zinky Boys* is a matter for the public sphere as Habermas (1991) envisages the sphere as a public space for public reasoned discourse in conflict with the political state. In this instance, it is specifically the Soviet public sphere, which is historically important as the Soviet-Afghan War concluded shortly before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This thesis positions *Zinky Boys* as portraying the public moral argument of the Soviet survivors in the public sphere.

The major findings of the thesis indicate that the Soviet Limited Contingent in Afghanistan were exposed to extreme levels of violence which is portrayed as a *Gewaltraum* (violent space). Secondly, the thesis finds that the agency of the Soviets in Afghanistan was often of a violent and abusive nature. A third finding indicates that participants in the war and their immediate family members, notably mothers, become victims of the psychological and physical impact of war. Finally, the finding is presented that the matter of the Soviet engagement in Afghanistan had become a matter for discussion in the public sphere. The resulting public moral argument positions the survivors of the Soviet-Afghan War as victims of the Soviet State due to their agentic state and psychological changes that they underwent in the *Gewaltraum* of Afghanistan, as well as the Soviet media campaign of disinformation and victimisation, and its effect on their standing as Soviet citizens and their inability to reintegrate successfully back into society.

Key words

Textual analysis; Intertextuality; Narrative journalism; Narrative paradigm; Phenomenology; Public Moral Argument; Public Sphere.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The overall objective of this thesis is to determine the public moral argument espoused by the survivors of the Soviet-Afghan War of 1979-1989. The public moral argument is derived through a textual analysis of their narrative accounts of their phenomenological experiences during their service and thereafter, that are contained in the anthology *Zinky Boys – Soviet Voices from the Afghanistan War*. The purpose of this chapter is to present an overview of and introduction to the thesis. I follow the outline prescribed by the *University of Limpopo Postgraduate Manual 2020*, by first providing background information, before identifying the research problem and validating the context of the literature survey, or more accurately in this instance, the conceptual framework for the study. This is followed by a brief introduction to the purpose of the study and the methodological approach. The section on ethical considerations and significance of the study conclude the chapter.

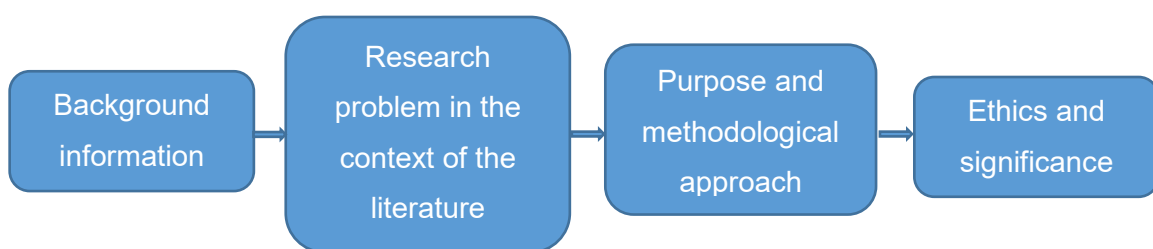


Figure 1.1 Conceptual framework for Chapter 1

The role and importance of narrative journalism in the field of Communication Studies was pushed to the foreground by the Nobel Committee on Literature's selection of Belarusian journalist Svetlana Alexievich as the recipient of the

2015 Nobel Prize in Literature. She was commended "for her polyphonic writings, a monument to suffering and courage in our time" (The Nobel Foundation, 2015). Fisher (2015) contends that "she writes nonfiction; her work could be best described as narrative or even investigative journalism."

I situate this study in the field of Communication Studies because I find the multitude of applications of the concept of reality construction particularly applicable in this context, where media in general, or *Zinky Boys* in particular in this instance, act as agents of media construction of social reality for various groups. To illustrate: *Zinky Boys* is a published narrative anthology that depicts (constructs) a subaltern reality specific to those soldiers and support personnel who were involved in the war. In addition, the mothers of those who suffered and were killed, construct yet another subaltern reality for themselves as mothers. Finally, the Soviet public, who become a *glasnost* and *post-glasnost* society, construct their own depiction of reality based on media reports in the Soviet press and media, as well as other information that found its way through the iron curtain.

Alexievich writes as narrative journalist allowing individuals to remember and narrate their stories and emotions experienced in the first person about the war in Afghanistan. The reading of the work is difficult, laden with statements that brim with emotions ranging from fear and dread, to the joy of being alive, whilst questioning the Soviet involvement in the war in Afghanistan. The personal struggle for identity and attempts at making sense of the world they live in, form a strong undercurrent when the various narratives as texts are considered against the textual space of the Semiosphere.

It is in the reading of these narratives as text that I became curious about these memories and narratives, which contribute to our social construction of the world which we live in. The same narratives are now mediated through the press as a published book and find themselves in the public sphere, and are

acclaimed as worthy of the attention of communication and literary scholars, through the author having been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

1.1.1 War

The war in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989 and the Soviet presence there has received much attention by scholars from both socio-economic and socio-political viewpoints (Behrends, 2015a; Brown, 2013; Harvey, 2003; Nazemroava, 2007; Reuveny and Prakash, 1999). Much of their writing accounts for either factual accounts of factors that contributed to the cause of the war, or plausible reasons to help one to understand the context within which the war began. Behrends (2015b), Brown (2013), and Reuveny and Prakash (1999), contribute richly by showing how the war can be seen as a causative factor to the dismantling of the former Soviet Union.

A key concept in the writing of Behrends (2015b:719) is that the Soviet-Afghanistan war is seen as a *Gewaltraum* (a violent space [own translation]), within which one's sense of what is real and ideal is challenged. Within this *Gewaltraum*, normal protocol and one's sense of humanitarian compassion are altered radically. Perhaps the German concentration camps and the atrocities of World War II (or the Great War as it is remembered by the Soviets) would be a good example of this. In such situations, it is easy to become disillusioned by the political propaganda and ideologies of bureaucrats who are safely ensconced behind their desks in government. In the crucible that is war, perceptions are altered and ideals wane because of discontent and disillusionment, which creep in, as is evidenced by Behrends (2015b:722) who shows the disillusionment of the Soviet Army through his interviews with Soviet combatants.

In addition to Alexievich's book *Zinky Boys* (1992), there is an article about the war by Anne Ducloux (2016) *A Muslim Woman Officer in the Soviet Army During the Soviet- Afghan War. A Soviet "AntiHero"*. In it the story of a Muslim woman from Uzbekistan is documented. She is, however, renowned and respected not for her acts of war, but for her involvement with a fellow officer. Later when they married, he converted to Islam and became the town *Imam*. Ducloux (2016) contends that generally a very negative view is taken of women who served in the Russian Army in the conflict with Afghanistan. Their own people often regard them as strangers and loose women, even though they may have been active in the medical profession as nurses or doctors or in some other support role during the war.

1.1.2 A Feminist Orientation

Alexievich is renowned for her writings about the role of women during wartime, c.f. *War's Unwomanly Face* (1988) in which she writes about the roles that they played in the war as snipers, soldiers and sappers. The poignancy of the contrasting role where 'woman' who is the giver of life, now becomes the one who takes a life, is quite striking. In her portrayal of the role of women during times of war, Alexievich sets herself apart from other authors on the subject. Alexievich remembers in her Nobel Lecture (2015:13) how vocal the mothers of the deceased soldiers and aides became when she writes "somewhere in the middle of the cemetery an old Afghan woman was shouting. I remember the howl of a mother in a village near Minsk when they carried a zinc coffin into the house. The cry wasn't human or animal...it resembled what I heard at the Kabul cemetery..." Her compassion for grieving women is underscored by the multiple narratives of mothers in *Zinky Boys* (Cf. Section 7.4.2).

The renowned feminist theorist, Judith Butler (2009:13), aptly writes on the precariousness and grievability of life when she says:

We read about lives lost and are often given the numbers, but these stories are repeated every day, and the repetition appears endless, irremediable. And so, we have to ask, what would it take not only to apprehend the precarious character of lives lost in war, but to have that apprehension coincide with an ethical and political opposition to the losses war entails?

With this musing, the universality of suffering is brought into stark contrast with the political view that one's cause in war is just. This justification, however, contrasts with the feminist suffering that emerges from reading Alexievich's writings. This sense of being justified in waging a war often emanates from the existing ideological conviction of the country initiating the war, in this instance, the Soviet Union's involvement in Afghanistan.

1.1.3 Ideology

In war the aggressor always sees himself as being justified to wage war in order to serve whatever ideological cause he believes in. In *Zinky Boys* (1992) Alexievich's account of the narrative interviews with survivors of the Soviet-Afghanistan war opens the veil that the Soviet government had drawn to shield its involvement in the war. She recounts her decision to write *Zinky Boys* in her Nobel Lecture (Alexievich, 2015:12), "I am going to write about this. I'm afraid that no one at home will believe me. Our newspapers just write about friendship alleys planted by Soviet soldiers." She recalls talking to those involved in the war that "they sincerely dreamed of helping the Afghan people build socialism. Now they laugh at themselves." (*loc cit.*). The disillusionment goes even deeper as she writes about an officer who showed her hundreds of zinc coffins at the airport, musing about the probability of death - "who knows...my coffin might be over there...They'll stick me in it...What am I fighting for here?" It is in this writing that I find the public moral debate

foregrounded in the Semiosphere, as the study of language and meaning as studied in this communicative space, imply the act of communicating, or conveying meaning. As expressed in this exemplar above, the quintessential question for those individuals involved in the war is to find meaning in their agency. This study of their narratives sheds light on what meanings they attributed to their agency during the Soviet-Afghan War.

Alexievich (2015) says she confronted her father about him having raised her to believe in communist ideals, and seeing young Soviets (fresh from leaving school) killing people in another country. For Alexievich, when ideological thoughts are translated into acts of war, it exposes human suffering, and brings about a different understanding to the carefully worded doctrine of ideology. Alexievich (2015:14) exclaims “we are murderers, Papa, do you understand!?” (sic). She recollects the young man in Afghanistan who accosted her with the words “you’re a woman, what do you understand about war? You think that people die a pretty death in war, like they do in books and movies?” (Alexievich, 2015:14). Later that same man telephoned her and questioned her “what are your books for? They’re too scary.” (*loc cit.*).

It is clear that in a study of this nature there is not much by way of existing literature to rely upon when it comes to the value judgements made by survivors of the war. Therefore, this study generated new knowledge about these narratives through the application of appropriate theory, such as the Theory of the Public Sphere by Habermas, and the Narrative Paradigm as proposed by Fisher, both of which are discussed in section 3.

1.1.4 Clarification of key terms

Epiphany: Interactional moments impact on people’s lives in either a positive or negative manner, but they “create transformational experiences” (Denzin, 2002:34). Denzin describes these moments as

'epiphanies'. These moments represent and shed light on "moments of crisis that appear in individuals' lives. Such moments are often interpreted...as turning-point experiences" (Denzin, 2002:34 on Strauss, 1959).

Hermeneutics: "Hermeneutic inquiry has as its goal to educe understanding, to bring forth the presuppositions in which we already live. Its task, therefore, is not to methodically achieve a relationship to some matter and to secure understanding in such a method. Rather, its task is to recollect the contours and textures of the life we are already living, a life that is not secured by the methods we can wield to render such a life our object" (Jardine, 1992:16).

Intertextuality: In literature, texts (in this instance interviews), which are of a similar nature, may corroborate, affect or diverge from one another. Intertextuality examines this interrelationship between texts. The term was coined by Julia Kristeva (Alfaro, 1996), and is applied in this thesis to corroborate a thematic intertext that narrates the position of the subjects under study.

Narrative Journalism: Refers to narratives of factual information (creative non-fiction) that are thoroughly researched and reported. Terms such as literary journalism or reportage are taken to refer to the same. Deahl (2016) states "Narrative journalism is a form of journalism. Unlike straight news stories -- which offer readers the basic who, what, where, when and why of a story -- narrative news pieces are longer and allow the writer to employ more elements of prose writing."

Narrative Paradigm: Postulated by Walter Fisher (1987) - applies to situations in the real world that could be narrated as a story. The value of the Narrative Paradigm lies therein that it assists in the interpretative function (*Verstehen*) of determining the validity and reliability of human communication. It also "provides a radical democratic ground for social-political critique" (1987:273). In this thesis, the narrative paradigm additionally provides instruments to validate the interpretation of themes

through testing for fidelity and probability to establish compelling good reasons for accepting the narratives of the subjects under study.

Phenomenology: Refers to the way in which reality is investigated by virtue of its intended meaning, remembered acts, and the way in which it is projected. Founded by Edmund Husserl, the theory holds that “Phenomenology is a philosophy of experience. For phenomenology the ultimate source of all meaning and value is the lived experience of human beings” (Armstrong, 2005). The experiences that are reported by the narrators in *Zinky Boys* are provided as phenomenological in nature through their remembered acts and projections.

Public Moral Argument: Issues that are discussed in public through disputes and debates, often reflecting values and motivations of participants as a moral claim. King and Hyde (2012:X) refer to “situations that call for the production of discourse as a means for coming to terms with the matters at hand”. The term is used in this thesis to indicate the moral positions and messages that are communicated by the subjects under study.

Public Sphere: Habermas circumscribes the public sphere as a discursive space for reasoned communicative exchange that is based on informed and rational argument (Berning, 2011). The public sphere is of importance in this study as this is the arena in which the public moral argument is published.

Textual Analysis: A methodology used by researchers to understand the sense-making processes used by humans. It is often dependent upon cultural and subcultural contexts. Alan McKee (2001:147) states that textual analysis “is responsive to nuanced and complex way[s] in which interpretations of a text can be produced”. In this thesis the texts were analysed for the messages that they communicate inclusive of denotative and connotative meanings, and not for their syntactical structures.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Due to the complex nature of the texts contained in *Zinky Boys*, a singular interpretation would render a one-dimensional and simplistic reading of the text that will not do the work justice. As seen in section 1.1.4 where the key terms are defined, there is overlap in that the encounter with *Zinky Boys* is narrative, phenomenological, hermeneutic, and intertextual, covering a wide range of topics about violence, war, women and war, and ideology.

The research problem is situated in the memories and narrated responses of survivors and affected individuals of the Soviet-Afghanistan War that generate an intertextual narrative, or collection of (now) public memories, which presents the reader with value judgments clothed in a public moral argument, which needs to be clarified through a textual analysis.

1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

Because of the qualitative-interpretivist nature of this study, the design that I developed follows that of a theoretical-conceptual framework. I positioned the study in the *Interpretivist Turn* as a methodological approach, which grounded my theoretical praxis. Following Hjørland (1998:607), I used a broader approach than the traditional practice of basing a research approach on one dominant theory. The literature review, therefore, mirrors my philosophical views as reflected in the *Interpretivist Turn*.

In understanding phenomenological narratives, I believe it important to understand the ontological and situational bases from and in which they are experienced. As a result, the metatheoretical approach that I followed is composite, including ontology, as Fisher (1984) contends that the narrative paradigm is ontological in nature. However, these narratives do not occur in a vacuum, but are situated in the narrative paradigm and in social and public

spaces. Therefore, I anchored the study in the main tenets of the Narrative Paradigm (Fisher, 1984) and Public Sphere (Habermas, 1991), and narrowing the Public Sphere down to the Russian Public Sphere, as I interpret public spheres to be cultural spheres as well.

It became apparent that to properly understand the narratives contained in *Zinky Boys*, the conceptual framework had to be extended to include Giddens' concept of agency (originally conceived in 1984, but hereinafter referenced in 2010) and the *agentic state* advanced by Milgram (1974), as manifested in his Obedience to Authority Theory. This meta-theoretical basis offered a holistic canvas against which to interpret the socio-cultural experiences of ordinary people, who are using life-narratives in the public sphere to find meaning in authentic existentialist relations in society as proposed by Heidegger (1962).

1.3.1 The role of theory in the study

Jürgen Habermas' Theory of the Public Sphere and Walter Fisher's Narrative Paradigm grounds the study, and both serve as a composite theoretical perspective to delineate and focus the study. This perspective arises from the recognition of three principal research traditions, namely positivist, interpretivist and critical realism traditions. Within these traditions, it is the *Geisteswissenschaftliche (Verstehen)* [humanities and emphatic understanding of human behaviour] traditions that embrace interpretivism (Schwandt, 2000), as the purpose is to gain interpretive understanding, but in an objective manner. The hermeneutical tradition, however, agrees with the interpretative nature of interpretivism, which I study in the narrative turn, but it argues that objectivity cannot be achieved, as the act of understanding requires "engagement of one's biases" (Schwandt, 2000:195). Considering that reasoned action (discourse in the public sphere) and story-telling (in the narrative paradigm) are in essence subjective acts which cannot be value free, the study is positioned in the interpretive research tradition which draws on interpretivist assumptions. In this

way, the interpretative nature of hermeneutics assists in framing the narrative analysis and it is up to the reader to ensure that the complexity of the text is maintained (Bennett, 2008; Nethersole, 1982). This complexity of the text is maintained in the act of constructing knowledge, as Schwandt (2000:197) contends, “we do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, language, and so forth”. Thus the context (cultural and political categories alluded to by Denzin, 1997) of the discourse become key determiners in achieving the intertextual meaning of the narrative texts through their description and representation.

Firstly, Habermas’ Theory of the Public Sphere which emanated during his tenure in the Frankfurt School (a school of social theory and philosophy in literary theory), holds that in social life “private people come together as a public” (Habermas, 1991:27). Their purpose is to involve public authorities “in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor”.

In the modern era, the role of the mass media has become entwined with the very nature of the public sphere, removing the former delineation between the ‘private’ and the ‘public’. Susen (2011:51) argues that “the integrationist nature of the mass media transforms the public sphere into a functionalist appendage of political reformism.” It means, therefore, that the private voices of individuals as expressed in public, and especially mediated by some form of mass communication such as the press, become widely debated. The public sphere, says Chouliaraki (2008:686), is a place where “rational critical discourse” is elevated to in order to test the “validity claims of speech”.

The classical understanding of the public sphere holds that the public used reason in expressing its opposition to domination by the state. Habermas (1991) postulates that the ‘literary public sphere’ has developed from out of the family as a private institution, which discussed literature and art, as it became

more accessible through its mediatisation. Any form of publicity or propaganda by the state, for example, exerts an influence on the family as an 'authorised' opinion, which often enough is accompanied by visual and staged displays of power (here I am thinking of the Soviet military parades as a display of power). These publicity and propagandistic events then, become the subject matter for 'civic advocacy' (Rutherford, 2000) which acts like a virus that incapacitates the body politic.

Geuss (1981:58) postulates that "a critical theory has as its inherent aim to be the self-consciousness of a successful process of enlightenment and emancipation." It is this enlightened state that is achieved through the process of self-reflection, when the self-reflective acts of 'remembering' and 'narrating' bring to the fore a new consciousness, one that is critical of its former objectivity. That is why the study is situated in the interpretivist tradition (as indicated in Section 5.1 below), and draws on the teachings of the Frankfurt School, specifically the work of the theorist Jürgen Habermas.

Secondly, the Narrative Paradigm as proposed by Walter Fisher (1987) was used as a theoretical concept that enabled me to make the textual analyses. Fisher (1999:273) contends that the Narrative Paradigm applies to situations in the real world, which could be narrated as a story because the Narrative Paradigm implies "a theory of symbolic actions – words and/or deeds – that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them". As Morrow (2009:1) explains, "...everything we do is and can be laid out as a story." Narratives are therefore essentially subjective, but there is some agreement in narrative rationality (probability and fidelity), but ultimately the stories that we tell are exemplars of a selective reality or memories (Bartlett, 1932) which are influenced by numerous factors, one of them being the public sphere, as outlined earlier.

Texts written in the genre of narrative journalism are the logical choice of subject matter to investigate in the context of this study, given that the media play such an important role in framing debates and agenda setting (McCombs, 2002). In addition, a pertinent example that is drawn from the work of Fisher (1984) is the idea that reasoning is evidenced in symbolic action. In an exploration of fictional works of literature, Fisher demonstrates that some narrative texts reflect reasons to distrust the myth of the ideological worldview according to which we live. The application of Fisher's Narrative Paradigm to the narrative subject matter of this study mirrors the distrust by the public of Soviet ideology, as is alluded to by Behrends (2015b:722). It positions epiphany (Denzin, 2002:37) at the level of issue, rather than individual troubles.

Accepting that narrative journalism is subjective (Harbers and Broersma, 2014, Morton, 2016), it should be recognised that the Narrative Paradigm is also effective "as both a communicative technique and a persuasive tool" (Morrow, 2009:2). In this manner, Svetlana Alexievich writes as a narrative journalist about the encounters of combatants and non-combatants from their remembered first-person viewpoints. Their stories (remembered acts) are presented with detailed context and emotion, inclusive of their relations with others, allowing for a "thick description" (Denzin, 1989; Geertz 1973) to emerge. These texts that are thus constructed also carry changing cultural beliefs (Thwaites, T., Davis, L. and Mules, W. 2002:117) that are fed back into the community as mediated messages, necessitating the study of these texts against their Semiosphere (Lotman, 1990) and semiotic space, as plots constitute a literary space in narrative literature (Nöth, 2014).

1.3.2 Other theoretical influences

This section of the chapter briefly introduces other theoretical influences that I took cognisance of during the interpretation of the data. Among these, I recognise the influence of Michael Foucault (1986), whose lecture on utopias

and heterotopias contributes to the understanding of social spaces as cultural extensions of human activities. Foucault (1983) is also important for his introduction of the notion of *Parrheisiastes*, or 'truth speaking'. It is this notion that I attribute to the mothers of deceased Soviets in *Zinky Boys* who are presented as outspoken critics of the Soviet Union. Bourdieu (1985) introduces the notion of social space in comparison to geographic space to signify commonality of characteristics and influence of the powers that are operative in the habitus upon agents in that space, which further supports the labelling of Afghanistan as a *Gewaltraum*.

In interpreting the action of agents in an historical event, the theory of structuration proposed by Giddens (2010) helped to understand the causal powers of the Soviets under the stressful conditions of warfare, as well as the Cold War context. When the agency of the Soviets is considered, it is additionally understood in the context of Frankfurt's (1971) premise of 'free will' and 'effective desire' which helped understand the "agentic state" in which the Soviets found themselves (Milgram, 1974:51). Milgram's (1974) theory of Obedience to Authority contributes towards understanding the behaviour of patriotic Soviets in their obedience to the ideological desire of the Soviet Union as its agents.

Heidegger's (1962) concept of authentic existentialist relations in society is valuable in understanding how the personal difficulties experienced by the Soviets in reintegrating into Soviet society became an existentialist crises for them, as it challenged the authenticity of their patriotic relationship with the State. In addition, Gramsci's notion of the Subaltern (Louai, 2012) can be applied to shed light on how counter narratives and spheres integrate into the public sphere; particularly in this instance, where opposing voices to the Soviet State's ideology found their way into the public sphere.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1.4.1 Aim

The purpose of this textual analysis was to investigate the responses of survivors and affected individuals of the Soviet-Afghanistan war during the 1980s, which emerged from their remembered and narrated experiences. By so doing, I uncovered the public moral argument that was made by them, which emerged from the narratives told by the survivors and their immediate families. An understanding of this argument helped to shed light on how accounts of individual phenomenological narratives bring to the surface contrary views against the practice of upholding ideology through physical violence.

1.4.2 Objectives

- To document a contextualised overview of the Soviet involvement in the Soviet-Afghanistan War during the period 1979 to 1989 (cf. Chapters 2-3).
- To examine the value judgments made by the survivors in their narrations (cf. Chapters 6–8).
- To interpret the intertextual narrative generated through the stories told by survivors and the views that they hold (cf. Chapters 6-8).
- To explain the public moral argument in the case of the Soviet-Afghanistan war from the phenomenological viewpoint of the narrators (cf. Chapter 8).

The thought progression in setting the objectives is from the general to the specific. In conceptualising the study, it was planned to provide the context of

the war first, before engaging with the textual narrative of survivors. Through the interaction with the text, a new text or 'intertext' emerged that encapsulated a public moral argument, which, as anticipated, contrasted with the mediated view of the then Soviet Government about its involvement in Afghanistan.

The conceptual framework of the study is presented in Section 1.6 below which demonstrates the theoretical grounding of the study in Fisher's Narrative Paradigm and Habermas' Theory of the Public Sphere. The framing elements that position the study within the Interpretivist Turn are presented as central to the process of deriving an intertext and public moral argument through a textual analysis of the narratives of the subjects under study, thereby satisfying the objectives of the study. The conceptual framework is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology that was followed comprises a textual analysis of social artefacts or interviews that have been recorded as text in *ZINKY BOYS: Soviet Voices from Afghanistan*. Preference is given to the term 'textual analysis' as it is the counterpart of 'content analysis' (Boyle and Schmierbach, 2015; Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014; Maree, 2007; McKee, 2001). Both manifest and latent content were explored in order to gain an understanding of the characteristics of the text, which was unitised and themed using an emic (inductive) approach.

1.5.1 Research Design

As a qualitative study, the research is positioned in the interpretivist research tradition (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). The design draws on interpretivist traditions as it deals with historic events which are interpreted (remembered) by first-person respondents who narrate (engage in self-reflection) about

phenomena that they have personally experienced. Their responses are collated in a non-fictional work of literature written in a narrative journalism style, which exposes and critiques the actions and ideology of the former Soviet government, thereby having a transformative effect on society.

The narrative texts (words, views and memories) of the characters in the book were studied using an emic approach to allow codes to arise. Therefore, I used a constant comparative technique (Boyle and Schmierbach, 2015) of textual analysis as basis of the research activity. In studies of this nature a two-step approach stemming from the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) is typically used of first unitising the data and then categorising the units, which result in themes emerging from the study (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014, Boyle and Schmierbach, 2015). Therefore, unlike in content analysis, no *a-priori* themes were selected in the beginning of the study, but rather a thick description (c.f. Geertz, 1973; Ryle, 1949) resulted from my interaction with the text.

Regarding the positioning of the study in the narrative turn, which draws on interpretivist approaches, I state the following positions:

Epistemologically I do not see permanence in knowledge, but consider it as a construct that is clouded by my interpretation of these narrated events in their social and historical contexts. Thus, I take cognisance of the nature of qualitative research and its traditions of interpretivism, hermeneutics and social constructionism, which determined my methodological positioning. Therefore, from an ontological position I used a first-person 'I' perspective as researcher, as some of the realities of war that make up much of the substance of the texts have also been experienced by myself, albeit in a different setting. Sensitivity towards the meta-theoretical position of the Soviet subjects in the study is shown by attending to the Semiosphere (linguistic-turn from a communication studies perspective) within which their remembered phenomenological

experiences take place. Methodologically the research was started by generating a thematised reflection of existing knowledge about the history or context of the Soviet involvement in the war, which is well documented, from which point the texts as provided, and the intertext generated through analysis, triangulated the data. Finally, from an axiological position with acceptance of the presence of my bias, which prevents a value-free study, the values and value judgements of the narrators were taken into account.

1.5.2 Sampling

In working with textual analysis (Frey, Botan & Kreps, 1999), it is considered to be a method used by communication researchers to describe structure, content and messages in texts. To this end, all of the samples that were used in the textual analysis of this study were extracted directly from the text *Zinky Boys: Soviet Voices from the Afghanistan War*. As no *a-priori* themes have been selected, the sampling size could not be reduced to narratives of specific individuals. However, since the literature study has shown that the role of women in war is a distinguishing feature of Alexievich's writings, care was taken to include, among others, the narratives that emanate from the mothers and women who were interviewed.

1.5.3 Data Collection

The primary data collection for this study was already complete because the interviews that were held with the survivors of the Soviet-Afghanistan war were already transcribed into text, and published in an accessible format as a book. Therefore, I approached the data as secondary research data, keeping in mind that the data has resulted from the reconstituted memories of those who were interviewed, whilst at the same time probably affected by their cultural schemas (Bartlett, 1932). What was of importance for me was to read the text with

sensitivity within the context of the text, to ensure that appropriate selections were made and correctly interpreted.

1.5.4 Data analysis

In textual analysis there are four main approaches which may be used (Frey, Botan & Kreps, 1999). These are: rhetorical criticism, content analysis, interaction analysis, and performance studies. The data collection method that I used in this study is rooted in the rhetorical criticism approach, because this allowed me to study the relationships generated between text and context, how the text constructs reality for the audience, and what it suggests about the narrator. Therefore, the method used straddled both the Social Movement Studies approach and the Biographical Studies approach as it collected data for analysis from the narrated private texts of individuals who have helped to influence the historical development towards the disintegration of the Soviet Union (Frey *et al.* 1999).

The data coding categories were derived directly from the text as is done in conventional analysis, but using the constant comparative technique, and was filtered for narrative rationality (probability and fidelity) as proposed by Fisher (1987). This step was important considering the work of Bartlett (1932) in which he postulates the Theory of Remembering, pointing out that our memories are imaginative reconstructions of past events. From the various narratives that were analysed, an intertext emerged that highlights the perspectives held by individuals about the war, which then constituted the public moral argument as espoused by them.

1.5.5 Quality Criteria – Qualitative Rigour

The aspects of quality criteria that are discussed below, pertain to the qualitative research approach. While rigour has a traditional understanding in quantitative research practice, I understand it to be of equal importance in the qualitative sense, however, not quantifiably measurable, therefore I provide an outline of the qualitative rigour that I implemented in the study below.

1.5.5.1 Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is difficult to ensure from the perspective of the researcher. However, in the case of this research the methodology followed within the Narrative Paradigm assured that there is probability and fidelity within the narrated texts resulting in an intertext that was constructed from the analysis of the narrated texts, thereby ensuring credibility.

1.5.5.2 Transferability

The transferability of the results of the research undertaken in this qualitative research tradition could be tested by replicating the research methodology on Soviet involvement in another context of war, say for example, the Soviet involvement in Angola during the same time period, that is, the 1980s (cf. Chapter 9.4). Whilst there is universal suffering in war across cultures and nations at the individual level, the Soviet ideological context would prevent the successful transferability of the findings to other non-Soviet wars, as war is also a cultural experience.

1.5.5.3 Dependability

The dependability of the research was not measured in the quantitative sense, but rather achieved, as stated in this chapter, through testing for probability and

fidelity as used within the context of the Narrative Paradigm. The notable focal point here was that I needed to be sensitive to describing the changes in the setting, and evaluate whether or not it affected how I approached the study.

1.5.5.4 Conformability

Conformability was achieved by documenting the processes that I followed in checking and rechecking the data during the data selection and analysis phases. Further, now that the study is completed, a data audit could be implemented to ensure that the procedures followed in collecting and handling data acknowledge the likelihood of data misrepresentation or bias.

1.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework depicted below and further discussed in Chapter 4, illustrates how the theoretical elements of Fisher's Narrative Paradigm and Habermas' Theory of the Public Sphere ground the study theoretically. The interpretative framing elements that are positioned in the Interpretivist Turn frame the influence of a number of established theoretical positionings that impacted my interpretive agency. Finally, the pursuit of the research objectives results in the establishment of an intertext which is the source of the public moral argument that is derived from *Zinky Boys*.

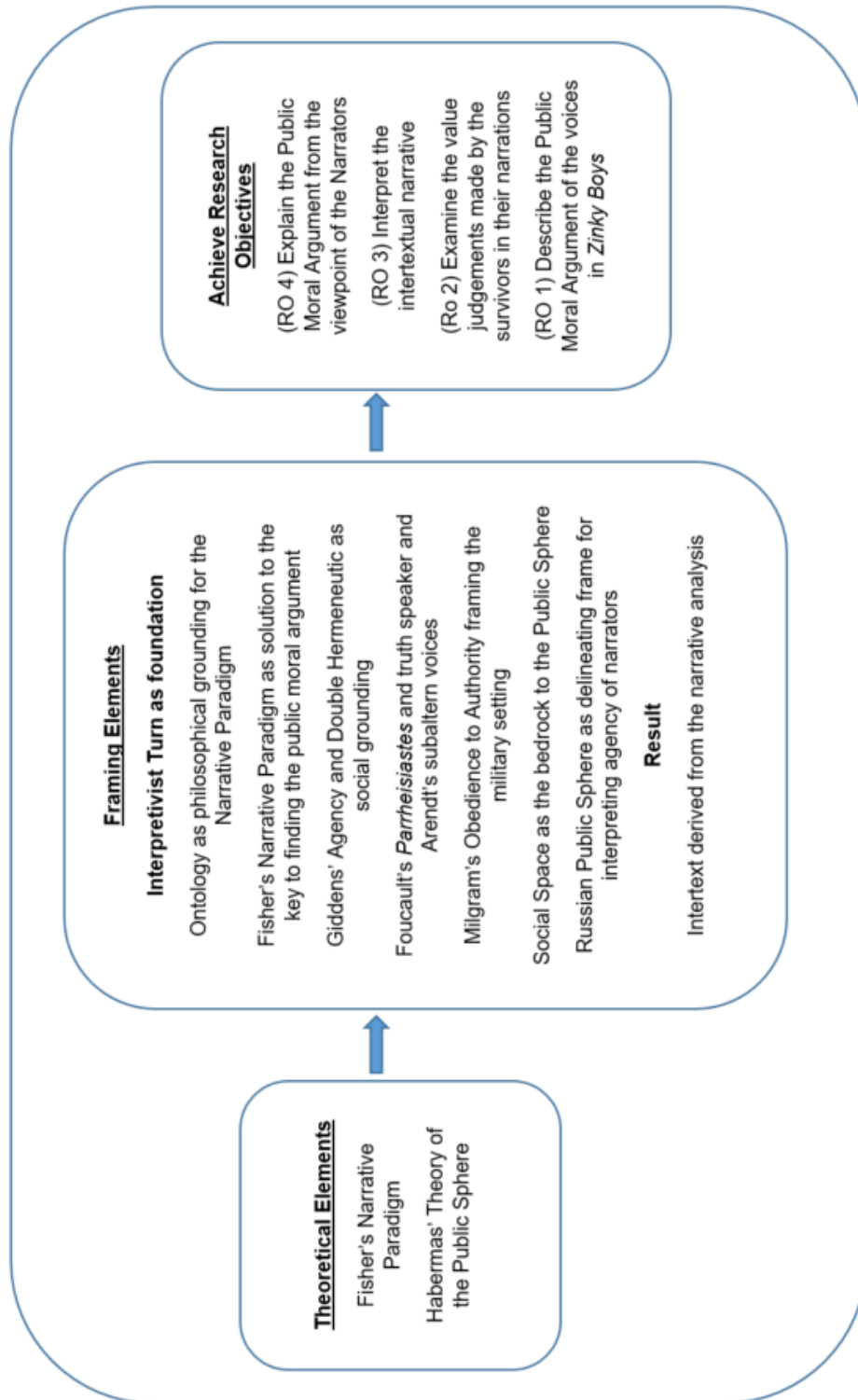


Figure 1.2 Conceptual framework for the study

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

When one works with a published textual analysis from an ethical perspective, there is no direct involvement with any interviewees. Therefore, no permissions need be sought from the interviewees whose transcribed and published narratives are bound in a published book form in the public sphere. However, in compliance with good research and institutional practice, this proposal underwent ethical scrutiny by the University of Limpopo's ethical body and permission was granted to conduct the research (see Appendix A).

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The significance of the study lies therein that it contributes to the body of research that is available on the work of Svetlana Alexievich, which at present is limited outside of the former Soviet Union, due to the fact that most of her work is published in Russian, with only a few scholars publishing in English on her work. The translations of her work into the English language has extended her audience of readers and researchers with more scholarly works, such as this one, contributing to the establishment of a corpus of articles and publications on her writing in general, and in particular on *Zinky Boys*.

Further, when this research was still at the conceptual phase, only one article entitled "Some call us heroes, others call us killers. Experiencing violent spaces: Soviet soldiers in the Afghan War" by JC Behrends (2015b) was published in 2015, which directly quoted Alexievich's publication *Zinky Boys*, although there are other sources on the Soviet-Afghan War, as discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Using memories of and interviews with Soviet soldiers, the article discusses their experience of combat and physical violence during the Soviet War in Afghanistan (1979–1989). The focus of the article is on physical violence, reprisal and revenge motives. Behrends (2015b) does use citations from Alexievich's, but does not document in detail the lived experiences of

mothers of conscripts and Soviet support personnel as extensively, as is done in the case of Alexievich's publication. Behrends (2015b) draws information from several other researchers who comment on the Soviet experience of the war. What sets Alexievich's writing apart is that she brings focus to the role of women, and especially mothers of combatants and how they deal with their emotions. Further, the work of Alexievich allows individuals to narrate their emotional involvement not only with acts of war, but also in relation to their political, economic and filial relations, and inner-self. It is in this aspect that the study contributes meaningfully to our understanding of societies that have been affected by war.

The significance of the study is positioned in its contribution as identifier of the public moral argument of the Soviet conscripts who found themselves victimised by the both the Soviet State and citizenry. In describing the public moral argument, the role of the Soviet media in promoting a campaign of disinformation and conspiracy of silence about the War in Afghanistan emerged as one of the main findings it reveals. The deception of the Soviet Union government as causal agent in generating disillusion among the general public and veterans, to the extent that the ideal of socialist ideology was no longer a venerable cause to pursue for some of these veterans, and members of the general public. The outward focus of the Soviet Union towards the international arena resulted in it behaving as an agent of institutional violence against the veterans and mothers of deceased combatants, which is a second important finding that emerges from this study. Thirdly, at the existentialist level, the individuals who have participated in the war underwent a process of self-mortification and total institutionalism in adapting to military life and the *Gewaltraum* of Afghanistan, and were driven by hatred, anger and revenge motives. Upon their return, they were faced with a new challenge to again transform to be compatible in meeting everyday requirements of Soviet life. The fourth finding is that the ideal of socialist ideology was no longer a venerable cause to pursue for some of these veterans, and members of the general

public. Collectively, these findings indicate that the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s was most likely hastened by the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, which through its deception of its citizens, contributed to the disillusionment of Soviets in the ideal of the Soviet Union.

I conclude this chapter by quoting Alexievich during her banquet speech on the occasion of the acceptance of the Nobel Literature Prize in 2015, where she is quoting from an interview she had with an exiled woman to whom she refers in her book *Second-Hand Time*:

The past would not release her from its predatory embrace. She had been taught to believe. The little girl, from whom Stalin once took everything, still lived inside her, and she still believed. In what did she believe?

This quote is particularly applicable to the narratives of *Zinky Boys*, which on the topic of remembered experiences describes the *predatory embrace* of the past, not in a faceless manner, but in that of a recognisable demon. As Alexievich says, *[s]he had been taught to believe*. Similarly, such is the case where individual narratives are representative of everyman's story in *Zinky Boys*.

In continuation, Alexievich indicates they had been taught to believe in the Soviet Socialist ideal. With a Stalinist identity superimposed over their existentialist selves through using various modes of indoctrination, the faces and personal struggles of individual and identifiable human beings who may be everyman, or everywoman, emerge with this one aching and startling question, *in what do I believe?* In as much as *Zinky Boys* describes the predatory past, it also is the story of a struggle for personal and Soviet identity.

1.9 CHAPTER DEMARCATION

Chapter 2 has as its purpose the provision of essential background information on Afghanistan. The discussion positions Afghanistan as a key geographical area of contention between East and West in the Cold War political arena. The transition from a monarchy to party-political leadership is discussed together with a presentation of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, which essentially had a Marxist ideological underpinning. These factors in combination set the scene for the ensuing conflict.

Chapter 3 presents a survey of relevant literature on the Soviet-Afghan War. This survey is of importance as it presents a thematised presentation of publications about the Soviet war in Afghanistan that lasted from 1979 – 1989. The purpose of the chapter is to provide a validated frame of reference against which I evaluated the narratives selected for analysis. The inclusion of this chapter in the study occurs in alignment with the research problem, which was to uncover the public moral argument of the narrators in *Zinky Boys*, and to measure it against an appropriate understanding of the period and context from which it emerged.

Chapter 4 posits the conceptual-theoretical framework in the Narrative Turn. From an interpretive viewpoint, the chapter is important as it describes the main tenets that influenced the analysis of the data. In this regard, the interpretation of phenomenological aspects in the text have ontological features, as Fisher (1984) contends that the narrative paradigm is ontological in nature. Further, the narratives under study have been published as a work of non-fiction in the public sphere; hence, Habermas' Theory of the Public Sphere bears relevance, inclusive of social spaces and the Russian (Soviet) Public Sphere. Finally, the agentic nature of the Soviet limited contingent also bears relevance. Therefore, a metatheoretical approach was used in the conceptual-theoretical framework.

Chapter 5 examines the research methodology that was employed in the study. As the primary task at hand was to conduct a textual analysis, an interpretivist, qualitative approach was followed, based on supporting research that indicate the suitability of qualitative approaches to conducting textual analysis (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 1999; Hawkins, 2018; Mckee, 2003).

Chapter 6 is the first of three data analysis chapters, which discourses an emic-thematic question of the experience of violence in Afghanistan. As a violent space, it impacted on ideological positioning and ontological considerations that bear reference on the public moral argument. This theme is presented using sub themes to explore life in Afghanistan, violent expressions during the conflict, the horror of war, and the emotional strain experienced by forces and their families.

Chapter 7 analyses and discusses Soviet agency in Afghanistan as well as the portrayal of Soviet women and veterans as victims of the war. The main agentic behaviours are sub themed under the topics of *Dedovshchina* (hazing), alcohol and drug dependency, corruption and bribery, women for money, and hatred and anger. A sub theme on mothers as victims and another on veterans as victims complete the third theme.

Chapter 8 presents the last theme, namely, Afghanistan in the public sphere. Sub themes on the topics of media coverage, sense of duty and patriotism, as well as shattered ideology and futility, complete the themes that emerged during the data analysis. Finally, the public moral argument and the location of the epiphany are presented in the same chapter.

Chapter 9 presents the summary and interpretation of the research findings. The research limitations and implications for future research are detailed, following on the conclusions drawn from the data analysis.

CHAPTER 2: AFGHANISTAN: A BACKGROUND

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide supplementary background in documenting a contextualised overview of the Soviet involvement in the Soviet-Afghanistan War during the period 1979 to 1989. This chapter is dedicated to describing the importance of Afghanistan in the context of the study. This description fulfils a twofold function. Firstly, it provides a temporal map for the Soviet-Afghan War, positioning it in the terminal phase of the Cold War. Secondly by discussing the demographics, topography, economic, and political state of affairs in Afghanistan, I help the reader to frame a plausible interpretation of the War and the hardships that were endured by its citizens and the Soviets who occupied the land during 1978 and 1989. This is a necessary step as the context of the discourse is made up of both political and cultural categories, as alluded to by Denzin (1997). It is important to ensure that sufficient knowledge about Afghanistan and the Soviets are in place, as well as their different ideological perspectives in order to understand the messages communicated through the phenomenological narratives captured in *Zinky Boys*. These ideological perspectives form the seat of the messages that are communicated, as illustrated in this chapter. I begin by discussing the position of Afghanistan in the context of the Cold War that was raging between the Soviet Union and western countries that allied themselves to an opposing stance against Soviet communism during the period following World War II (1945) up to 1991.

I do so by firstly discussing the origin of the concept of the Cold War. Secondly, in the section on the strategic importance of Afghanistan, I discuss the economic and political climate at the time immediately prior to the Soviet-Afghanistan War to prepare the canvas for the textual analysis that is to follow in later chapters. Turning towards the political situation, I then discuss the

decline of the monarchy of Afghanistan and advance the reasons supplied by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan for involving themselves in the political coup against the Afghan government. The chapter concludes with a short look at the casualties of the Soviet-Afghan War.

2.2 AFGHANISTAN: A COLD WAR GEOPOLITICAL KINGPIN

In this section of the chapter, my purpose is to first highlight the political context of the Cold War during the late 1970s to the early 1990s as this period encapsulates the decade of Soviet-Afghanistan conflict that lasted from late 1979 to early 1989. The political contextualisation is further of importance as "situating or locating an interpretation" (Denzin, 2001:85) is an important step before interpreting and understanding the focus of this study, namely the Soviet-Afghan War of the 1980s. This action will provide a temporal map, which will enable me to contextualise and interpret the action that is described within the time-period encapsulated in the text under scrutiny, *Zinky Boys* (Alexievich, 1992). The political contextualisation is important, not only for the temporal map that it provides, but also because it further contributes toward understanding the agency of individuals in their social structures, as proposed by Giddens in his theory of structuration (Giddens, 2010).

Since the subject matter of this study comprises an historical event, I specifically endeavour to understand agency in the context of the social system and the resulting consequences of those actions, as Giddens (2010:14) purports "...to be an agent is to be able to deploy (chronically, in the flow of daily life) a range of causal powers, including that of influencing those deployed by others". These notions are further expounded in the theoretical framework of chapter 4 of this thesis, but in anticipation thereof, I would add from my own experience that Giddens' theory of structuration is well suited to understanding human behaviour under such stressful conditions as warfare. Giddens (2010:xxiv) draws our attention to the fact that individuals are not only

positioned in their own life, but also “in the duration of ‘institutional time’, the ‘supra-individual’ structuration of social institutions”. Here I am thinking of the Cold War as a context of social interaction that influences and determines the behaviour of agents, or nations.

2.2.1 The Cold War

The ‘Cold War’ is the term that is used to refer to the polarised ideological positioning between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and democratic western countries (the West, such as United States of America, Canada, Britain, France, and Germany) in the rest of the world. It is important to note the relevance of the Cold War in the context of the Soviet-Afghanistan War in general, and in particular, to the text of *Zinky Boys* (Alexievich, 1992), as the Cold War provides motive for involvement by the Soviets in the War. The origin of the term is ascribed to the renowned writer George Orwell (Eric Arthur Blair), who wrote a critical essay entitled ‘You and the Atomic Bomb’, which was published by the London-based *Tribune* on 19 October 1945. In it, he says:

James Burnham's theory has been much discussed, but few people have yet considered its ideological implications — that is, the kind of world-view, the kind of beliefs, and the social structure that would probably prevail in a state which was at once unconquerable and in a permanent state of ‘cold war’ with its neighbours (Orwell, 1945).

However, the popularity of the term in the context of the ideological and the geopolitical communist-capitalist opposition more frequently associated with it, probably stems from Bernard Baruch’s 1947 use of it in his speech to the South Carolina Legislature, Columbia, SC in which he states:

Let us not be deceived — we are today in the midst of a cold war. Our enemies are to be found abroad and at home. Let us never forget this: Our unrest is the heart of their success. The peace of

the world is the hope and the goal of our political system; it is the despair and defeat of those who stand against us (Baruch, 1947).

Orwell's vision of a state of cold war resulting from differing ideological world-views held true for a period spanning 46 years from 1945-1991 until the dissolution of the USSR following the resolution of the *Soviet of the Republics of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR* with Declaration no. 142-N. In terms of the declaration, the USSR ceased to exist on 26 December 1991 and was replaced by a federation of states (Geopol Intelligence, 2016) which spelt the end of the Cold War. The US Department of State (2009) indicates that the former members of the USSR, with the exception of Georgia and the Baltic States, joined to form the Commonwealth of Independent States.

For the purpose of this study, the military conflict or Soviet-Afghanistan War that raged from 1979 to 1989, is interpreted within the context of the Cold War that was, at the time, still raging. It is of particular importance to note that support through the provision of arms and money were made available by several western countries, counting the United States of America, Iran, Saudi Arabia, China and Pakistan (BBC News, 2009), in effect, opposing the spread of communism. This action underscored the philosophy of the West that there was a very real danger of a domino effect, that should one country succumb to communism, its neighbours would soon follow, thereby creating Soviet domination in the world. Interestingly, the presence of China in opposition to the USSR is explained by the fact that the Chinese were, at that time, in opposition to the Russian interpretation of communism (Starr, 2004), although they are at heart, today, a communist state as well. This fact is noteworthy because the expectation would be to the contrary, that a communist state would not oppose another communist state in expanding communist ideology in the world.

2.2.2 The Strategic Importance of Afghanistan in the Cold War

In this section of the chapter, I will first provide geographic and demographic information on Afghanistan, followed by sections on the economic and political importance of Afghanistan to both the West and the East as this information helps the reader to contextualise the social structure that informs the agency in the text, *Zinky Boys* (Alexievich, 1992).

Afghanistan is a landlocked, arid country that is mostly located in mountainous terrain (Briney, 2016; Szczepanski, 2016) and bordered by a total of six countries. It is bordered in the north by three countries, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, which are former republics of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Its two largest borders are with Iran in the West and Pakistan in the East. These two countries also border one another South of Afghanistan. Its smallest border is with China in the North-East between Tajikistan and Pakistan.

Afghanistan is of strategic importance to the geopolitical world of the Cold War because it is the crucible in which East meets West. The communist northern borders of the country and the Pakistani and Iranian borders to the east and west of Afghanistan represent ideologies about economic and political systems that are diverse in nature.

The map presented in Figure 2.1 shows the location of Afghanistan clearly, together with the neighbouring states that were identified in the previous paragraphs.



http://www.worldatlas.com/img/areamap/continent/middle_east_map.gif

Figure 2.1 Middle East Map

2.2.3 The population of Afghanistan

It is necessary to mention some aspects of the Afghan population in order to better understand the context of the Soviet-Afghan War and the actions of the Soviets who were interviewed by Alexievich. According to Index Mundi (2015), a data portal that gathers statistics and facts on population totals in countries all over the world, the population of Afghanistan at the time of the outbreak of the conflict in 1979 numbered 13,283,280 individuals. This number varies slightly from the number provided by the City Population Website (www.citypopulation.de) which pegs it at 13,086,630, but it is a variance of some 200,000 individuals, which is insignificant in the context of the conflict that was investigated. In the ensuing war, this number declined to a lower number of

11,337,930 in 1987, and went up slightly towards the end of the war to 11,608,350 in 1989, a variance of close on two million people. Of significance is the fact that wars bring a displacement of people due to those seeking refugee status in safer, neighbouring countries, which would account for the variance in population statistics. The larger cities draw concentrations of peoples who feel that there is safety in numbers. In the text of *Zinky Boys* (Alexievich, 1992), the importance of Kabul as the headquarters of the Soviet presence in the country is prominent.

Notably, the largest city is Kabul with a population census of over a million at 1,373,572, followed by Herat in the east at three quarters of a million, 793,198, adjacent to Iran. Herat was the flashpoint of the 1979 protests according to Gammell (2015), who sees in it an uprising against President Taraki and the Khalqis, and the start of an Islamic *jihad*. “During the years of jihad, Herat experienced the very worst of the war. Incident reporting from 1985 and 1986 show Herat as suffering the highest casualty rates, on all sides, and the highest incident count of any province in the country” (Gammell, 2015).

Obtaining accurate statistics on Afghanistan and its citizens is a difficult task as the country has been war-torn since 1979 when it had last conducted a national census. However, GlobalSecurity.Org (2012) and National Geographic (2004) concur that the overwhelming majority of its citizens practise the Muslim faith. In fact, its commonality in practising the Muslim faith was used in the early 1980s, according to Global Security.Org (2012), as an appeal to unite against the Soviet Union, calling upon believers to unite in waging a *jihad* (holy war). I believe that the precursor of this call is seen in the Herat uprising of 1979, as is evidenced earlier in this chapter. As such, the Muslim faith proved to be an unexpectedly successful motivator for unity against the Soviet Union’s attempts to acculturate the Afghanistan population to communism.

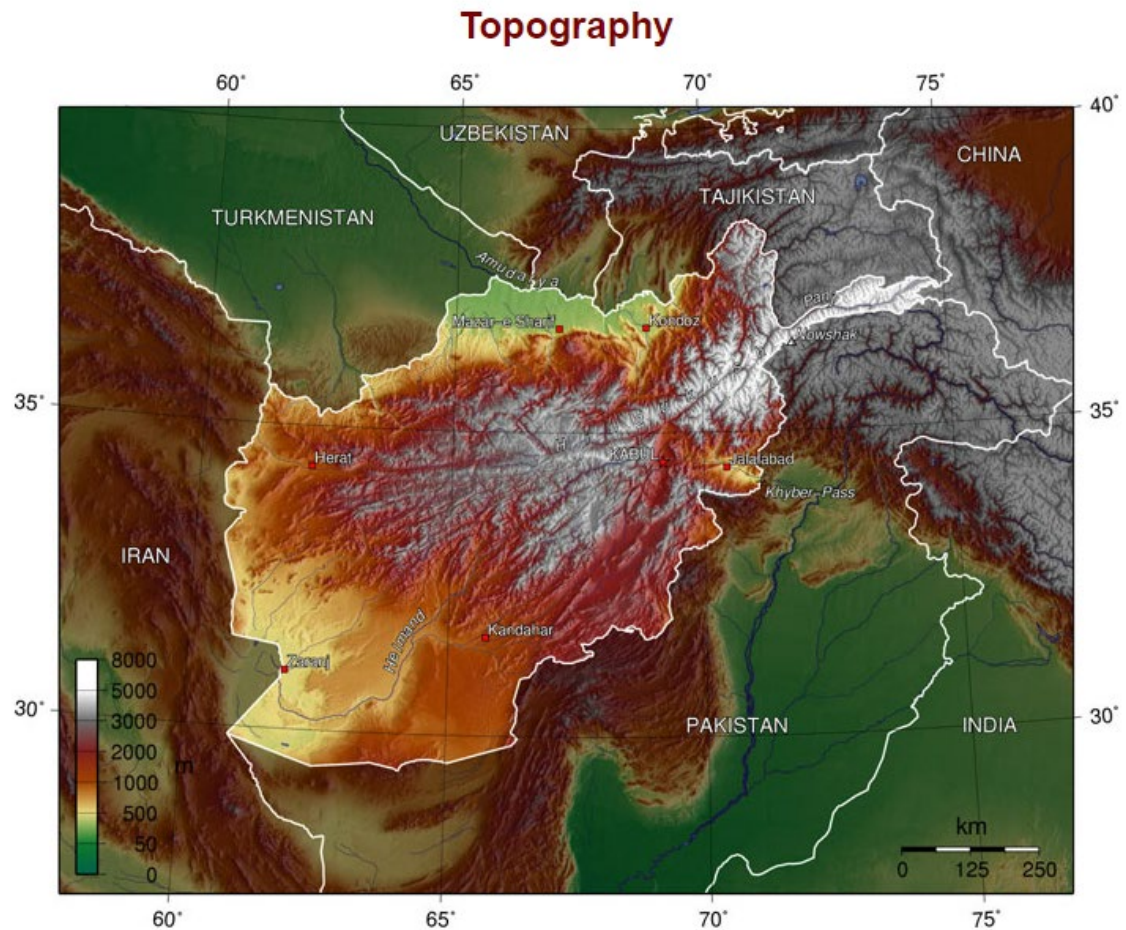
The ethnic diversity that is found in Afghanistan is due to its positioning in the Middle East and its historical importance as an access route between Asia, Africa and Europe. National Geographic (2004) cites peaceful migrations and invading armies as contributors to the current diverse ethnicity to be found in Afghanistan. The population comprises a number of ethnic minorities such as the Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara and Uzbek groupings who are separated by the topography of the country as the Hindu Kush range of mountains divides Afghanistan into a northern part comprising plains and valleys which are home to the Uzbeks and Tajiks.

The central highlands are occupied by the Hazara and the southern plateaus are occupied by Pashtuns, which is a majority group. Traditionally, the Pashtun's belong to the Sunni Muslim grouping, while the Hazara are Shiite Muslims (National Geographic, 2008). Pashtuns in general do not regard Hazaras to be true Afghan inhabitants. Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan is situated south-east of the Hindu Kush Mountains. The topography map below, Figure 2.2, clearly shows the presence of the Hindu Kush Mountains, which is causing the dispersal of the peoples of Afghanistan.

As is the case with any war, one has to attend to the composition of the inhabitants of the country and its geography to better visualise the movement of troops and the battles that were fought, as well as the terrain that influences their tactical decisions and behaviour. The information supplied in this section will fulfil this role in helping the reader understand the conditions, terrain and involvement of people in the Soviet-Afghan War.

In Kabul, the winter months stretch from late October to March during which the city frequently experiences sub-zero temperatures and snow, whilst the summer months could be quite warm reaching highs in the range of 32 degrees Celsius. The city of Kandahar which is situated in the south of Afghanistan in the desert region, for example, reaches temperatures of 40 degrees Celsius in the summer

for almost two months continuously (June and July) whilst it seldom drops to below zero.



<https://www.afghan-web.com/geography/>

Figure 2.2 Topography of Afghanistan

Having provided a brief summary of Afghanistan, its peoples and climate, I will now attend to the description of the Afghan economy. This description is important in the context of the study as economical motivators often provide the stimulus for action by governments in conflict situations.

2.2.4 The economy of Afghanistan during the late 1970s and early 1980s

It is important to understand the economy of Afghanistan as it was a contributing factor that led to its dependence on foreign aid, mainly from the USSR, but also from the US, as can be seen in the discussion that follows. The text of *Zinky Boys* (Alexievich, 1992) frequently covers economic issues that are of relevance to soldiers in the country, and from the historic attempts at economic reform, we learn that it is an important contributor to the conflict in Afghanistan. Research of available literature on the economy of Afghanistan during the late 1970s and early 1980s suggests that Afghanistan was largely dependent upon foreign aid, which was not a very stable source of income (Maley, 2010; Neale, 2008; and Noorzoy, 1985). Maley (2010) contends that Afghanistan was dependent upon unstable revenue due to the fact that as early as 1964 it relied on foreign aid to cover 49% of its state expenses. For the balance of its income, it relied on selling natural resources (natural gas and copper) which are not renewable, and collecting land taxes. This placed the country in a precarious position as it was subject to fluctuating global prices on its natural commodities and the priorities of donor countries, thereby creating a dependency on unstable revenue sources.

Neale (2008) posits that up to two-thirds of the income of Afghanistan was supplied by the Soviet Union and the United States. The World Bank (2016) reflects a GDP per Capita of US\$278.391 in 1989 for Afghanistan. Available income was mostly spent in the education sector and on civil service and the military. This resulted in about 20,000 educated individuals in a population of 15,000,000 in 1978. With such a small elite in the country, the majority of the educated individuals had an impoverished background, often being the first in their family to earn a degree. Their families having been suppressed by the Khans (tribal leaders) in the past, these individuals often carried a hatred of the Khans and the government. Neale (2008) is of the opinion that these individuals longed to modernise Afghanistan in order to reform it from its impoverished

state. However, corruption was rife, with doctors in the medical sector often stealing medicines to be sold in the bazaar. Neale relates an incident where nurses had to be bribed to provide patients with the food that the government health services provided as part of its hospitalisation.

The Afghan economy during the late 1970s and early 1980s is further characterised by a shift in focus from trading with the free world to trading with the Soviet Union (Noorzoy, 1985). Whereas in the previous two decades the proportion stood at 37% of exports it jumped to 64% in 1978/79, climaxing at 68% in 1981/82. The chief commodity that was exported in the early 1980s which contributed largely to this increase, is natural gas. Previously, until 1979, up to a third of Afghanistan's export was made up of exports in fruit and nuts (Noorzoy, 1985).

This trend of trading with the Soviet Union was caused by the Soviet economic approach to bilateral trade, which was based, according to Noorzoy (1985) on a barter system in exchange for Soviet economic assistance. This had three primary objectives. Firstly, the objective was to ensure that the Afghanistan population were aware of Soviet involvement and support through the construction of bakeries, silos, and the paving of roads. Secondly, the Soviets ensured that they maximised economic gain in transactions, for example, acquiring natural gas at well-below global prices. Thirdly, attempts were made to integrate the Afghan economy with the Soviet economy as is evidenced by efforts to develop resources for export such as natural gas and copper, with the Soviet Union being the main beneficiary. These efforts should not be read in isolation, but as part of the Soviet greater plan to minimize the influence of the United States in Afghanistan and to position the Soviet Union as a positive benefactor to the inhabitants of Afghanistan.

An aspect of Afghanistan's export that I have not mentioned to date, is its production of opium. The opium production and trade in Afghanistan is a key area of involvement by outside forces, notably the US, which used the money

obtained through drugs to fund the supply of arms to the resistance (McCoy, 1997). In 1994, some five years after the Soviet-Afghan War, opium production was already at 71,000 hectares of cultivated poppy fields according to the Afghanistan Opium Survey 2014 published by the Ministry of Counter Narcotics of Afghanistan. A recent publication by *World Knowing* (2016) positions Afghanistan as the world's largest producer of opium with 223,500 hectares under cultivation.

In an excerpt from Alfred McCoy's 1997 publication entitled *Drug Fallout: the CIA's Forty Year Complicity in the Narcotics Trade*, he states:

In 1979, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan and the Sandinista revolution seized Nicaragua, prompting two CIA covert operations with some revealing similarities. During the 1980s, while the Soviets occupied Afghanistan, the CIA, working through Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence, spent some \$2 billion to support the Afghan resistance. When the operation started in 1979, this region grew opium only for regional markets and produced no heroin. Within two years, however, the Pakistan-Afghanistan borderlands became the world's top heroin producer, supplying 60 percent of U.S. demand. In Pakistan, the heroin-addict population went from near zero in 1979 to 5,000 in 1981 and to 1.2 million by 1985—a much steeper rise than in any other nation. CIA assets again controlled this heroin trade (McCoy, 1997: Excerpt).

This viewpoint is corroborated by Chossudovsky (2005), who states “The Afghan narcotics economy was a carefully designed project of the CIA, supported by US foreign policy”. The net effect of this development is that it provided an important resource in funding the war effort and paved the way for later development of opium production in the post-Soviet-Afghan conflict.

2.2.5 The political importance of Afghanistan to the West

Afghanistan's importance to the West and especially its position in western political thinking no doubt stems from its history of conflict with the British Empire in the late 19th Century and early 20th Century. No less than three major wars were fought against British colonial rule in the years 1839-1842; 1878-1880 and during 1919 after which the British withdrew (Byrd, 2012).

The British thinking at the time was to delineate a geographical position on the map that would mark the limits of the influence of Tsarist Russia and similarly indicate the limit of the British Empire (Emadi, 1990), with the mountainous Afghanistan acting as a bulwark or 'buffer' (Byrd, 2012:3) between the two empires. Taken in this context it is clear that there were fears in the West of a southward expansion of the Russian Empire towards the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea, and ultimately the Indian Ocean.

However, when the British finally withdrew from Afghanistan in 1919 the Afghan monarchy was faced with the challenge of rebuilding itself. It was in this post-war period with Britain, that the King, Amanollah Kahn (monarch 1919-1929), who had himself travelled extensively in Europe, realised the need for Afghanistan to develop to keep pace with the rest of the world (Emadi, 1990). He appealed to the developed world for aid and received assistance from both the West and the East. From America, Afghanistan received a loan of \$20million in 1945 which was increased to \$51.75million in 1954 (Emadi, 1990), initially for the construction of the Kandahar-Herat highway in 1945. Similarly, financial aid of an amount of \$20million was made available for agricultural assistance by the Morrison-Knudsen Company in the United States.

The United States as one of the leading states in the West had first shown its diplomatic interest in Afghanistan as early as in 1934, with the recognition of Afghanistan's independence and it setting up an embassy in the capital city of

Kabul (Harvey, 2003). The United States' Office of the Historian cites an earlier date of recognition, that of 9 August 1919, following notification by Britain that Afghanistan had achieved independence (Office of the Historian, s.a.a). It puts the date of diplomatic relations a year later than Harvey's date, at 4 May 1935 when William H. Hornibrook presented his credentials to the Afghan government. However that may be, the important factors to focus on, are that Afghanistan had achieved independence by 1919 and had established diplomatic relations with the United States of America by 1935. Unfortunately, this diplomatic relationship was dealt a blow by the abduction and assassination of Adolph Dubs, the American ambassador in Kabul on 14 February 1979. Following his death, the U.S. maintained relations through a proxy position with a *Chargé d'Affaires ad interim* in place until closure of the embassy on 30 January 1989 (Office of the Historian, s.a.a). Garthoff (1985) contends that the economic aid that was provided by the USA was reduced following ambassador Dubs' assassination.

It is not only on the economic and financial fronts that the Afghan process of reformation encountered heavy seas in later years; it also encountered early resistance from internal sources. Byrd (2012:3) indicates that Afghanistan's reform process during the reign of King Amanullah was a "major but aborted reform process". Some of the reforms went against established traditions, for example Afghan dress codes. King Amanullah permitted women in Kabul to appear in public unveiled and promoted the wearing of western style dress among officials. It is this aspect of culture, namely empowering Afghan women (Powell, 2010) which proved difficult for the hard-line traditionalists to accept and fuelled resistance to social and political reform efforts.

Although the country maintained neutrality during World War II, its geopolitical importance during the Cold War is indicated by the assistance programmes provided by both the United States and the Soviet Union. These programmes

resulted in a slow process of modernisation in the three decades preceding the Soviet-Afghanistan war.

Noorzoy (1985) stresses the importance of the Cold War as an agent during the development of political relations between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union on the one hand, and America on the other. From the perspective of the United States, the focus was to contain the expansionist tendency of the Soviets post-World War II, and from the Soviet Union's side the focus was to counter and lessen the U.S. influence in lesser developed countries, such as Afghanistan.

2.2.6 The political importance of Afghanistan to the East

From the above discussions, Afghanistan was clearly of importance not only to the West, but also to the East, especially the Soviet Union. Noorzoy (1985) refers to two periods of Soviet involvement that may be demarcated as spanning from 1917-1928/29 and 1930-1954. The first period begins shortly before the Second Anglo-Afghanistan War of 1919 and is characterised by international trade and the establishment of protocol between Russia and Afghanistan. However, the second period of 1930-1954 is characterised by a marked absence of the collaboration that had epitomised the previous period. It is the next period spanning from 1955-1978 which is of importance to understand the context of the Soviet-Afghanistan War.

During this period the Soviet Union aided several countries, counting Egypt, India and Afghanistan as the top three ranking countries to receive aid (Noorzoy, 1983), with Afghanistan receiving as much as \$570 billion in assistance. Cooley (1999) estimates that by 1973 the Soviet Union accounted for the most financial assistance (close to \$1billion), while Cooper and Fogarty (1985) put the economic credits and grants alone at \$1.265billion by the end of the period 1954-1978. This made the Soviet Union the most heavily invested

patron country in the reconstruction of Afghanistan prior to the Soviet-Afghanistan War.

2.2.7 The end of the Afghanistan Monarchy

The relative peace that was enjoyed during the reign of King Zahir Shah (1933-1973) was disturbed by the 1973 *coup d'état* (coup) executed on 17 July 1973 under the leadership of the king's cousin, Mohammad Daoud, following a period of increasing instability and a devastating drought in 1972 (Neale, 2008). Following the coup, Daoud declared himself President of the Islamic Socialist Republic of Afghanistan. At this stage, according to Snegirev and Samunin (2012), the coup very likely occurred as an internal arrangement between Mohammad Daoud (a close relative of the king) and King Zahir Shah, who had lost his hold over the country due to his inability to control the increasingly militant Muslims and elements within the Afghan army, which were determined to change the political regime in the country.

It was during Daoud's term as President that several reforms were announced to ensure progress along socio-economic lines and democracy. Land reforms that enabled peasants to own the land that they tilled and the abolishment of ethnic and social inequalities are but two of the examples. An important development that is mentioned by Snegirev and Samunin (2012) is that Daoud was determined to act decisively by suppressing Islamic fundamentalists who committed acts of terrorism and were organising armed resistance in several areas in Afghanistan. Young women who were walking around Kabul dressed in skirts or who went about with their faces unveiled were targeted by these Muslim fundamentalists and had acid sprayed into their faces (Williams, 2012).

During the period immediately following the coup, Daoud enjoyed support from the communists as he aligned his foreign policy towards the Soviet Union for the first few years of his rule. It was widely believed by the Kremlin that "... if the

country could acquire a socialist orientation, it would suit the objective of the USSR to keep Soviet–Afghan relations at a high level” (Sarin and Dvoretzky, 1993:35).

The United States Office of the Historian (s.a.b.) reports that the political factions that were involved in the coup were in favour of Soviet military and political involvement in Afghanistan. Coupled with the Marxist ideological underpinning of the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) which was established in 1965, there was loyalty to Moscow among those individuals involved in staging the coup. This, in spite of the fact that “Daoud himself was more nationalist than socialist” (United States’ Office of the Historian, s.a.b.). The nationalist character could be seen in his attempts to create unity in the PDPA, which at the time was suffering from a split between two factions, and to pursue good relationships with the USA. The factional split occurred in 1967 between the Parchamists under the leadership of Babrak Karmal, who would again take control in 1979 through Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, and the Khalqis who supported Nour Taraki, who was briefly to lead the PDPA in the initial stages of the Saur Revolution from 1978-1979.

A second coup occurred five years into the post-monarchical phase of the Republic of Afghanistan. This coup, unlike the first, was not to be without bloodshed. Driven by communist and military elements within the PDPA, the government of Mohammad Daoud was violently overthrown on 27 April 1978. Daoud, along with his family, were executed by soldiers aligned with the Khaliq-faction that was led by Nur Muhammad Taraki (Office of the Historian, s.a.b.; Maley, 2010). This coup included a name change for the country to “The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan” (Williams, 2012:128). Williams (2012) notes that the Communists constituted a minority of some 12000 Communists in Afghanistan at the time of the coup. This observation adds weight to the argument espoused by Neale (2008) that the coup was a revolution from the top down and not the bottom up as there was little support from the majority of the

population that lived in the rural areas. He contends that while at times a coup can be staged with minority support and rule, it is more difficult to change family and societal structures, which would require majority support (Neale, 2008).

The coup of 1978 and the period following it was characterised by difficulties. In the rural areas small uprisings began and became more widespread as traditionalists showed their resistance to the changes that were being implemented by the PDPA. The Mullahs, according to Neale (2008), argued that the Communists were not only being used by Russia as communist tools, but they were atheists as well, who were out to corrupt the decency of women. Because the rural population viewed the PDPA representatives in the same light as the oppressors of the previous regime they resisted the change initiatives. The government responded with arrests of members of the local population, torture and execution, even indiscriminately attacking the peasants from the air by bombing them from helicopters (Neale, 2008), as they were determined to change the old ways.

Dr Sima Samar, Chairperson of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, made it clear in an interview granted to Marcus Cott (2010), that the Khaliq-faction that was in control at the time were convinced that Communism was to be implemented as a top-down dictatorship. This sentiment is echoed by Neale (2008): “Many of the Afghan Communists had been educated, in part, in the Soviet Union. For them it was simple. They wanted a modern, developed, civilised country like the Soviet Union. And that meant, obviously, the sort of dictatorship they saw there.”

2.2.8 The ideology of the PDPA

At this point in framing the discussion on the background of Afghanistan that situates this study, I believe it is necessary to discuss the ideological positioning of the PDPA as their actions before and during the war stem from their

ideological conviction. The paragraphs below are at best a paraphrased version of the ideological viewpoint presented by the Information and Publication Department that was housed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan during the early 1980s. I paraphrase deliberately from this singular source, to convey the ideological positioning from within the PDPA as accurately as possible, without drawing on opinions advanced by other researchers. The Ministry's method of providing evidence in support of their ideological viewpoint was to collect 'testimonial' evidence from individuals and governments that are published in a book entitled *Revolutionary Afghanistan Through Honest Eyes: A collection of views expressed by foreigners about revolutionary transformations in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan*. Editorial comments provided by the Editor of the Ministry in the introduction of the book as well as at the beginning of each paragraph help to crystallise the view of the PDPA on the matters raised.

The point that is made in the foreword of the book is that:

...the tyranny, oppression and injustice of the corrupt, regressive and feudal monarchic regime was ended and political power was transferred to the vast masses of the toiling people, represented by their true and tested vanguard, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan." (MFA, 1983:5).

This comment (thick with revolutionary rhetoric) about the feudal monarchic regime is made despite the monarchy having been toppled through a bloodless coup in 1973 by Daoud, and that Afghanistan had been functioning as a republic with many reforms being implemented between 1973 and 1978.

Hafizullah Amin, who had ousted Noor Taraki, the leader of the 1978 coup in September of 1979, is immediately branded as a "well-known agent of the dastardly CIA" and the Ministry bemoans the imprisonment of "thousands of true revolutionaries, patriots, innocent people, including women and children" (MFA, 1983:5). Those who were imprisoned were not members of the

governing Khaliq-faction who were in power at the time. Amin was subsequently killed in the 1979 Soviet Union involvement in Afghanistan, and with it, the rival Parcham-faction of the PDPA is put into power when Barbak Karmal becomes the leader.

Two distinct views are postulated about international responses to the Saur Revolution of 1978: firstly, the solidarity and assistance of the Soviet countries are put in a positive light, highlighting cultural, economic and political assistance, but especially military assistance with this statement, "...the sole purpose of warding off the armed interference from outside which posed threats to independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity..." (MFA, 1983:6). Secondly, a negative view is taken of "world imperialism, headed by US imperialism, Chinese hegemonists, the forces of reaction in the region and of international reaction as a whole..." (MFA, 1983:6). In the same breath the military assistance rendered by those in opposition to the PDPA are identified as Pakistan, America, China, and Egypt.

From an ideological viewpoint, the editor, in the foreword to the publication, makes it clear that there was awareness about foreign aid being provided to counter-revolutionaries on Pakistani soil by American, Chinese, Egyptian and Pakistani instructors. Strong propagandistic rhetoric is used to describe opposition to the coup as an "undeclared war against Afghanistan" and "world imperialism" as well as "other dark forces of our time" (MFA, 1983:7) which are "waging psychological warfare against our people and revolution". Accusations of "a huge propaganda campaign" and "fabricating and spreading lies and slander" are made in further rhetoric, with the position being taken that "a treacherous conspiracy of silence about the great revolutionary transformations taking place in democratic Afghanistan is also a component of the psychological warfare waged by imperialism and reaction" (MFA, 1983:7).

It is because of this conviction stated in the previous paragraph, that the editor collected several testimonies of foreigners, which would provide a view 'through honest eyes' as put in the title of the book.

2.2.9 A view of Afghanistan life as presented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The view that is postulated in this section of the chapter has as its purpose to highlight the ideological view of the pro-reformers in Afghanistan who wished to modernise. The editorial comment at the beginning of the chapter entitled *Why Revolution?* in a booklet published by the Ministry, depicts the struggle as being "against monarchic tyranny and oppression" (MFA, 1983:8). It bemoans the feudal and pre-feudal relations "which exploited and oppressed our people", and states the revolution arose "from the corruption prevailing in the government apparatus, from the failure of the ruling class to solve urgent social and economic problems, and from the poverty that affected the future of our toilers" (MFA, 1983:8). What follows is a paraphrased account of narratives provided in the first chapter through the 'honest eyes of foreigners'.

The first narrative is provided by a Czechoslovak journalist who tells the story of an Afghan girl, Khalida. In contrast to other families, hers was 'richer' because her father was employed by a foreigner, a concept that is interpreted to mean that the family has security in terms of continued employment. Unlike other children, she was not barefoot. However, when the younger brother took ill with a serious child's disease the unavailability of medicine brought the family misfortune. The journalist contends that a simple matter such as this brought understanding to Khalida about modern Kabul and its society. Mention is made of 'handsome villas, cars, cinemas, hotels, post offices', places she will never enter and services she will never use because despite her 'wealth', she was still impoverished, with her family having only one bicycle to share. Even though

she is at a suitable age for marriage “she does not want to be sold, she will choose her own future husband herself” (MFA, 1983:9).

Aspects that are highlighted in this narrative which put typical Afghan life in stark contrast, are issues pertaining to the uncertainty of employment, children not owning a pair of shoes, the unavailability of basic medication and health services to treat children’s diseases, a lack of transport, not having money to see a film in a cinema, or not being able to be on the inside of a hotel or to use basic postal services. Lastly, and importantly, she will not be sold like a slave into marriage as an economic mechanism by her parents to obtain some money or an income.

The journalist provides a second narrative about an incident with a young beggar boy around twelve years old who was an amputee, who had no left hand. In their encounter the boy tells about his family – “there are many of us at home and we haven’t anything to eat.” (MFA, 1983:11). In the ensuing narrative the boy tells how he had found a job with a construction company and was looking forward to receiving his first day’s pay. However, he was given only half of his wage because the agent, who had appointed him, claimed the other half as ‘his share’ for taking the boy on. When he arrived home the incident angered his father and a friend then advised his father to have the boy’s hand cut off. “If my hands couldn’t make a living, then I had to make it another way. No one asked if I agreed...” (MFA, 1983:11).

The point that is made here is that the family is in such a state of desperation that the boy was intentionally crippled, as people are more sympathetic to crippled beggars. The young boy states “that’s my livelihood. My father had it cut off. They always give something to cripples. It makes people more sympathetic... My father was right! He begs too, but I bring home more than he does...” (MFA, 1983:10).

A third and final narrative by the Czechoslovak journalist tells of an encounter between herself and a fifteen-year old girl and her five-year old brother. The journalist encountered a fruit vendor who was selling oranges in the street. When she bought one and began to peel it, the young boy expressed his wish to his sister to also have one, but because of their poverty they could not afford one. The journalist succumbed to “the sad eyes and the immense longing” (MFA, 1983:11) and gave him the orange. The boy then vowed to share it with his sister who had also never had an orange before either. The boy, followed by his father, returned to her shortly to present her with a gift of a beautiful plate that was made by the boy’s father, who then refused any payment for the gift.

The journalist encountered these experiences some ten years prior to the revolution during the reign of the king and states that:

...hunger, poverty – those were words, which belonged to the vocabulary of the Afghan children, just as to our children belong words like radio, television, toys and telephone. Only a few of those children could attend schools or enjoy the benefits of medical science and at the age of ten it was unheard of for them to enjoy carefree play. (MFA, 1983:12-13)

This is followed by a narrative provided by a French Journalist with the heading *This is How it Was*. The journalist highlights the plight of the poor and illiterate by referring to their lack of material possessions: first the man who has only one treasure, a goat; then a man threshing grain with an ancient flail, the only thing he possesses. The children on the streets are reduced to peddling wares such as flick-knives in order to survive. A man’s meal is described – “a glass of tea with a scone of pressed mulberries...” (MFA, 1983:13). The desperation that is described is offset by a ray of hope that the French Press has been providing a lot of media coverage on the plight of the Afghan people. But this hope is soon shattered by the testimony that close on 90 per cent of the population is illiterate, and would not be able to read what is being said about them, not even in their mother tongue.

In a further narration titled *De Facto Slaves*, the French Journalist claims that “seventy-eight per cent of the rural population were landless” (MFA, 1983:14). Plots of land were let to the peasants to farm on very expensive terms – an example of his is the reference to an Act, which determined that a peasant may retain only one out of six sacks of wheat that he cultivated on the rented plot. Therefore, many of them, reportedly as many as two million Afghans, travelled to Iran annually in the hope of finding employment (MFA, 1983). This grim picture is offset against the gains promised by the revolution, namely: agrarian reform, eradication of illiteracy, and the cancellation of debts to moneylenders.

An abridged account of an article that appeared in the *Morning Star* newspaper (17 August 1982) in the United Kingdom (UK) provides a British view of the Afghan struggle for a new society. The *Morning Star* claims that workers in Afghanistan were exploited and oppressed, women especially so, stemming from the feudal heritage of pre-revolution Afghanistan. Four years into the revolution (1982) the new government was committed to promoting equal rights for everybody “irrespective of race, religion or sex” (MFA, 1983:15). At the time of writing, illiteracy among Afghan women measured at ninety-eight per cent. The biggest challenge, however, was to change “centuries of religious custom and practice” (MFA, 1983:15) without alienating the religious leaders.

An excerpt from an article by a Cuban journalist follows in which it is stated that the revolution was caused by “the necessity of escaping from feudal exploitation, oppression, medievalism, economic backwardness, foreign exploitation and injustice. It was carried out to eliminate the bane of hunger...” (MFA, 1983:16). The journalist continues to cite examples including the handling of debt, equal rights for women, forceful marriage to the highest bidder, land ownership for peasants, free medical services, a literacy campaign and building schools (MFA, 1983). In opposition to this development, the journalist writes about “counter-revolutionary forces supported by the United

States and other imperialist powers, such as Chinese hegemonists and the forces of Arab reaction” (MFA, 1983:19), aided by Pakistan as their main ally.

From the narratives referred to in the preceding paragraphs it is clear that the PDPA felt that it was justified in staging the revolution to put an end to the practices that hampered the modernisation of Afghanistan.

2.2.10 Casualties of the Soviet-Afghan War

As with all wars that are waged, it is difficult to provide accurate numbers of casualties. It is no different with the Soviet-Afghan War that was waged from 1979 to 1989. Typically, researchers report casualties that have been counted on three sides of the conflict namely either Afghan civilians or mujahedeen combatants who led the opposition against the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, and infrequently, Soviet combatants. Occasionally reference is also made to the social displacement of Afghans to neighbouring countries.

The table below attempts to provide an overview of the casualties as reported by five different sources: Table 2.1 Comparison of Casualties Reported

Table 2.1 Comparison of Casualties Reported

	Kamrany and Killian (1992)	Harvey (2003)	Powell (2010)	Braithwaite (2011)	Western University (Ontario) (2015)
Afghan Civilians	1,000,000	+1,000,000	1,000,000	600,000-1,500,000	850,000–1,500,000
Mujahedeen Combatants					75,000-90,000
Soviet Combatants			26,000	15,051	14,453 + 18,000 Afghan Combatants
Afghan Refugees	6,000,000	3,000,000			5,000,000

From the statistics presented above it is clear that the Afghan population suffered heavily, estimated at more than one million casualties (deaths) and probably more than six million fleeing their homeland to the neighbouring Pakistan in the east or Iran in the west. Combatant deaths may be as high as just more than 100,000, with most of these casualties incurred on the side of the Mujahedeen. Braithwaite (2011:329) reports 50,000 Soviets injured. There is a rather large discrepancy reported in respect of Soviet casualties. This may be explained due to the way in which the numbers are reported as being Soviet forces (from outside Afghanistan) or Afghan government troops fighting on the side of the Soviet army. Be that as it may, two sources (Braithwaite, 2011 and the Western University, 2015) estimate the actual deaths of Soviet combatants at around 15,000. It may very well be that if one adds the number of Afghan troops killed to the Soviet casualties the number that is projected by Powell (26,000) is perhaps somewhat on the conservative side. Using these numbers one may deduce that the kill-rate was around 1:3, that is, for every combatant killed on the Soviet side there were three Mujahedeen killed. As will be shown later in the textual analysis of *Zinky Boys* (1992), indiscriminate killing of civilians took place when it was suspected that a village helped or sheltered opposition fighters, thereby explaining the high number of civilians killed.

2.3 CONCLUSION

There is little doubt that the perceptions cultivated by the Cold War and the fear of the West of a possible Russian 'domino effect' were contributing factors to the instability of the Middle-East, as is evidenced by the Soviet-Afghan War of 1979-1989. On the one hand, the fear of imperialism is made pervasively real by events that echo past behaviours of superpowers such as Tsarist Russia and Great Britain, which employed expansionist tactics to increase their influence and domain. On the other, there is an expression of solidarity with mainstream ideologies such as communism on the one hand, and capitalism on the other. What had initially begun as Soviet expansionist tactics and Western opposition

to Soviet expansion, quickly deteriorated into an ideological struggle of modernism, versus traditional practice united by Muslim faith. I believe it may very well be a valid opinion to suggest that the war was fought and lost on the basis of incompatible cultures of modernists and traditionalist, fuelled by overzealous Muslims who sparked off a *jihad* against the Soviets.

Afghanistan's geographical position at the crossroads of Asia and it being a crucible of cultures, no doubt contributed to the increasing strategic importance of Afghanistan in the timeframe of the 1970s and 1980s for both the East and the West. Whilst it was deemed at the time to be an economically poor country, it did have exportable resources, notably natural gas, and given its close proximity to Iran, a main proponent in the oil industry in the eyes of the West, it enjoyed a strategically important role in the eyes of the West. For the Soviet Union a southerly expansion in that geographic location, with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan being Soviet neighbours to the north, was a logical stimulus for interest in Afghanistan. The fact that it was already receiving vast quantities of foreign aid from the Soviet Union and the West made it susceptible to further involvement from the Soviets.

A destabilising factor that has to be considered is the fact that internally, the political grounds were shifting away from its traditionalist monarchy to a more modernised form of government, which in turn conflicted with traditional values cherished by the majority Muslim population, which did not want to adapt to conflicting views on women, as one case in point. The emergent People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan were blind to the cultural impact of their actions and did not realise that their forceful change of cultural practices were, in fact, solidifying and increasing opposition to them and the Soviet Union, and the positive ideals that they were wanting to achieve.

The casualties that were incurred during the War are a far cry from the initial bloodless coup of 1973 which signified a change to the old way of living.

Whereas peaceful change on the route to modernisation was no longer attainable once the coup of 1978 got off to a violent start, it was overshadowed by the loss of over 1,600,000 lives and 6,000,000 million people displaced. These losses had intercultural and economic ramifications for the neighbouring countries that had to host them as refugees whilst enduring the destabilising effect that such actions bring to a host country.

In conclusion, this chapter provides important information with regard to the geopolitical positioning of Afghanistan and its strategic importance to the two main opposing forces of the Cold War in the temporal map of the 1970s and 1980s. It further focuses on the internal causes that gave rise to instability and war, all of which are important in preparing the canvas for the textual analyses that are presented in chapters 6-8 in this research.

CHAPTER 3: SURVEY OF LITERATURE ON THE SOVIET-AFGHAN WAR

Revolution, for whatever reason, is self-defeating, for violent revolution results in violent reaction. Oddly enough, the worst reaction usually comes from within the revolution itself, and the first casualty is the revolutionary.

(L'Amour, Louis - Talon-Chantry. Rivers West 1975)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to document a contextualised overview of the Soviet involvement in the Soviet-Afghanistan War during the period 1979 to 1989. The inclusion of this chapter in the study is aligned with the research problem, namely to uncover the public moral argument communicated by the narrators in *Zinky Boys* as it materialises, and to measure it against an appropriate understanding of the period and context from which it emerged. Consonant with this, I realised that it was necessary to ensure that a validated frame of reference, or rounded background knowledge should be in place against which I would interpret the narratives, intertext, and public moral argument voiced by the narrators in the text. Creswell and Creswell (2018) note the need to present a holistic account of the problem that is investigated, which *inter alia*, includes the ability to categorise the multiplicity of factors and perspectives, as well as the researcher's ability to outline the bigger representation that materialises. To this end, I made a study of available journal articles, published interviews, book chapters and monographs, using NVivo12 for Windows to code and theme the emergent topics that are covered by authors who published on the Soviet-Afghan War of 1979-1989.

The use of NVivo12 in this process of codification additionally served as a trial of the selected method and techniques involved in the digital codification process, to ensure that there would be both personal experience as researcher, and qualitative rigour of approaches in place to guide me in codifying the

selected texts in *Zinky Boys* for analysis. The publications that were included in the selection cover a range of dates as far back as the early days of the war, up to the most recent, relevant publications that were available through searches initiated through electronic clearing houses such as Google Scholar, the University online catalogue, JSTOR, Ebscohost, Proquest, Springerlink, and Taylor and Francis as examples.

In addition, in reading journal articles that were topically relevant, I scoured their reference lists for additional useful sources that were subsequently either searched for online or acquired through requests made to the University Subject Librarian. Texts were included for selection based on the evidence that the content of the texts covered the Soviet-Afghanistan War of 1979-1989; causal or contributing factors leading to the war, the withdrawal from Afghanistan and the subsequent dissolution of the USSR, or any direct topical relevance to the war and the soldiers engaged in it.

The purpose of this chapter is achieved by providing a themed topical overview resulting from my reading of selected articles and book chapters published specifically on the Soviet-Afghan War. In doing so, I deliberately avoided discussing articles or book chapters that merely mention this conflict in passing, in preference to those articles that focussed exclusively on this war. The resulting themes that emerged from the literature are unpacked in six thematic groupings that follow the typical story structure of beginning, middle, and end, in order to provide a logical and validated frame of reference against which the interpretations of the narratives in *Zinky Boys* were made.

I must stress that the themes that follow in this chapter are emic themes that arose in the process of coding the texts under study. Therefore, I begin by discussing the literature that deals with the reasons provided for mainly the Soviet Union's engagement on Afghan soil. This is followed by a theme that highlights the cultural-ideological drivers of the conflict that motivated the

participants to keep a sustained involvement in the war. In discussing the agency of the role players in the war three sub-themes emerge, namely *Dedovshchina* (or hazing, bullying), drug use and trafficking, and violence. The public perception of the war is an emergent theme, together with the role that journalists played in forming these perceptions. These perceptions ultimately helped the Soviet Union to decide to disengage from the war and withdraw from Afghanistan. However, as a result of the ongoing reforms initiated by Gorbachev, the Soviet Union imploded upon itself, followed by its dissolution. Finally, the theme of veterans and women as victims of the war is briefly discussed.

3.2 THEME 1: REASONS FOR ENGAGEMENT IN THE WAR

The literature that I surveyed differs on the topic of the reasons that triggered the Soviet Union into action to send its limited contingent of forces into Afghanistan. It is important to note that the sources referred to, additionally provide background and context to this situation, which help establish the reasons for engagement in the war. A case in point is Collins (2011), who argues that the Kalhqi-faction inside the PDPA was moving too quickly with its aggressive land reform policy and related changes, which had a destabilising effect on the Afghan population.

Noorzoy (1985:153) provides a wider canvas against which to understand the events that precipitated the invasion by looking at a political-ideological, military and economic model that resonates with the (then existing) Cold War strategies to counter the influence of the US in lesser-developed countries, such as Afghanistan. In addition, he argues that the Soviet Union created reliance upon the Soviet Union through, *inter alia*, the provisioning of arms supplies, as well as economic trade stimulated by aid programmes. The threat of the possible flourishing of Afghani-US relations is another theme reported in the literature. In this regard, Tadman (2012) writes about earlier indicators that President

Mohammed Daoud was seeking treaties with the West to reduce the Afghan reliance on the Soviet Union. Similarly, Baker (2019) highlights the danger for the Soviet Union that his successor, President Hafizullah Amin, would form alliances with the West in order to speed up the modernisation of Afghanistan.

Considering the aforementioned viewpoints, it becomes important not to lose sight of the influence of political agency to sustain geopolitical positioning during the Cold War, and how policies influenced the behaviour of the superpowers. The Brezhnev Doctrine is an example in this regard, requiring the Soviet Union to take action to ensure that Afghanistan would not become an ally of the West. Sanderson (2017) argues that the US had been achieving success in the Middle East and that the Soviet Union feared that Afghanistan was at risk of being lost to the US if they did not take action to assist the Afghan Communist Government to remain in power, and to suppress the Afghan resistance. In the context of this resistance to the PDPA, Van der Merwe (1988:viii) writes that “the Kremlin decided to invade in order to save the unpopular socialist revolution in Kabul”.

Malay (2010:864-865) reports that while the Soviet Union was persuaded to invade Afghanistan by a meeting of the Soviet Politburo on 12 December 1979, it was initially against invading Afghanistan despite the unrest in the country and Amin's request for assistance. The motivation was to halt the worsening situation in Afghanistan and the perceived necessity to provide a steadier government, which were seen as compelling reasons for the Soviet Union to invade, as postulated by Kalinovsky (2010). This view contrasts with the more popular view that the Soviet Union was countering possible alliances by Afghanistan with the US, and to “spread communism or economic modernity” (Kalinovsky, 2010:2). Braithwaite (2011:76) supports this view that the Soviet Union was initially reluctant to invade Afghanistan, and that the Afghan Government requested troops to oppose the rebellion following the anti-Communist uprising in Herat, in March 1979.

Baev (2012:25) argues that among a host of policies, the “policy of cultivating close personal ties with the leaders of satellite states shaped by the authoritarian nature of the Soviet regime”, is the deciding factor that led to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In describing the events leading up to the decision to invade Afghanistan, Powell (2010) argues that the situation of continued unrest and the reports by the KGB that Amin was engaging in talks with the US, impacted positively on the decision to invade Afghanistan. Powell (2010) makes the KGB involvement clear:

In early December, top Soviet policymakers, led by Yuri Andropov, the head of the KGB, and Dmitri Ustinov, the Minister of Defense, pushed Brezhnev to authorize a military intervention to replace Amin with exiled leader Babrak Karmal.

Dimitrakis (2012:511-512) clarifies the involvement of the KGB in the decision-making process by quoting the KGB Chairman Youri Andropov as arguing:

It's completely clear to us that Afghanistan is not ready at this time to resolve all the issues it faces through socialism. The economy is backward, the Islamic religion predominates, and nearly all the rural population are illiterate. We know Lenin's teaching on a revolutionary situation; therefore, I believe that we can suppress a revolution in Afghanistan only with the aid of our bayonets, and that is for us entirely inadmissible. We cannot take that risk.

In his introduction to *New Evidence on the War in Afghanistan* (2010:139) Ostermann writes:

Russian scholar Svetlana Savranskaya argued that the Soviet leaders' almost exclusive reliance on alarmist KGB assessments of a quickly deteriorating situation in Afghanistan in the fall of 1979—at the expense of more cautious military intelligence and diplomatic channels—constituted a critical factor in the decision to intervene.

Mitrokhin (2009) wrote a 179 page expose of the involvement of the KGB in Afghanistan and contends that the KGB role was instrumental in persuading the Soviet Politburo to invade Afghanistan. In addition, the KGB played an important role in supporting President Babrak Karmal during his term as PDPA leader.

I wish to return, briefly, to the Herat uprising of March 1979. This must be one of the factors that undoubtedly had an impact on the Soviet mind-set, if not psychologically. Collins (2011:26) provides a very graphic picture of the rebel attack and armed mutiny of the Soviet contingent there, resulting in the “massacre of 50 Soviet officers and their dependents”. He then quotes Patrick Garrity (1980:33) as stating:

Soviet advisors were hunted down by specially assigned insurgent assassination squads. . . . Westerners reportedly saw Russian women and children running for their lives from the area of the Soviet-built Herat Hotel. Those Russians that were caught were killed: some were flayed alive, others were beheaded and cut into pieces.

I wish to turn away from the Soviet considerations to briefly present an interesting view about the role of the US in the Soviet Union’s decision and engagement in Afghanistan. Blum (1998) has translated an interview held by *Le Nouvel Observateur* (France) with Zbigniew Brzezinski, former National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter, in which it is argued by Brzezinski that the US provoked the Soviet Union into invading Afghanistan. He is echoed in this opinion by Markowitz (2009) who contends that Brzezinski influenced Jimmy Carter to support the Muslim rebels in Afghanistan.

As a last comment on the reasons why the Soviet Union decided to invade Afghanistan I wish to bring Gompert, Binnendijk and Lin’s (2014:130) criticism on the Soviet Union to the fore:

Fundamentally, in mistaking Afghanistan for a prize of East-West competition, the Soviets erred by launching an intervention that floundered because of Afghanistan's harsh local realities. The result was far greater harm to the Soviet Union than the harm Soviet leaders feared when they ordered the intervention.

Many a battle has failed because the local conditions and realities were not taken into account, as is evidenced in the extract above. Due to this miscalculation of not only the geo-political realities, but also the fact that cultural and religious realities were not properly understood, led to an ideological misconception of the possible future of Afghanistan, as seen through Soviet eyes.

3.3 THEME 2: DRIVERS OF THE CONFLICT

This theme dealing with the drivers of the conflict surfaced when the relationship between ideology and religion crystallised as factors that kept adding impetus to the momentum of sustained conflict. In addition, the cultural grounding of the overwhelming majority of the population proved to fuel the conflict, which was further bolstered by the ideology of nation-building. The last driving factor that is discussed here is the support offered by the West to the rebels against the Soviet Union's occupation.

Sub Theme 2.1: Ideology and religion

Discussing the theme of ideology and religion is challenging. I have grouped these two sub-themes together to form a joint theme, as there is a commonality that is often studied in literature by joining ideology and religion, as is the case with Burrowes (2016). In his article, *The Psychology of Ideology and Religion*, Burrowes (2016) argues the case that "...it is fear, often mediated through ideology and religion, that drives most human behaviour" as younger people are often terrorised into believing what the adults around them believe. The case of the *madrassas* mentioned in this section comes to mind, where younger people

are raised to form particular ideological viewpoints that are validated through their religious system. In this regard Burrows (2016) states:

Ideology is the term widely used to describe the underlying set of values, myths, ideas, attitudes, beliefs and doctrine that shape the behavioural approach to political, economic, social, cultural and/or ecological activities of an individual or organisation. This organisation might be a political party, government, multinational corporation, terrorist group, non-government organisation, community or activist group.

As an example, through the ideological narrative fuelled by the Brezhnev Doctrine and often used by the Soviet Union, words such as 'internationalism', 'international duty', and '*druzhiba*' were used to inculcate the expected behaviour in all Soviet citizens (Ackermann and Galbas, 2015).

Burrows (*loc cit*) indicates how religion and ideology share fused identities at the macro level:

At the macro level, there are worldwide or regional ideologies such as capitalism, fascism, conservatism, communism, socialism, feminism, pacifism and environmentalism as well as religions including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism.

In the case of the perceptions held by Afghan Muslims about the Soviets, they were essentially seen as atheists (Baev, 2012). The Soviets were fuelled at the macro level by their ideological viewpoint of doing their international duty by ensuring the sustained development of communism and economic modernity in Afghanistan. However, as pointed out in this section, the Islamic religious roots of the Afghan population in areas outside of the cities proved a stronger unifying factor and motivator.

There is irony in the history of events that reflect how, particularly in the case of Afghanistan, military might has its limitations in enforcing the Brezhnev

Doctrine. In particular, how *perestroika*, which allowed opposition viewpoints, ultimately ripped the social communist fabric apart, as Robinson (1995:174) so aptly describes: “ [t]hat the party fell because of the way in which its ideology was construed to allow opposition to develop and for splits to emerge inside it was the irony of perestroika, indeed the irony of all Soviet history.”

The Afghan story is somewhat different, leaning more towards a religious ideology in comparison to the communist ideology held by the Soviet Union. Donnelly, Sanderson and Fellman (2017) state “[t]he “anti-Soviet Jihad” in Afghanistan in the 1980s was the first modern conflict to see high levels of foreign fighter participation”. They further state (2017:2) that conflict of this nature was “considered a defensive war on behalf of a local Muslim population”.

Donnelly *et al.* (2017:3) arrive at key judgements in the case of the Soviet-Afghan war that hold the following three cardinal points:

- Defending Muslims against a non-Muslim invader motivated volunteers to travel to Afghanistan.
- U.S., Saudi Arabian, and Pakistani assistance allowed recruiting networks to develop.
- The evolution of volunteers from international humanitarian workers to fighters helped establish the credibility and militant networks that would drive future conflicts.

It is clearly reflected in the literature on the Soviet-Afghan war, that ideology and religion were important drivers of this decade-long conflict. I now turn to a more focussed discussion on the cultural aspect of the war, particularly from the Afghan viewpoint and with a few thoughts about the role of cultural drivers in this context.

Sub Theme 2.2: Culture

Baev (2012:252) positions culture at the centre of his analysis on the destruction of the Afghanistan sovereignty. The once delicate cultural balance in the country was destroyed by the cultural oppositions held by the role-players in the conflict. The Soviets were perceived by the Afghan Muslims to be essentially atheist, and the Afghan communists deemed the followers of Islam as being backward. The approach followed by internal powers was to win 'the hearts and minds' of Afghans through the implementation of policies of land reform and education, both of which were in ideological opposition to the foundation of the traditional Islamic belief and existing tribal cultural practices. In this regard, Baev (2012:252) posits, "[t]he destruction and breakdown of traditional cultural values and ties made Islam into the central element of the new culture..." which effectively summarises the core ideological reason for the failure of the Sovietisation of Afghanistan.

This cultural-ideological opposition can best be understood when one begins with the Saur revolution of April 1978 as a starting point. Up to this point in time the Afghanistan population were accustomed to a monarchy in their recent past up to 1973, when Mohammed Daoud Kahn overthrew the last monarch, Mohammed Zahir Shah. Thus, Daoud became President of Afghanistan, initially with Soviet assistance, but he soon fell out of favour with them, as he continuously welcomed Western (American) assistance. Collins (2011:25) states that in Daoud's fifth year of office, upon noting that the left had grown in strength, "[h]e began to tack to the right, warming to the United States while relations with Moscow cooled". In response to his non-alliance policy with the Soviets, Nur Mohamad Taraki became a founding member of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) with the aim of establishing a socialist nation, or Marxist state in Afghanistan (Edwards, 2002:25). As I have pointed out earlier, this was a failed strategy that embraced a foreign cultural identity, foreign to the views held by most of the rural population in Afghanistan,

resulting in a cultural disassociation. The result was rebellion across the nation until the Soviets sent in their limited military contingent and advisors to help the PDPA to imprint the Soviet ideal.

This opposition to secularisation and modernisation is noted by Markowitz (2009), and Steele (2011a), who point out that the backing of the Mujahedeen rebels by the US, since the Saur Revolution of April 1978, was to keep the Soviet threat at bay. It served the purpose of the West to implicate the Soviets in what was propagandistically labelled "...an aggressive land grab" (Steele, 2011a).

Baev (2012:258) provides a context for understanding the war in Afghanistan at a simplistic and more sophisticated level. Simplistically it points to the mujahedeen resistance fighting against the "Communistic imperialist aggressor". At the sophisticated level, there is talk of a *jihad* or "global Crusade against the evil empire" which puts its sponsor, the US, in a positive light. However, the geopolitical context of the Cold War had unintended consequences for the US as neatly summarised by Hartman (2002:485):

The mujahidin (sic) of the 1980s may have been cannon fodder for US interests, but their victory over the Soviets represented something far more to them. It was a morale boost that Muslims of the world had not experienced in quite some time. Afghanistan became a launching pad for jihad worldwide, and the USA, with its overreaching geopolitical goals, became the target.

Shalinsky (1993) provides insight on the expected modes of behaviour of women in the Afghanistan *jihad*, who through adherence to the traditionalist roles of women supported the *jihad*, e.g. by keeping themselves veiled and living in obedience to the laws of Islam. Guest (2010:886), similarly points to the conflict in Islamic beliefs and the traditional notions of *badal* or revenge, where the Islamic rules of war extended protection to prisoners, but honouring the tradition of *badal* would entail the taking of revenge.

The mujahedeen were not without support. This is evidenced by the literally 'thousands' of Afghanistan Muslims who joined the mujahedeen (Trueman, 2015) "on a holy mission for Allah", and they declared a *jihad* on the followers of Amin and the Soviets in the country. In this regard, Donnelly, Sanderson and Fellman (2017) point out that the *madrassas* (schools in Muslim religion) were used to recruit non-Afghans to join the *jihad*.

There was support from Muslims from neighbouring countries as well, as described by Wilke (2006) who depicts Pakistan as a long-time ally of the West, with Pakistani Muslims seeing this as an opportunity to align themselves in a joint *jihad* with Afghanistan Muslims. Powell (2010) shows the tactical geographic advantage that the mujahedeen enjoyed in having Pakistan as an ally, as the mountainous area bordering Pakistan on the Afghan side was very hard to patrol securely, and resupply missions to the mujahedeen were easy to accomplish.

The Soviet engagement in Afghanistan is depicted in various ways, but in this context of discussing the mujahedeen, it is noteworthy to mention that Neale (1988) depicts it as a victory for the mujahedeen. Similarly, Powell (2010) points to the failure of the Soviets and the increasing desertion rates of former Afghan soldiers who turned to and allied with the mujahedeen. It is of greater interest to note that Powell (2010) holds the opinion that when it became clear to the Soviet leadership that an outright victory in Afghanistan was no longer possible, they continued their engagement in the context of the Cold War to effectively neutralise Afghanistan as a possible host to American influence.

It is important, taking the section above into consideration, that cultural, ideological and religious motivators lie at the heart of the behaviour of the opposing forces in this conflict. The then geopolitical context in conjunction with

the Brezhnev Doctrine fuelled Soviet action, but they did not foresee or understand the ideological strength of the Muslim faith that they were opposing.

Sub Theme 2.3: The ideal of nation building

Kapp (1997:119) describes the Cold War as “a battle for the hearts and minds of people”. This kind of battle focussed on winning societies over with promises of uniquely styled ontological ideologies – “freedom and prosperity” or “equality and liberation from oppression” (*loc cit*). The cold war thus focussed on the socio-economic order of societies rather than conventional reasons for warfare.

In the case of Afghanistan the hearts and minds campaign was severely uncoordinated, started too late, and was ineffective in winning back those who had been lost due to the Soviet Army’s brutality in the early years of the war (Robinson, 2010). The promised socio-economic order that was guaranteed by the Soviet Union is well captured by Edwards (2002:1) who states:

...a bold attempt was made to transform the Afghan nation into a different kind of social and political entity. Those responsible for this transformation envisioned the establishment of a socialist nation in which class oppression would be wiped out and the productive energies of the poor mobilized.

The People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan promised a structure of government that would make room for women, bureaucrats, students and low-ranking military officers. At the heart of the mission lay the education of the poor, who would be made aware of the social and economic conditions that condemned them to the brutality that they were experiencing and which would prevent the country from developing economically and socially (Edwards, 2002).

In his publication on nation-building Kalinovsky (2010) is of the opinion that the need to undertake a nation-building project in Afghanistan, to bring political stability to the country, was envisaged by the Soviet leadership. This

stabilisation effect would then allow for self-governance and would provide the opportunity to withdraw its military presence. By 1980, Soviet specialists had trained around 70,000 skilled labourers, technicians, and engineers during the preceding two-and-a-half decades, and it had also planted a Communist Party in Kabul in 1964. It had also provided non-military advisors at almost every level of government in Afghanistan.

By the time that Gorbachev had assumed power in the mid-1980s, the Soviet Union was desperate to disengage from its commitment in Afghanistan, as already pointed out in this chapter. It was at this point that they decided to replace President Barbrak Karmal, and to embark on a programme of National Reconciliation. The latter occurred with help from Eastern European allies such as Bulgaria, which had provided millions in aid (Kalinovsky, 2010).

Kalinovsky (2010) exposes the failure and abandonment of the nation-building approach in Afghanistan as well as the fact that there was no master-plan in place to guide the nation-building effort. It was more reactionary than planned actions delivered on a predetermined timeline. The comparison is often made to the American experience in Vietnam, and in this instance Kalinovsky (2010:28) contends that the modernisation efforts by the Soviet Union looked “remarkably similar” to the American efforts to bring “economic well-being to the population”.

Reed (2010) postulates that efforts by the superpowers involved during the Cold War in Afghanistan could be understood in the context of neo-colonialism. “Neocolonialism began during the hegemonic power struggle to create favourable political and economic conditions for pro-U.S or Soviet ideologies in nonaligned actors such as Afghanistan” (2010). Kalinovsky and Kalinovsky (2011:2) however, hold the view that “Soviet leaders found it difficult to disengage from the Afghan conflict because they feared undermining Moscow’s status as a defender of Third World countries against encroaching neo-colonialism.” This statement is contextualised in the existing frame of reference

that Afghanistan was welcoming aid from the West, as the Soviet Union already had invested heavily there since the mid-1950s.

Sub Theme 2.4: Western support

In order to understand the presence of western support for the mujahedeen in Afghanistan it is necessary to note that Afghanistan had begun developing ties with the Soviet Union after World War II, prompting the US to seek out a relationship with Pakistan in 1954 through developing military associations (PBS News Hour, 2006). In fact, the mujahedeen leaders who attained fame as the “Peshwar Seven” and played a vital role in the resistance against the Soviet Union, were all Pakistan-based having gone into exile prior to the arrival of the Soviet Union in 1979 (Steele, 2011a).

In its online publication on Russia and Afghanistan, the Institute for the Study of War researcher Sanderson (2017), identifies a host of international actors that include Egypt, China, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the US, who were supporting the Afghan resistance, or mujahedeen. Similarly, Steele (2011a) earlier-on identified Pakistan, China, the US, and Saudi Arabia as countries that had assisted the mujahedeen.

Hartman (2002:467) writes that the US believed that the Soviet Union was seeking access to Persian Gulf oil resources via Afghanistan, as was signalled by its intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979. This now prompted the US to act by supporting the mujahedeen. “America's response -to finance and arm the most fundamental and dangerous Muslims that could be rounded up- is a decision that continues to shake the world” (*loc cit*). Perhaps the most telling statement that Hartman makes is the following:

The rise of the Taliban can be directly attributed to this process and America's so-called 'War on Terrorism' is yet another harsh penalty the people of this war-ravaged country must accept at

the hands of the world's sole remaining superpower (Hartman, 2002:467).

There is support for this line of thinking in that Markowitz (2009) contends:

In 1988, under the leadership of Osama bin Laden, who had previously led the Saudi Arabian contingent of the tens of thousands of foreign Muslim 'holy warriors,' Al Qaeda, or 'the base,' was founded and joined the mujahideen. Backed and funded by the US, this ultra-right group strove to fight to "purify" the Muslim world of all secular forces and regimes... Al Qaeda, along with the other US-backed groups and warlords that formed the mujahideen, literally drowned the Afghan revolution in blood at the beginning of the 1990s.

A factor that has not been highlighted yet is the intervention of the Pakistani Intelligence Service, the ISI. As pointed out by Barakat and Wardell (2011:6), around three million refugees from the war took refuge in camps in Pakistan while another two million fled to Iran. The Pakistani government actively encouraged the formation of mujahedeen groups in these camps. Donneley *et al.* (2017) similarly point to the recruitment networks that existed in Pakistan.

The Pakistani border played a crucial role in the conflict, as it was one of the main routes used to distribute materials and money to the Afghan Resistance (Tadman, 2012). It comes as no surprise then that Powell (2010) advances the reason for the rejection of the ceasefire offered by Najibullah in 1987, as being due to the high levels of support received from America and with the Soviet Union having committed itself to withdrawing from Afghanistan.

Without the support of the West, there would probably not have been a chance of a successful and sustained uprising by the mujahedeen in Afghanistan. As Neale (1988) points out:

The Pakistanis supply little money, but without their base in Pakistan the resistance would probably have collapsed...The

Mujahedin would have collapsed without American, Saudi and Pakistani support.

He conjectures that the mujahedeen resistance would have probably collapsed without the support provided to it by countries that allied themselves to the mujahedeen cause out of anti-Soviet sentiment, or in identification with the Islamic cause. The statement is speculative in that it is an untried possible outcome of the situation in Afghanistan. I am of the opinion that the cultural depth and ubiquitous presence of the Islamic faith in Afghanistan was the core reason why the mujahedeen held out against the Soviet onslaught. There is no doubt that tangible aid offered by these countries did assist them, but I do not think that it is the main reason why they endured.

3.4 THEME 3: AGENCY IN THE PERIOD OF CONFLICT

In this theme, I confine the scope of the theme to three key concepts of agency that recurred in my reading of the sources. Agency is defined by Schlosser in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2019) as “[i]n very general terms, an agent is a being with the capacity to act, and ‘agency’ denotes the exercise or manifestation of this capacity”. Agency is further defined and discussed in section 4.5 of the thesis, therefore a clarification of the term is offered here. Agency implies human action in given social contexts, as it is assumed that humans act in response to the co-presence of other human beings. Among the emerging concepts from the literature studied, regular mentions of *Dedovshchina* (hazing or bullying), the use of drugs by soldiers or drug trafficking, and violence were noticeable. Here I deliberately limited the scope of the theme to the role players, namely soldiers and agencies that were active in the context of participating or promoting participation in the war.

Sub Theme 3.1: Dedovshchina

The term *Dedovshchina* is a complex term that poses challenges to non-Russian speakers. In this regard, Daucé and Sieca-Kozłowski (2004) attempt a translation of *Dedovshchina* in their introduction to the *Journal of Power Institutions in Post-Soviet Societies*, but maintain that the term is not easy to translate due to its polysemic nature, and the associated accompanying practices, which are often complex in nature. Associated terminology related to the practice of *Dedovshchina* include the words ‘hazing’, or the French term *le bizutage*, or the more common term, ‘bullying’. According to the authors, an analysis of the word itself holds a key to understanding, as the root form of the word ‘*ded*’ references the concept of ‘grandfather’, which is not an uncommon concept in military institutions in reference to older, more experienced soldiers.

To this debate of understanding *Dedovshchina*, Belkin (2004) adds in the foreword to the same issue of the journal, that a more wide-ranging phraseology is applied by the Russian Ministry of Defense, who claims it to be “[v]iolations of regulations on service relationships”. It would be, according to the writers, incorrect to misconstrue *Dedovshchina* as merely acts of criminality or hooliganism. It is, in my own experience and understanding, more correct to recognise that the hierarchical relationship between younger recruits and longer serving conscripts is characterised by power relations where more privileges are afforded to longer serving servicemen. It is also characterised by duties of servitude (often unpleasant and distasteful ones) exercised by younger recruits under the supervision of longer serving conscripts.

The impact of *Dedovshchina* not only within the ranks of the armed forces, but also in society is noticeable. Belkin (2004) is of the opinion that *Dedovshchina* is a “major source of contradiction between the Russian society and its military”, and adds to this statement that the ability of the army to serve its intended purpose in combat is undermined in the process. This impact is so severe to

Belkin that he compares it to a disease, and social sore at societal level, not only in the military. This idea is substantiated by Bannikov (2004) who indicates that “hazing-related morals” are ubiquitous in society and that families, schools and workplaces are not left unscathed. Belkin (2004) suggests that society at large, specifically family members and even societal institutions such as schools, are responsible to ensure that the practices of *Dedovshchina* are not nurtured during the process of raising children.

Dedovshchina is often accompanied by acts of violence, or is itself perpetrated as an act of violence (Bannikov, 2004; Behrends, 2015a; Belkin, 2004; Maklak, 2015). Bannikov (2004) contends that “violence is inherent in human nature”, and that social conflict is inherent in army life as it both collects and transmits conflict due to the accumulation of “psychophysical energy”, further adding to this the isolation of the army from the remainder of society at large. It has, therefore, the propensity to become ‘a world of its own’, and such was the experience for me as well, as a one-time insider in the military where such hazing practices were experienced and witnessed.

In the case of *Dedovshchina* as a violent practice perpetrated by Soviet soldiers, one has to understand that the whole of Afghanistan had become a violent space, where one had to focus on survival in, as Behrends (2015a:173) indicates, “a *Gewaltraum*, a space where violence was the dominant resource”. In this *Gewaltraum* young conscripts were both those who had to physically endure violence and also perpetrated it (Maklak: 2015). Belkin (2004) contends that violations of regulations on service regulations such as *Dedovshchina* and “*hooliganism in the barracks*” accounted for the “the main causes of violent deaths and suicides” in the Russian military.

The perceptions associated with *Dedovshchina* are not all entirely negative. Maklak (2015:682) explains that narratives of Soviet soldiers collected during interviews conducted during 1988/1989 showed that the young men viewed

Dedovshchina as a “functional tool of self-organization within the otherwise dysfunctional military institution and stressed the values of endurance and maturation central to male identity”. It is this aspect of identity formation that became part of their life scripts and masculine identity. *Dedovshchina* was also positively viewed as a “rite of passage” (Maklak, 2015:694).

Whilst *Dedovshchina* was initially kept in the inner circle, it had an absence in the public sphere (Behrends, 2015c). However, it did find prominence as a topic in the press during the latter part of the 1980s (Maklak, 2015; van Bladel, 2004). In this regard van Bladel (2004:8) indicates that the “press tested the limits of *glasnost*” (a policy of openness instituted by Gorbachev in the latter 1980s) on the topic of *Dedovshchina* which appeared to have grown out of control. Claims that the military was inefficient in maintaining peacetime order also surfaced in the public sphere (Elkner, 2004). The more liberal newspapers such as “*Komsomol'skaya pravda*, *Ogonyok*, *Nezavisimaya gazeta* and *Argumenti i fakti*” are mentioned by van Bladel (2004:8) as papers which took advantage of *glasnost* to open up the debate on the practice of *Dedovshchina*.

It is during the latter part of the 1980s that the *Committee of Soldiers' Mothers* found prominence (Elkner, 2004). This committee's activism contributed to altering public perception and making *Dedovschina* a much talked-about subject. In addition to this making-public of *Dedovschina*, the romanticised notions of soldiers doing their sacred duty in foreign countries made way for the harsh reality that “for many conscripts, military service was in fact a profoundly damaging and traumatic experience” (Elkner, 2004). It is in this regard that Belkin (2004) writes:

The uncured threat to recruits' physical and mental health is the primary concern for the families of conscripts in Russia and a major source of contradiction between the Russian society and its military, as well as one of the main factors undermining combat readiness of the army.

No doubt, the practice of *Dedovshchina* and the associated agency of violence that accompanied it brought about a destabilising effect on the ability of the Soviet army to prepare its soldiers for combat and to wage war effectively. However, at the personal level, where conscripts were able to overcome the hardships and difficulties of *Dedovshchina*, it not only proved to be a rite of passage into manhood and the achievement of status among men, but also contributed to identity formation for the individuals concerned.

Sub Theme 3.2: Violence

In this thematic discussion, I first focus on the nature and classification of violence as themed from the topical analysis of publications on violence during and shortly after the Soviet-Afghan War. I then move on to indicate the impact of violence on Afghanistan, and the impact of violence on Soviet Society. The relationship between *Dedovshchina* and violence has already been discussed in the previous sub theme.

Sieca-Kozlowski (2013) postulates a classification of violence into four types, all of which are applicable to the war outside of the realm of actual war conflict (combat) in Afghanistan and the period following it:

Symbolical violence: as defined by P. Bourdieu is a submission process in which the dominated perceive the social hierarchy as legitimate and natural. It is a collective belief that allows hierarchies to be maintained, for instance, command structures in war.

Physical violence: military violence including wounds and bodily injury.

Institutional violence: as defined by Johan Galtung (1969) refers to a violence that serves or results from institutional objectives. This category includes aberrant orders, abusive or unjust exercise of power on behalf of commanding officers, or wrong doing on the part of medical staff. It also includes disengagement

and the renunciation by the State of its responsibility for disabled veterans.

Social violence: in the context of disability, refers to marginalization as a consequence of the disengagement of the state towards this category of people.

This classification is an important assist in gaining an understanding and to differentiate among the various types of violence that Soviet veterans had to endure during their tour(s) in Afghanistan, as well as the negative reception that they were subjected to as war veterans. At its core it is a tragic account of how "...regular Soviet youths were transformed by the wild war they were ordered to fight...some of them started to enjoy being violent" (Behrends, 2015a:173). Indeed, Behrends (2015b) describes the entire Afghanistan landscape as a metaphorical *Gewaltraum* (violent space). The violence encountered by Soviet soldiers permeated every aspect of life, not only on the battlefield, but also in the barracks and everyday encounters with civilians, to such an extent that it affected and changed their *Referenzrahmen* (frame of reference). Thus, with their behavioural norms transformed, these soldiers were capable of extreme acts of violence in almost any situation, not excluding violence in the barracks, which threatened their own forces (Van Bladel, 2004).

With regard to violence in Afghanistan Baev (2012:249) refers to the "self-propelling dynamics of violence in Afghanistan" that contributed to the failure of the Soviet campaign in Afghanistan. One group of victims of violence that is often overlooked in this regard is women, and the suffering that was endured by women during and after war. Barakat and Wardell (2001:17) state that in the case of Afghanistan, it is the widespread, systemic human rights violations of women that are of concern, rather than war-related physical violence against women. There are unintended social ailments such as begging, child labour, and prostitution that arise from such situations as a result of a lack of employment for women, as cited by Barakat and Wardell (2001:25). Related to this phenomenon is the mass exodus of people who fled violence in

Afghanistan, giving rise to (at the time) the largest wave of population displacement into neighbouring countries, notably Pakistan (Barakat & Wardell, 2001:50).

Acts of violence did not subside as expected after the withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan. Pettersson and Wallensteen (2015) report an alarming increase in the violence in Afghanistan after the Soviet forces had withdrawn from Afghanistan, causing over 12,000 deaths. In a similar vein, McIntyre (2019) sketches a dismal picture of anarchy and incidents of extreme violence, often predicated upon the basis of ethnophobia.

Behrends (2015b:721) reports that the attempt at the Sovietisation of Afghanistan resulted in regular outpourings of violence with reports on the war and notably the violence (2015c:676) being withheld from the public. In its stead, he mentions a report that he attributes to Philipp Casula, which demonstrates “the conflict was framed by Soviet narratives about *druzhiba narodov* (friendship of the people) and by the idea of a civilizing mission that was neocolonial in its character” (Behrends, 2015c:676). Counter-narratives steadily emerged as the war progressed, notwithstanding how carefully these *druzhiba narodov* narratives were crafted. This is evidence not only by the journal articles and book chapters cited here, but also other publications that found their way into the public sphere, such as the text which is the subject of this dissertation, namely *Zinky Boys*.

Ackermann and Galbas (2015:8) cite Alexievich’s *Zinky Boys* as a “metaphorical phrase for the violence in Afghanistan recognized all over the Soviet Union”. The authors assert that Gorbachev’s policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost* brought openness and critical debate on the trauma experienced by Soviet soldiers. So too, did the efforts of the Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers add to an increase in the awareness of the cost of the war in Soviet lives. Of significance here is the impact of long-term exposure to violence on the lives of

returning soldiers and their families as well as Soviet society (Ackerman and Galbas, 2015:9). This view of the difficulties experienced by the Soviet soldiers is underscored by Behrends' comment that "[m]any of them describe how they adapted to survival in the violent space; this adaptation made their return to civilian life painful and protracted" (2015c:676). The struggle for recognition by the *afgantsy* (Afghanistan veterans) and entitlement to their veteran's benefits (Behrends, 2015c:184) is another example of institutional violence perpetrated by the leftover coalition of Soviet states in the post-Afghan war stage.

I conclude with an interesting observation made by Bannikov (2004):

The acceptance of violence as a life principle distorts the notion of normal social relations and spreads a belief that being fit for violence is a criterion of social success, while being a former victim justifies the violator in his own eyes, hence the brutal ambitions of all those "real" men living according to "real" concepts based on their knowledge of life they "spooned up" while "smelling powder" or "doing porridge".

The statement demonstrates that societies that welcomed back veterans from the Afghanistan campaigns were themselves in various stages of transition into new entities. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union there was no longer an absolute wielder of power, and often societies in these times of anarchy had to establish their own systems of power and control, hence the acceptance of violence in their midst. In the same sense, perpetrators of violence used violence to establish themselves in various societal positions of influence.

Sub Theme 3.3: Drug use and trafficking

A smaller theme about the Soviet-Afghan war that emerged from the articles and chapters under study, is the theme of drug addiction by armed forces (Behrends, 2015a; Kadykalo, 2015; Astapenia, 2013; Macdonald, 2007; Borovik, 2001; Reuveny and Prakash, 1999; and Iltis, 1996). These authors

point to the use of and addiction to drugs by both conscripts and officers alike. This phenomenon is not only limited to the war period, but is a problem experienced by veterans of the war as well (Astapenia, 2013). The problem of drug dependency was reported to be so acute during the war that soldiers sold equipment and armament to raise funds with which to buy drugs, electronic goods and food (Reuveny and Prakash, 1999).

Kadykalo (2015:72) reports that the withdrawal of the limited contingent of Soviet soldiers at the end of the war contributed to:

...making Afghanistan a powerful exporter of drugs: “Мы ушли из Афганистана, но что лучше—15 000 погибших за десять лет войны или миллионы погибших от афганского героина” (“We walked away from Afghanistan, but what is better—15,000 who died within ten years of war than millions killed by Afghan heroin”)

Afghanistan was left in a state of disarray after the war ended, but the involvement and effects of the engrossment of the United States in the war perpetuated. Kalinovsky (2011:208) reports that the “*mujahadeen* were now dealing in drugs and using US supplied weapons to kill each other”. This involvement by the US has a longer historical origin which is dealt with under the themes of ‘Western support for the war’ and the ‘reasons for engagement in war’. However, as early as 1992, Tamarov opined that the war was fought to maintain the practice of trafficking in drugs, thereby providing a possible cause to the involvement of the war. The widespread practices of the CIA in drugs are reported by McCoy (1997) who contends that there was a strong connection between the CIA, Pakistan, and the mujahadeen by stating “CIA assets again controlled this heroin trade. As the Mujaheddin guerrillas seized territory inside Afghanistan, they ordered peasants to plant opium as a revolutionary tax”. In this regard Neale, (2008) reports “[t]he CIA and the Pakistani ISI also encouraged a massive expansion of opium and heroin production in Afghanistan”.

Ittis (1996) implicates the US directly in trading arms for drugs through its agents by stating “the CIA's covert war in Afghanistan turned that nation into the world's second biggest opiate exporter. For this reason, the full extent of US material aid to the mujahedeen groups will never be known.” Macdonald (2007:86) writes, “the CIA's covert warfare served as a catalyst for the transformation of the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderlands into the world's leading heroin supplier”.

Based on these publications on the use of drugs by Soviet conscripts, officers and veterans, as well as reported abuses of trading for drugs and armament, and the covert involvement of certain Western-allied countries such as the US and its proxy Pakistan, a picture emerges that clearly indicates that drug trafficking has contributed to the failure of the Soviet campaign in Afghanistan. Macdonald (2007:153) grasps the essence of it by stating “[a]s one mujahid said, '[w]e try to poison the Russians with it ... they sell opium and hashish mostly but now also heroin to the Russian soldiers in exchange for guns and to poison their spirit.’”

3.5 THEME 4: PERCEPTIONS OF THE WAR

In setting the stage for a survey of the perceptions of the war, it is first necessary to provide a little background on the PDPA again and the history of Afghanistan at the time. The situation of civil unrest in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan had reached critical mass by the end of 1979 with military support evident from the West, involving suppliers such as several Arab countries, Pakistan and the US (Lyakhovskiy: 2007:3). It is reported that at the time, the PDPA opposition had amassed up to 40,000 members who had initiated unrest in 16 of the 27 provinces and had some exclusively under their control (*loc cit*).

The tipping point came when Amin disposed of his opponent, President Taraki, in mid-September 1979, who had been governing since the April 1978 coup, and had implemented policies of Marxist social and land reforms. The general Muslim population was in revolt against these steps implemented by Taraki, but now faced a decidedly anti-Muslim dictator in the person of Amin. The chances of the suppression of unrest in Afghanistan diminished as Amin “unleashed a wide-scale campaign of terror and repression in the country incompatible with the PDPA’s declared goals” (Lyakhovskiy, 2007:3). Trueman (2015) writes that the Afghan Muslims joined the mujahedeen, which had declared a *jihad* on Amin and his supporters. In addition, from the Soviet side there was uncertainty about Amin’s loyalties to the agenda of the Sovietisation of Afghanistan as “[in]formation about Amin’s contacts with US representatives emerged” (*loc cit*).

The PDPA primarily comprised smaller groupings as well as the two major cultural groupings, namely Khalqis and Parchamis. Amin was anti-Khalqi, and drove the wedge of division even deeper into the party by engaging in a purging of Khalqis (especially in the military) who were in opposition to him (Lyakhovskiy, 2007:3). This, no doubt, left the army seriously weakened and without experience.

When the Soviet military entered Afghanistan in December 1979, they claimed that they had been invited by the PDPA to help stabilise the Amin Government (Trueman, 2015). However, they violently replaced Amin with their own agent, Babrak Karmal, who used to be the Afghan Ambassador to Moscow (Yousaf, 2012). The perception of the Soviet government at the time was to support the Sovietisation of Afghanistan. In the chronology compiled by Chernyaev (2004) on the withdrawal from Afghanistan, he quotes Gorbachev in discussion with Karmal as saying:

...if it is to stand on the account of Marxist-Leninist analysis, on the account of realism, [we] must acknowledge that there is much more work to be done in order to finish the main task: to

ensure the irreversible character of the revolutionary process in Afghanistan.

The support through invasion by the Soviet Union was debated widely, but Behrends questions the legitimacy of the war. He points to the obfuscation of the casualties suffered during the war (2015a:172) by stating that the perception that was perpetuated in the Soviet Union was that "...there was no war – just an 'internationalist mission' –". When Moscow eventually acknowledged the true nature of the war, and became more candid and open about their involvement through the implementation of *glasnost* in the Soviet Union, there remained a lack of legitimacy in the eyes of the Soviet population. However, though the war in Afghanistan had remained in discredit in the three decades following its cessation, Luxmoore (2019) points to a change in the Russian public mood with legislators attempting to "...pronounce the invasion as a just and necessary move".

However, at the time of the conflict, public opinion and perception were decidedly against the Soviet engagement in Afghanistan (Astapenia, 2013; Chernyaev, 1985; Levinson, 2006; and Markowitz, 2009). In this regard, Markowitz (2009) points to strong public opinion in opposition to the war especially from soldiers and military families who took the government to task through citizen letters and any means available. Levinson (2006:14) states:

However, the experience of the Afghan war also shows there comes a time when public resistance to war grows stronger than these factors. Then the war ends. It ends in a military defeat that ultimately turns out to be a victory for society.

The opinion expressed is that public resistance can influence governments and their interests. In this instance, though, the initiatives of *glasnost* and *perestroika* collaborated to bring about the dissolution of the Soviet Union and it was not merely home-based public opinion only.

In a most telling entry in his personal diary (4 April 1985) Chernyaev writes:

I was told the following today: that the CC and Pravda receive literally a torrent of letters about Afghanistan, mostly from regions of Russia and from Siberia. Unlike before, there are very few anonymous anti-Soviet letters. Almost all of them are signed. The main message: why do we need this, and when will it end?! (sic) Women are writing, pitying the young men who are dying and suffering mentally there. They are writing that if "this is so necessary," then send volunteers, at least the commissioned, but not the recruits; because being there and doing what they must do mutilates their souls. Soldiers are writing, sincerely and simply reporting that they do not understand "why we are here." Officers, and even one General, who signed his name, are writing that they are unable to explain to their soldiers, subordinates, "why they are here," and that only from the outside it can seem that they are "fulfilling the international duty," but being there it is impossible to believe.

On 17 October 1985 the following entry shows there is no letting up of the pressure and the public opinion remained firmly in place:

There is a good deal of everything [in the letters]: international duty?! For what? Do the Afghans themselves want us to fulfill (sic) this duty? And is this duty worth the lives of our boys, who do not understand what they are fighting for?.. And why are you (the Soviet leadership) throwing recruits against professional killers and gangsters, who have been taught by the best foreign instructors and who are armed with the best weapons: ten of whom are capable of fighting against a whole brigade?! At least recruit volunteers or something... Besides the letters filled with tears, mothers' grief over the dead and the crippled, heart-rending descriptions of funerals, there are letters of accusation: the Politburo made a mistake and it should be rectified, the sooner the better, because every day is taking lives. (Chernyaev, 17 October 1985).

It is clear from the diary excerpts that public opinion was against the armed conflict in Afghanistan: from the public expressing pity on the underprepared Soviet troops fighting against better trained troops who were better armed

(hinting at the US involvement in equipping and preparing the mujahedeen in guerrilla warfare), to mothers expressing their grief.

Sub Theme 4.1: Journalism during the war

Public opinion cannot form by itself, and is often the result of the hard work and sacrifices of journalists, especially during wartime when it often involved journalists paying the ultimate sacrifice and forfeiting their lives. A more detailed discussion on the press in the Soviet Union is provided in Chapter 4, but here a few observations will suffice to establish the veracity of the claim that there was involvement of the press in covering the war from both sides of the Iron Curtain.

An overview of the landscape is provided by McNair (1991) in his book '*Glasnost, Perestroika and the Soviet Media*'. In the case of the Soviet-Afghan war, it principally involves a dichotomy of reporting between the western media and Soviet journalists. Typically, from the western media, reports tended to popularise the mujahedeen who were portrayed as freedom fighters and rebels (McNair, 1991). The British media as well as the western media adopted the stance of reporting the conflict as a "national war of liberation between freedom-fighting Mujahideen and a Soviet-backed puppet government" (McNair, 1991:108).

Journalists on the Soviet side of the conflict focused on portraying positive images of their own forces that reflect "images of strength, unity, and success in combating the enemy" (McNair, 1991:108). The image of the mujahedeen that is depicted by the Soviet media is one of them as "bandits' (*dushmani*) and 'terrorists'" and creating the impression that most of the Afghani population are in support of the PDPA government in Afghanistan. At the same time, a great deal of coverage on the so-called 'terrorist activities' of the mujahedeen was provided, (more so in the *perestroika* period), especially to strengthen the idea of legitimacy on the side of the Soviet Union.

Steele (2011b) reports that the initial understanding of the Soviet contingent in Afghanistan was that it would be a short-term occupation with victory that would soon be in their grasp, hence they gave the western journalists *carte blanche* to cover their activities. However, very soon “the war became a taboo in the Soviet media, while western journalists who applied for visas for Afghanistan were routinely refused” (Steele, 2011b). The workaround that journalists used in this regard was to enter Afghanistan via Pakistan and the mountainous border that was hard to patrol. The situation had changed by 1981, as the Soviet story was not being heard in the West, therefore a few journalists were granted visas and allowed into Kabul, showing the mujahedeen claims that Kabul was under siege were false. The report that Steele (2011b) presents is one of relative peaceful daily routines in Kabul with very little sign of military presence and activity in the city, itself, while the bazaars were actively participating in commerce.

Female journalists in particular found niches for reportage of the war in Afghanistan, as reported by Madrigal (2012). As women reporters, they were granted access to areas that could not be covered by male reporters, and Madrigal (2012:3) contends that the schism between the traditionalists and supporters of the PDPA was actively felt in the cadre of Afghanistan women.

In an interview with a military journalist, Seica-Kozlowski (2014) reports that journalists operated under difficult conditions, including having to contend with the throttling effect of censorship. In the interview with Nikolai Starodymov he alleges that “we could not mention the dead, the wounded. We were not allowed to write about helicopters, about hepatitis. It oppressed me.” (Seica-Kozlowski, 2014).

The challenges of military journalists are highlighted by Daucé and Seica-Kozlowski (2014) who write:

Their task is to inform society and shape public opinion, but they are also bound by the rules of the armed forces in situations where their own safety is at stake and a war of information is often being waged alongside the war on the ground.

In addition, writes Doucé, military journalists had to balance party ideological correctness in their reporting with State censorship. An observation of note is the following:

Under Gorbachev's glasnost, starting in 1985, the coverage of military matters, became a forum for expressing political criticism, whether by publicising the failures of the war in Afghanistan, bullying of new recruits, corruption among officers or the scandals of the nuclear deterrent (Doucé, 2012).

Kalinovsky (2011) highlights the contribution made by journalists in exposing the vicious nature of the war in Afghanistan as well as the mayhem committed by the soldiers of the Soviet Union. In addition, two of the themes already covered in this chapter that relate to *Dedovshchina* and drug use, were also revealed, with a notable impact on the public.

These revelations, and the emotional public reaction they evoked, contributed to the growing rift between the military and the civilian leadership, which often sided with the journalists (Kalinovsky, 2011:198).

One more notable source that is worth mentioning is Artyom Borovik's book, *The Hidden War: A Russian Journalist's Account of the Soviet War in Afghanistan* (2001). In it, he reveals the hardships endured by the Soviet soldiers, and especially revealing the weakness of the Red Army, and the despair of its soldiers who were engaged in hostilities without clear understanding and purpose.

However, journalists alone did not create perceptions; it was also politicians who fostered popular views of the war in Afghanistan. For example, it is the

British ambassador to Moscow, Rodric Braithwaite, who states that the Soviets were initially reluctant to commit troops to Afghanistan in 1979, recognising that it would not necessarily improve the situation. Braithwaite (2011:323) notes:

All wars lead to an 'epidemic of amorality'...[b]ut they are always accompanied in all wars and in all armies, by murder, torture, cruelty to prisoners, rape, and violent looting, especially when the army is operating outside its own territory.

The situation in which the Soviet Union found itself in Afghanistan is often compared to that of the US in Vietnam. As Trueman (2015) notes:

They knew that Russia had got itself into their own Vietnam and it also provided American Intelligence with an opportunity to acquire any new Russian military hardware that could be used in Afghanistan. Mujahadeen fighters were given access to American surface-to-air missiles – though not through direct sales by America.

The implication of support from the West is clear in this instance, as is the prediction that no clear victor would emerge from the situation, other than those opposing voices who wanted the Soviet Union to disengage from Afghanistan. The financial drain on the Soviet Union was crippling their economy and the mujahadeen was in strife with itself allowing “very strict Muslim Law” to be imposed on the Afghanistan population by the Taliban (Trueman, 2015).

At the cessation of hostilities in Afghanistan in 1992, the Soviet Union had already withdrawn their armed forces in 1989, but had continued to prop up the Karmal regime of the PDPA, which was steadily losing its strength and hold in Afghanistan. The US and Soviet Union had by this time agreed to stop supporting the conflict by making arms available to the opponents in Afghanistan (Blum, 2004). Blum (1998) puts forward an interesting fact that was admitted to in an interview held with Zbigniew Brzezinski (US President Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor from 1977 to 1981) in *Le Nouvel Observateur*

(France), (Jan 15-21, 1998:76) that the US had secret involvement in Afghanistan, and that the Soviet Union was entrapped into invading Afghanistan. The result of the engagement in Afghanistan is that the country reverted back to its Muslim heritage and was ultimately lost to the opportunity of Sovietisation. Neale (2008) points out that this resulted in the discreditation of the left and feminists of Afghanistan.

Perceptions of the war in Afghanistan is not only captured in the hard facts of history and journalism reports, but also in how wars are remembered by the stakeholders, and especially how these memories are deliberately positioned. Kadykalo (2015) demonstrates how a collective identity is emerging for Russian people that is aligned to the power and pride of the Soviet state, and which is trying to abrogate the negative effects of the war and establishing the continuation of the imperial tradition of the Soviet state.

Kadykalo (2015:33) cites the anthology of interviews under study in this thesis, *Zinky Boys*, as an example of “where the disturbing and violent memories of the war in Afghanistan were discussed—in Russia and beyond”. As pointed out by Swartz (1992:108) Alexievich constructs a ‘history of feelings’ of the war, “[h]er work is a compilation of over forty first-person accounts from Soviet veterans or relatives of victims, notably including mothers of the slain, and women veterans, and civilians as well as soldiers”. On her own website *Voices from Utopia*, Alexievich has the following statement published about her book:

1989 saw the publication of *The Boys in Zinc*, a book about the criminal Soviet-Afghan war that had been concealed from the Soviet people for ten years. To collect material for the book Alexiyevich was traveling around the country for four years to meet war victims' mothers and veterans of the Afghan war. She also visited the war zone in Afghanistan. The book was a bombshell and many people could not forgive the author for demythologizing the war. In the first place the military and Communist papers attacked Alexiyevich. In 1992, court proceedings have been opened against the author and her book

in Minsk. The democratically minded public rose in defense of the book. The case was closed.

Particularly telling in this regard is the conflict of perceptions mirrored in this statement. That it is a 'criminal Soviet-Afghan war', 'concealed from the people', that the author engaged in 'de-mythologizing' the war, and how she was attacked by the Communist papers and military, until the public rose in her defence ensuring that the court proceedings failed.

3.6 THEME 5: WITHDRAWAL AND DISSOLUTION OF THE SOVIET UNION

The withdrawal from Afghanistan and subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union are much talked-about topics in the literature about the Soviet-Afghan war (Byrd, 2012; Gompert, 2014; Göransson, 2019; Goodson, 1991; Ostermann, 2004). It is important that when one considers the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan that an appropriate perspective of the activities in the context of the Cold War is retained. In this regard, a range of documentation has become available for public consumption as was demonstrated at the *Towards an International History of the War in Afghanistan* conference that is covered by Ostermann, (2004) in the *Cold War International History Project Bulletin, Issue 14/15*. In this report, the involvement of the Soviet Union in the subcontinent as a whole is visible:

Particularly striking in this regard is Gorbachev's 20 July 1987 conversation with Najibullah about joint retaliatory actions by India and Afghanistan against Pakistan. To cover the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and relieve pressure on the Kabul regime Najibullah suggested the "risky" idea of provoking serious "disturbances" in the border regions of Pakistan in case India launched "a preventive attack, as a sort of demonstration, on Pakistan. Not to occupy its territory but as a show of force."

It is clear from the extract above that Soviet interest was not limited to Afghanistan only, but indeed, the whole of the subcontinent. Relations with Pakistan had been strained, and the Soviet Union had been interested in strengthening ties with India (Ostermann, 2004). However, indications are clear that the USSR was not oblivious to the fact that their withdrawal from Afghanistan would impact on its neighbours and the continued expansion of the mujahedeen, which had proved to be resilient and unstoppable.

The decision to withdraw from Afghanistan was conveyed by Gorbachev to Karmal and this decision was first reported in the Politburo as early as on October 17th, 1985 (Chernyaev, 2006). The information is obtained from the diary that was donated by Anatoly Chernyaev in 2004 to the National Security Archive in the US and was as stated on the National Security Archive website, translated into English by Anna Melyakova and edited by Svetlana Savranskaya. However, a later formal decision was taken by the Politburo and this date is provided by Maley (2010:867), who relates: “[o]n 13 November 1986, the Soviet Politburo took the decision to withdraw Soviet forces over a two-year period.” However, the question that is often debated is put into stark reality by Kalinovsky (2011:2) which is “[w]hy did it take the Soviet Union so long to bring its troops home?” This question is well answered by Kalinovsky (2011:2) who contends:

The single most important reason that Soviet leaders delayed the decision to withdraw for as long as they did is that they continued to believe the USSR could help stabilize Afghanistan, build up the Afghan armed forces, and make the Kabul government more acceptable to its people.

Given that history teaches us that 15 February 1989 marked the last day of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, it is noted that this period slightly exceeded the initial two-year plan. This necessitates a few explanatory comments about the steps set up in the withdrawal plan until it reached its conclusion in 1989.

As stated by Byrd (2012), certain events needed to be implemented to enable the Soviet Union to withdraw with a certain measure of success and without losing face. The first step involved replacing Babrak Karmal on 5 May 1986 with Mohammad Najibullah, who was regarded to be a more effective leader, having gained experience serving as Afghanistan's head of the secret police. The second step is the most telling in that it involved the setting up of "a ceasefire with the mujahedeen forces, a transitional government, and elections" (Byrd, 2012:7). This signalled a reversal of the Sovietisation attempts in favour of one of national reconciliation, which was rejected by the mujahedeen, even though there was a focussed attempt at drawing in local leaders into the government as a third step. These steps additionally included the strengthening of the Afghan security forces, which unintentionally allowed the conflict against the mujahedeen to continue long after the Soviet withdrawal was concluded. The withdrawal included consultation with the UN, resulting in the Geneva Accords in April 1988. The last step was the actual withdrawal of Soviet forces from May 1988 to February 1998.

Maley (2010), captures the essence of themes that emerged from this withdrawal period, namely, Najibullah's reputation that did not align successfully with a policy of national reconciliation as well as the dependence of the Afghan government on financial aid and resources from the Soviet Union to buy the loyalty of party members to uphold the current government. However, with the cessation of assistance from the Soviet Union the Afghan government collapsed in April 1992. An important theme that is highlighted by Maley (2010:868) is one of mortality and he cites up to 240 deaths on a daily basis in Afghanistan over a period of a decade and states, "[t]his high level of mortality was accompanied by shocking and extensive war crimes and human rights violations". This theme is also picked up by authors such as Braithwaite (2011) and Behrends (2015a).

To understand the withdrawal in its proper context, it is necessary to make a few comments about the Soviet occupation and the role of the US. During its

occupation of Afghanistan the Soviet Union learnt two valuable lessons, firstly, that there are limits to military power, and secondly, that foreign intervention was fiercely resisted on the Afghan cultural front (York, 2013). However, it is interesting to note that Neale (1988) holds the opinion that the mujahedeen would have collapsed without the assistance provided by the US. The US intervention was a counter-strategy as part of their own Cold War doctrine to keep the Soviet Union contained and to oppose any expansion of their territory. In this regard, the Office of the Historian (s.a.b.) reports that the intervention in Afghanistan by the Soviet Union was because of its “Brezhnev Doctrine, which held that once a country became socialist Moscow would never permit it to return to the capitalist camp”.

Taken in context, Gompert (2014) believes that the Soviet Union abandoned the Brezhnev Doctrine when Gorbachev came to power and instituted his reform policies. This explains why the Soviet Union was still attempting to influence events in Afghanistan via its proxy, Dr Najibullah, to entrench it as a communist state until its own collapse due to the implementation of *glasnost* and *perestroika*.

The National Security Archive’s official chronology of the Soviet-Afghan War (2004) compiled by Anatoly S. Chernyaev, indicates that the *Pravda* newspaper in its issue of 18 February 1988, published an announcement that stated its hope “that the Afghan people choose the path of peace and unity, as only this path will put an end to bloodshed and will contribute to the establishment of tranquillity on the land of ancient Afghanistan” (Chernyaev, 2004). It is clear that the Soviet Union believed that a stabilised Afghanistan would rebuff any takeover by Western powers.

The withdrawal of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan has impacted on a wide front as illustrated by the collection of chapters selected by Saikal, and Maley (1989) in their publication *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*. These cover

the Geneva Accords, regional politics, Soviet domestic policies, Sino-Soviet relations, and Soviet alliances. However, other articles that cover the withdrawal raise troubling issues. With the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan, it is perhaps surprising that President Najibullah managed to continue in power for a few years until he was overcome by mujahedeen forces and the eventual collapse of the Afghanistan forces. Another point of interest is the collapse of the Soviet Union, especially, as this was perhaps the biggest surprise to the West (Çiçek, 2015; Morewood, 1988).

Kalinovsky and Kalinovsky (2011) write about the support rendered to Najibullah:

In the years 1989–1992, the government of the Republic of Afghanistan, supported by Soviet advisers and armaments, continued to hold out against mujahedeen groups backed by Pakistan, the United States, and Saudi Arabia.

Kalinovsky and Kalinovsky (2011:179) make it clear that it was becoming less important to the Soviet Union that the Kabul regime should not collapse following its withdrawal from Afghanistan, as “the need to guard the Soviet Union’s reputation as a defender of global national liberation movements decreased as the country’s superpower status evaporated at the end of 1989”.

Reuveny and Prakash (1999) provide a critical assessment of how the Soviet-Afghan War affected the Soviet Union and its politics, and contributed towards its dissolution: firstly, intervention in other countries through military measures clearly proved itself to be ineffective. Secondly, the Red Army became estranged from its party-political association and proved ineffective against the mujahedeen, demonstrating thereby that it was not unconquerable. This factor encouraged non-Russian nations to seek their liberation from the Soviet Union. Thirdly, the perception that this was a Russian engagement utilising non-Russians against Afghanistan provided a common cause to those states

wishing to be free of their membership of the Soviet Union. Lastly, the role of the media changed even before *glasnost* was effected, new forms of political participation emerged, and deposited a large number of war veterans in their home countries who agitated against “the political hegemony of the communist party” (Reuveny and Prakash, 1999:693).

These four reasons are echoed by Çiçek (2015) who postulates that:

...the war in Afghanistan, albeit not being the sole reason of the collapse, accelerated the process of the dissolution of the Soviet Union through the political, economic, military, and social consequences that it created.

Çiçek (2015) notes several important events in the timeline of the Soviet Union which accelerated this process of dissolution. Notably, the Supreme Soviet’s formal acknowledgement of former countries that vied for independence in 1989. The formal dissolution of the Soviet Union that took place on 26 December 1991 is thus characterised by the recognition of the independence of these former Soviet states.

Moss (2017) indicates that the policy of *glasnost* had the opposite effect to the intended, with “...Gorbachev’s reforming efforts, though designed to strengthen Communism in the long term, led to its downfall and the resurgence of religion...”. It is the opinion of Morewood (1988) that the reforms introduced by Gorbachev (*glasnost* and *perestroika*) could be causally attributed to the structural changes that led to the Soviet Union collapsing. A clear case is made by Reynolds (2009) as well as Harari (2016) that the Soviet Union, though a fierce competitor of the West in technology, was lagging behind in computer technology. Harari (2016) states:

Socialism, which was very up to date a hundred years ago, failed to keep up with the new technology of the late 20th century. Leonid Brezhnev and Fidel Castro held on to ideas that Marx and

Lenin formulated in the age of steam, and did not understand the power of computers and biotechnology.

The sentiment expressed here is perhaps most visible in the frequent references made in *Zinky Boys* to Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan obtaining technological objects of entertainment, such as cassette recorders. These instances will be covered in more detail in chapter six.

In summary, the withdrawal from Afghanistan by the Soviet Union was not only due to a failed implementation of the Brezhnev policy, but because military might proved itself ineffectual against cultural and ideological conviction. The cost implications of sustaining the war were bleeding the Soviet economy dry and it was technologically not on a par with the Western countries such as the US, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, which were supporting the mujahedeen. With the collapse of the Soviet Union a new era of challenges through anarchy and violence were ushered into Russian history, so much so, that the first decade after the dissolution of the Soviet Union is referred to as the “lost decade” (McIntire, 2019). McIntire (*loc cit*) cites hyperinflation, a drop of 40% in GDP in Russia, and capital losses amounting to billions of dollars every month. The Commonwealth of Independent States (New York Times, 1991) was formed in the place of the USSR comprising eleven of the now former USSR countries, thus established in the place of the now dissolved Soviet Union.

3.7 THEME 6: VETERANS AND WOMEN AS VICTIMS OF THE WAR

This section consists of two subsections, namely veterans as victims of war, and women as victims of war. From the literature surveyed, it became apparent that the Soviet veterans were victims of institutional violence in that their privileges as war veterans were not fully granted to them by the State. Additionally, in suffering agency because of the *Gewaltraum* of Afghanistan, they endured much on behalf of the Soviet Union which disavowed them as war veterans.

Soviet women too, suffered as victims of the war. In the first instance, those who went to serve in Afghanistan were tarnished as being women of loose morals, and secondly, the mothers who lost sons and daughters in the war were also victimised. This victimisation was not only limited to the personal grief that they experienced, but they suffered from institutional violence too in that they struggled to access their privileges that accrued to them as mothers who had lost sons in the war.

Sub Theme 6.1: Veterans as victims

In much of the literature that I surveyed (Astapenia, (2013); Behrends, 2015a; Sieca-Kozlowski, 2011 and 2013), veterans are portrayed as victims of the ravages of war and orphaned by the motherland. Danilova (2007) makes a poignant observation that “every war creates a new ‘lost generation’, veterans of wars and military operations”. In addition, she adds that since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the problems experienced by veterans has been widely discussed in the media and by the public.

The problem in recognising veterans of the Soviet Union relates to the context of the Second World War, also known as the Great Patriotic War. Veterans who saw active duty in this war were beneficiaries of the stipulations of a well-developed policy according them exceptional privileges and benefits. However, since the involvement in Afghanistan was not portrayed as a war, and information about conflict was withheld from the public during the first four years of the war, the Soviet Union could not accord its personnel the status of veteran as ‘there was not war’ (Danilova, 2007). In instances where veterans had been wounded in Afghanistan they would be compensated and were accorded the “status of a disabled Veteran of the Great Patriotic War”, but all other veterans were not recognised and merely regarded as “ex-service personnel” (*loc cit*).

Ostensibly, veterans were supposed to receive the same benefits as from 1983 as those who partook in the Great Patriotic War, but it was difficult for veterans to find help from their government, as summarised by Danilova (2007):

The indifference of local authorities to soldiers' queries was exemplified in a typical statement: "Well, we did not send you to Afghanistan". The Soviet society partly shared this opinion.

The impact of *glasnost* and *perestroika* changed how the involvement in Afghanistan was publicly perceived, and taking into consideration the fact that the involvement in Afghanistan was portrayed as a "mistake of the Soviet government", there were dire consequences for the veterans. Danilova writes:

Consequently, the participants of the war were named as war criminals, killers and victims of the last Soviet war. The end of the war coincided with the general breakdown of the Soviet Union that led to a chain reaction of rash political and economical reforms which radically changed all aspects of the Soviet life, including, the lives of the Afghan war soldiers.

The psychological impact on soldiers who were serving in Afghanistan was immense, keeping in mind what Behrends (2015a) had stated about the whole country being a *Gewaltraum*. In an interview conducted by Seica-Kozlowski (2011) with a former military psychologist, Igor Soloviev, this notion is clearly articulated:

Among my friends who served in Afghanistan, there is only one who kept his family together. After serving there for two years, they returned as completely different people. Their wives had to accept completely different people. A man who returned from there was not the one she married. Families fell apart. This is additional trauma.

In a similar vein, Seica-Kozlowski (2013) reports that the State passed on responsibility to social networks: wives, families, and friends. The wife often

simultaneously provided psychological and financial support. The psychological afflictions endured by returning soldiers from Afghanistan soon destroyed the reputation of the invincible Red Army; as Sieca-Kozlowski states “[u]nder Brezhnev, the myth of endurance was undermined by the return of the veterans of Afghanistan physically and psychologically destroyed” (*loc cit*). The article further reports that returning soldiers who presented psychological symptoms were studied psychologically, but regrettably efforts were focussing on the prevention of post-traumatic-stress-disorder rather than treatment.

To better understand the hardships that were endured by returning soldiers from Afghanistan, Kalinovsky and Kalinovsky, (2011) provide a picture of the extent of the conflict:

By the time the last Soviet soldier returned to his native soil in February 1989, over 13,000 of his comrades had fallen in the Afghan dirt, and another 40,000 were wounded. Countless more returned home scarred by the war, in ways that sometimes manifested themselves only years later. Estimates of Afghan losses vary, but it is believed that anywhere from 800,000 to 1.2 million Afghans died as a result of the fighting.

Kazemek (1996) describes the situation regarding the veterans as one where there is insufficient understanding of their hardships: “Participants are beginning to speak out; there is simmering bitterness; there are conflicting beliefs and opinions regarding these revelations”. In this regard Behrends (2015:a) reports that veterans encountered difficulties in reintegrating with society in the Soviet Union. The experiences that these veterans were subjected to while on active duty in Afghanistan changed their values and frame of reference. Their integration back into Soviet society was complicated by the complex political stance that the Soviet Union took during the Cold War, as illustrated by the following statement (Behrends, 2015b:722):

Until 1987, the Soviet press and publications remained in a state of denial: they insisted on the internationalist mission to build

socialism... Soldiers returning from the battlefield were told to keep quiet and those fallen returned in the infamous zinc caskets, and were delivered and buried late at night. These politics of misinformation were initially successful, but eventually contributed to discrediting the war effort.

Similarly, Ackerman and Galbas (2015:2) add:

Certain specific features of the Soviet–Afghan conflict, such as its asymmetric nature, and the unwillingness of Soviet officials to address the violent character of the Soviet invasion, have had a long-term impact on the veterans of the war.

In describing the challenges facing these veterans, Astapenia (2013) focuses on the issue of drug dependency among veterans:

The war in Afghanistan brought not only numerous deaths and disabilities to Belarusians, but after the beginning of the war in Afghanistan in 1979 drug addiction in the Soviet Union grew enormously. Soviet soldiers *en masse* became drug addicts -- and they brought this habit back home with them.

Astapenia (*loc cit*) points out that the soldiers of Belarus could not identify with the need for the war in Afghanistan and deemed that the Soviet involvement was “a point of shame and disgrace”. In addition, many of them refused to accept any medals following the war as they regarded the war as alien to them.

The way in which wars are remembered impact on the behaviour of those returning veterans. Göransson (2019) writes of the revival of camaraderie among veterans through the use of *Odnoklassniki*, a social media platform for old friends and classmates. In their interactions with one another, they find a shared understanding of what it means to be a veteran of the Soviet-Afghan war. In this regard, Sklokina (2015:133) reports ideas of “military brotherhood” and “masculine values of courage and dignity, as well as in Soviet nostalgia and paternalism” which unify the veterans into social agency. Kamienski (2017:226) reports that up to 44% of returning Afghantsi required “specialized psychological

assistance, although no such support was available". He reports that "those who needed it were drawn to alcohol, toxic substance abuse, substance addiction and even suicide" (op cit).

An area of study that has not received much attention judging by my literature survey is the impact of mental health on civilians in countries afflicted by conflict, hence in a sense, veterans of conflict. Murthy and Lakshminarayana (2006:25) identify the mental health of such civilian populations as a significant factor and have concluded that women are affected more than men. In their study conducted in Afghanistan, they found that the disabled, the elderly, and children are identified as vulnerable groups. Various psychological symptoms present in the groups surveyed. It is reported that "[s]ymptoms of depression were observed in 38.5% of respondents, symptoms of anxiety in 51.8% and PTSD in 20.4%" (2006:26).

Ducloux (2016:5) reports that in Uzbekistan veterans of the Soviet-Afghani war are viewed disparagingly, and especially so the women who volunteered to serve:

...it is unsurprising to see that, among these former "Afghans", women are even more "invisible". When asked about these doctors, nurses or canteen workers that served in Afghanistan, Uzbeks speak of them as "aliens" or equate them to "prostitutes".

At this point, I wish to turn to the theme of women as a grouping that, like the veterans, were negatively affected by the war.

Sub Theme 6.2: Women as victims

In an interview held in 2001 by Jana Wendt with Zieba Shorish-Shamley, the question was put to Shorish-Shamley to describe life of a woman today under the Taliban. The response provided by Shorish-Shamley indicates that Afghan

women cannot participate in the public sphere of their society. Whilst this observation falls outside the demarcated timeline of the study, it is noteworthy that the Taliban emerged from the chaos that erupted following the withdrawal of the Soviet forces in 1989, having been taught in Islamic schools set up for Afghanistan refugees (Canfield, 2004:174).

Atashi (2015) contends that there are likely several factors that have contributed to the suffering of women in Afghanistan. Considering the history of Afghanistan and the efforts to modernise Afghanistan by the PDPA, she postulates the viewpoint that women occupied a central role in what was perceived to be wrong in Afghanistan:

By the time the Soviets left, women became emblematic of everything that had gone wrong during the foreign occupation. Once a symbol of honour, women represented modernity and dishonour. The Mujahedeen's way to regain the moral past was to get rid of the altered state of women's bodies and spaces they came to inhabit (Atashi, 2015:27).

Communities in Afghanistan, writes Steele (2011a), have a history of violence against women. Some of the restrictions placed on women that Steele lists, include underage marriage, restriction on movement out of the home compound, withholding education and employment from women, and forced isolation. It is important to understand the context of this social arrangement as the honour of men and the reputation of Afghan families in society rely on the perception of the women in that family. Barakat and Wardell (2001:13) state "[c]onsequently, a primary obligation for women is to uphold family honour by conforming to socially and culturally accepted norms of behaviour".

One of the characteristics of the PDPA is that in their attempts at modernising, they focused on advancing women's education, and indeed, in the cities, women were occupying positions in government, industry and business (Barakat and Wardell, 2001:15). This was not, however, the case in the rural

areas, which had a stronger traditional character. The Soviet military intervention in the rural areas where the mujahedeen were based, caused wide-scale destruction of infrastructure and claimed many lives, causing the displacement of approximately five million Afghans (Barakat and Windell, 2001:15).

In an ethnographic research project conducted by Shalinsky (1993) in Afghanistan, she discovered that education of women and children about the *jihad* in Afghanistan is accomplished with the use of tape recorders and stories involving the Prophet Muhammad. In an example cited by Shalinsky (1993:661), women are admonished to “dress modestly and veil themselves, thus preventing the necessity for another jihad and thereby fostering a new Islamic state”. Shalinsky (1993:662) explains the complex understanding of desire and reason, where reason is achieved through studying the Quran, and a woman is frequently depicted as desirous, as her sexuality will lead her to temptation and to sin. Therefore, a woman who does not wear a veil is seen to be sinful as she is leading men to sin as well. Such women, often living in the cities and associated with the PDPA’s attempts at modernisation, are alleged to contribute to ethnic and political tension in Afghanistan (Shalinsky, 1993).

In a research note based on the theme of women in arms set in the Uzbekistan context, Ducloux (2016) observes that in the *nomenklatura* of independent Uzbekistan, the Afghan veterans are disparaged and forgotten. Afghan veterans, and especially women, are not honoured in the memory of Uzbeks, and “[w]hen asked about these doctors, nurses or canteen workers that served in Afghanistan, Uzbeks speak of them as “aliens” or equate them to “prostitutes”.

In a master’s thesis entitled *The Soviet-Afghan War: Female Perspective and Participation*, Madrigal (2012) argues that there is a *lacuna* in the research that “combines a collection of all three female perspectives: foreign journalists,

Afghan women, and Russian women”. Madrigal (2012:53) reports that women often faced similar challenges during periods of war, necessitating taking risks, such as female journalists who, aided by interpreters, put themselves at risk to get and write first-hand accounts of the conflict. Similarly, Afghan women had either to commit to fleeing the country or to staying in Afghanistan and align themselves with their cultural tradition, or to join the Sovietisation-drive of Afghanistan. Russian women who were in Afghanistan in support of their husbands as non-military support personnel faced harsh criticism upon their return to the Soviet Union, and those who served as support personnel were often denigrated and misunderstood to be comfort-women to the soldiers. As with all other veterans in Afghanistan, women too received little recognition and assistance upon their return from Afghanistan.

In his diary entry of 17 October 1985, Anatoly Chernyaev comments on Gorbachev reading letters received from the public in the Politburo. In these letters various criticisms were raised against international duty, the draft system, and the poor training and weapons offered to Soviet soldiers compared to those received by the mujahedeen. In addition, the plight of women, specifically mothers who had to bury their sons or had to live with their crippled sons, were brought to the fore. Kalinovsky and Kalinovsky (2011:198-199) similarly comment on the increasing uncensored publicity of the war during the period of *glasnost* and the resulting distance it brought between civilian and military leadership. He notes in particular, the growth of support for groups like the Soldiers’ Mothers Organisation, which further exposed practices like *Dedovshchina* and accentuated the grief experienced by mothers who had lost sons in the war.

The grief and fate of these mothers are well-described by Tamarov (2001:3) who portrays the situation sympathetically:

They were eighteen and nineteen years old. At home, their mothers were waiting for them, mothers who had given birth to them, who carried them in their arms when they were small, who woke them up to go to school, who couldn't do anything when their sons were taken into the army, who couldn't do anything when – instead of their sons – they were presented with a form: "Your son perished while fulfilling his international duty in Afghanistan..."

Now, our troops have returned from Afghanistan.

Now, our government has announced that the war was "a mistake".

Now, I think about the results of this *mistake*. Tens of thousands killed, hundreds of thousands of bodies crippled and fates twisted. That is the only result of this war. What can any war give, aside from such results?

The war in Afghanistan is portrayed from the Soviet side as "a mother's war" in *Zinky Boys* by Narrator 23 Major Propaganda Section Artillery. The sentiment is more deeply appreciated when taken in the context of Tamarov's portrayal above. It was a war in which the mothers were waiting for their eighteen and nineteen-year-olds to return home uninjured. The portrayal of a protective and nurturing motherly figure in the quotation above is particularly striking, considering the images of giving birth, carrying the little ones around, and waking them for school. The image is strengthened by the portrayal that the mothers are incapacitated by their sons being taken from them and put into the army, and especially the notification that their son was killed in Afghanistan. The relationship between mothers and sons is strongly projected, lending credibility to the claim that it is not only the combatant who suffers, but the mothers at home, the families at home are particularly affected by the Soviet decision to involve them in the war in Afghanistan.

The portrayal by Tamarav moves to the present, to the now, to troops that have returned and a government that brands the war as a mistake. Tamarov confronts the reader with the binary opposition of causality and effect, now there are thousands dead, thousands crippled, thousands of fates twisted, and it is

not as if it came as a surprise as mankind and governments should know by now that these are results that emerge from each and every war ever fought.

3.8 CONCLUSION

The thematic survey presented in this chapter has the purpose to provide a well-documented and referenced background against which the text of *Zinky Boys* was interpreted. In presenting the themes, I used the chronological advancement that is commonly found in most story-lines, by progressing from the beginning, through the middle part to the end of the story. Hence, I began by discussing the causes of the war, the drivers that sustained the war, and the behaviour or agency of those engaged in the war. It is important to present the differing perceptions of the war as it helps understand the agency of the participants. The discussions lead to a conclusion by first discussing the withdrawal and dissolution of the Soviet Union, before the effect of the war on the veterans and women is discussed.

As can be seen from the pages preceding the conclusion, there are a number of journal articles, books, and internet articles that chronicle the Soviet-Afghan war. The themes presented here are harvested from the topics covered by these sources, but are by no means exhaustively covered, as there is an over-abundance of sources which cannot all be included in this discussion.

The discussion above notes the increasing desire by Afghanistan to be less dependent upon the Soviet Union as a reason to seek treaties with the West. In this regard, both Presidents Daoud and Amin sought to strengthen relations with the West. The anti-socialist sentiment, and more importantly, the importance of the predominant Islamic culture in the country that opposed socialism, are reasons why the Soviet Union decided to involve itself in supporting the Afghanistan government against the uprising.

The anti-socialist drive encouraged by the traditional culture existent among Afghanistan's rural population is a key ideological driver, together with the predominance of the Islamic faith that fuelled the resistance against the socialist reform efforts and which garnered international support for their cause. The cultural disassociation that was felt by most of the traditionalist population in Afghanistan is yet another key driver of the conflict that should be taken into account in evaluating the opposition to socialism in Afghanistan. The ideal of nation-building through modernising Afghanistan miscarried as it put women into cultural opposing roles to their accepted traditional and Islamic roles in the communities. In the effort to prevent the dominance of socialism, the restoration of the traditional role of women in communities additionally fuelled the drive to combat socialism. Because of Cold War context, these efforts were met with support by Western countries that allied themselves against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

The discussion shows that three important behaviours emerged because of the agentic state in which the Soviets found themselves to be in while in Afghanistan. In the heterotopia of the Sovietverse in Afghanistan, the practice of *Dedovshchina* as a key practice in establishing identity and rite of passage escalated to proportions that exceeded those normally encountered during peacetime. Taken in combination with the *Gewaltraum* that was Afghanistan at the time, it added to the practice and occurrence of violence that characterised the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. With their ethics and mores suppressed by the use of drugs and alcohol, the causal impact that the Soviets had on escalating violence among the Afghan population was notable.

The Western publicised views of the Soviet Union as transgressor taken together with its denial and lack of willingness to be held accountable for its involvement in Afghanistan contributed to popular sentiment being turned decidedly against the Soviet Union in the public sphere. The delayed emergence of the truth within the Soviet Union communities as revealed by the

Soviet media had an adverse effect on the Soviet population, who opposed the involvement of the Union in Afghanistan.

The literature under review shows that the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from Afghanistan was prompted by the realisation that they were involved in a war that could not be won by them, and bears resemblance to the involvement of the United States in Vietnam. Whilst the war in Afghanistan is not likely to be the reason why the Soviet Union disintegrated, it can certainly be viewed as a contributor to the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Having provided a background to Afghanistan and the war in Afghanistan, it is now necessary to provide a discussion of the theoretical lens through which I approached this study. This is done through the construction of a conceptual framework that is discussed in chapter four, and is followed by a discussion of the methodological framework in chapter five.

CHAPTER 4: THE CONCEPTUAL-THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Meanings are not mental objects bounded in conceptual places but rather complex operations of projection, binding, linking, blending, and integration over multiple spaces.

(Turner, 1996:57)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the theoretical lenses that I have used in this thesis. In seeking to frame the public moral argument and to explain the attitude and behaviours of the interviewees in *Zinky Boys*, it is important to provide a firm grounding to the study, as depicted and discussed forthwith.

4.1.1 Concept map to the conceptual framework in figure 4.1

The conceptual framework in figure 4.1 below illustrates my constructed framework that demonstrates how the framing elements that I discuss relate to one another in this chapter. As with any academic approach to researching and writing a thesis, the theories that are selected as underpinning to the study are critical elements. In this instance, deriving from the title of this study *Communicating a Public Moral Argument: A textual analysis of Svetlana Alexievich's Zinky Boys: Soviet Voices from the Afghanistan War*, the importance of deriving a 'public' and 'moral' argument were two key factors that needed theoretical underpinning. (I make this statement with some hesitation, as the general approach to interpretive practice is more theory developing in nature than hypothesis and theory testing). Therefore, since the moral argument is public, I chose Jürgen Habermas' theory of the Public Sphere as a key theory to demonstrate that in this particular case, given the context of the Cold War and the non-democratic/capitalist nature of the sphere, there existed a Russian Public Sphere with unique characteristics that provide context to the literature under study, and would likewise frame any interpretation thereof. Secondly,

since I chose to make a textual analysis of the phenomenological experiences narrated by the survivors and their immediate family members, Walter Fisher's Narrative Paradigm was selected to extrapolate an intertext from which a public moral argument was derived, which, as demonstrated later in this chapter, is ontological in nature.

However, theories cannot be mixed without a rationale that demonstrates the relationship of these theories within the study in question. It follows that a cohesive whole is needed that will demonstrate touchpoints of importance which guide the approach to the study, such as the importance of the binding elements or variables in the study. Anthony Giddens' concepts of Agency and Double Hermeneutics, as well as Gramsci's notion of the Subaltern are important in understanding how the public sphere and narrative paradigm integrate. It follows that the notions of ontology and social spaces provide a backdrop to understanding how phenomenological experiences are narrated as life-experiences. The conceptual framework finally demonstrates that an intertext was constructed as part of the narrative analysis process that crystallised into a public moral argument, which is, as the title of the study indicates, the purpose of the study.

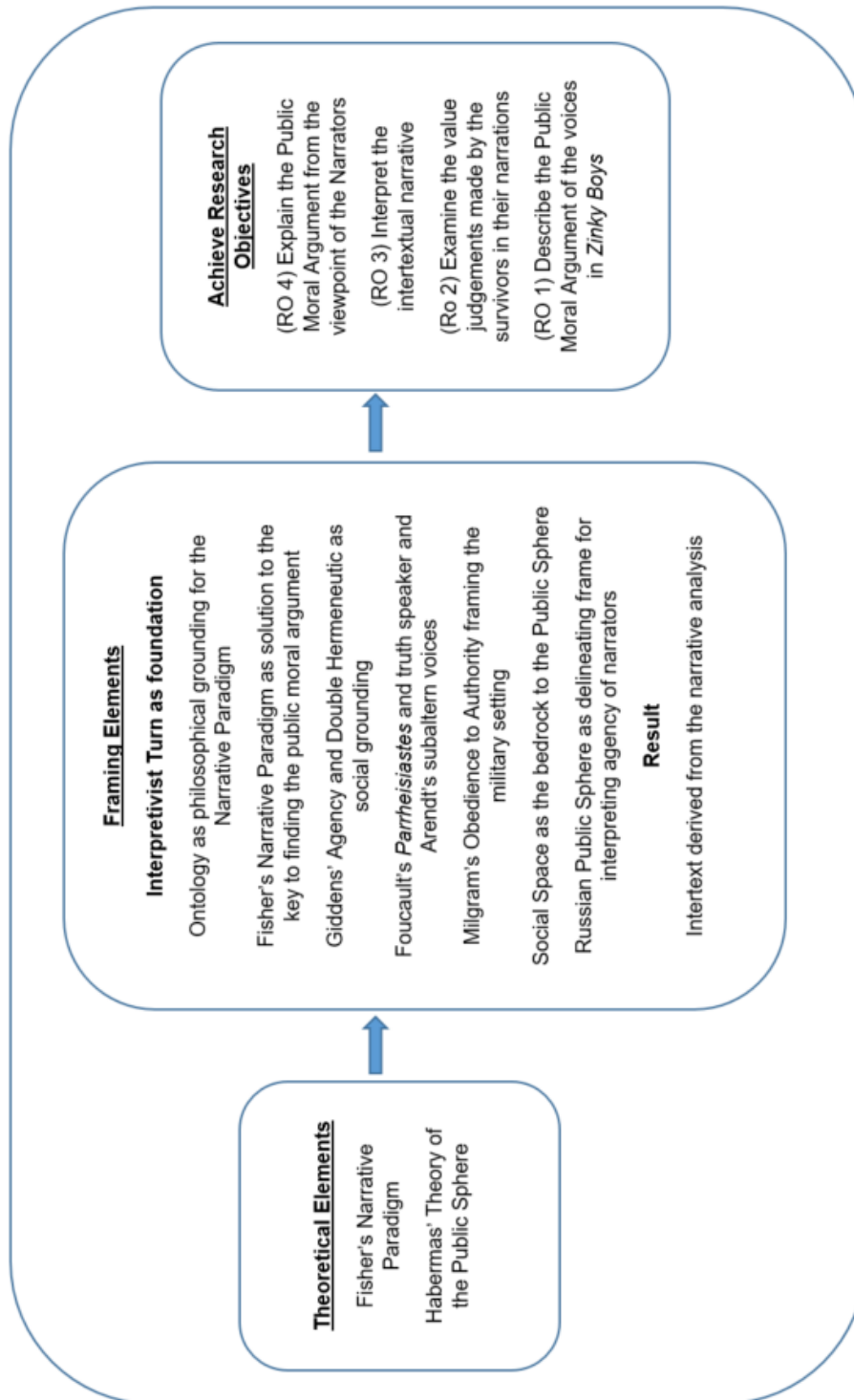


Figure 4.1 Conceptual framework for the Study

From the onset, I believe it is important to explain the theoretical lens that I applied, in that I see and understand the narrator as a 'being' in a specific

context, who is communicating a public moral argument. Therefore, to properly ground the narrative focal point, I chose Fisher's theory of the Narrative Paradigm as it enables one to conduct a narrative analysis, not so much on the *logos* or argumentative value of the narrative, but rather on the phenomenological narrative, which is a distinctive marker of the cultural turn to the narrative. This means that the dialectical and rhetorical narrative perspectives lie central in the study. Secondly, as the title implies with a 'public moral argument', there is a need to investigate how phenomenological experiences of individuals are interpreted in social spaces, or the public sphere, hence the need to contextualise the narratives in their public sphere, with specific positioning in the Russian public sphere. It is this interpretivist approach to the stories of the narrators, that positions the study within the domain of the *Interpretivist Turn*, as I explain below.

I am indebted to Herbert Grabes' 2010 article titled *Theory Coming in Turns: Epistemology, Heuristics, and Fashion* for introducing me to Dr Doris Bachmann-Medick's writing on *Cultural Turns. New Orientations in the Humanities and Social Sciences* (2016), in which she discusses the term 'cultural turn' in the humanities and social sciences. Bachmann-Medick argues on her homepage (English version) that:

If the humanities and social sciences of the last thirty years are reconstructed systematically from the perspective of their different *turns* – so this study argues –, a new and specific understanding of cultural studies comes to the fore: not as an autonomous discipline but as a multi-layered medium for transdisciplinary encounters and translation – with a high and new productivity for a transnational opening up of the study of culture

(Bachmann-Medick, 2019).

It is within this notion of *turns*, and specifically the *Interpretivist Turn* and as a methodological approach, that I wish to ground my theoretical praxis. I am particularly excited by Arthur Bochner's (2014) reflections on the narrative in his

book *Coming To Narrative: A Personal History of Paradigm Change in the Human Sciences*, and his preface in the book that lists important turns in the development of the Narrative Turn. This preface in particular led me to Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3) who make an important claim: “now, at the beginning of the 21st century, the narrative turn has been taken.” Bochner (2014:272) confirms that narrative and storytelling research have become established fields of narrative enquiry and practice and adds that the “narrative turn is predicated on what Charles Taylor (1989) calls the study of persons rather than things”.

Following Hjørland (1998:607), I will use a broader approach than the traditional practice of basing the research approach on a single theory, because a metatheoretical approach is linked to various philosophical views, interdisciplinary, and contained within the *turn* or trend that holds sway in a given paradigm. I discuss the development of the *turn* in more detail later in this chapter.

In alignment with Fisher’s (1984) contention that the narrative paradigm is ontological in nature, and because the stage on which the narratives are produced is an open, public sphere, my approach in this research, though being interpretivist, will centre on the public sphere and the narrative paradigm. The reason for this is that they function as theoretical anchors for this study to provide a framework for the interpretation of *Zinky Boys*, as indicated in my opening statements in the chapter.

Whilst this thesis comprises a two-pronged theoretical anchor, on the one hand depending on Habermas’ (1991) Public Sphere and on the other Fisher’s (1987) Narrative Paradigm, one finds that interpreting the text of *Zinky Boys* requires a ‘thick description’ of the meaning derived through a close reading of the text (Denzin, 1989; Geertz, 1973). This is necessary as Geertz stresses immersion in the cultural context in which the study takes place and Denzin notes the importance of the historical situation. Such a thick description is not possible if I

suppress the multi-layeredness and transdisciplinary nature of the interpretivist tradition. Therefore, my application of the *Interpretivist Turn* in social science includes associated theories, notions and models, which I see as a 'meta-theoretical turn' or research paradigm that will enable a thick interpretivist reading of the text, starting with the individual at the centre. Having placed the ontological individual in the centre, it is imperative to understand the concept of 'being'.

4.2 AWARENESS OF BEING

In understanding the *Interpretivist Turn*, it is important to note that as an individual who functions in a cultural context (Bachmann-Medick, 2019), it is in my nature to relate to and reflect on my experiences in the context of a given time, or space. This awareness brings forward a much older, historic problem of human existence and identity, and how they present themselves; which necessitates discussion that will prepare a starting point for further exploration of the metatheoretical discussion on public spaces, public spheres, agency and the narrative paradigm. As a starting point, I wish to first go back to a more basic question pertaining to our state of existence. This leads me to briefly consider ontological aspects (the nature of being) of existence that lie at the heart of metaphysical philosophy, which traditionally uses an empiricist approach to understand fundamental aspects of our reality and relationships. The empirical nature of our knowledge presupposes that there is an *a priori*, which is the result of our sensory input, and experience, that confirms the existence of ourselves, our world, and objects to which we relate in our world. Therefore, the epistemological, or knowledge, from this viewpoint, is based on experience. Was it not Camus who posited that there is no truth other than experience, and a multitude of truths, and that man is always prey to his truths?

When René Descartes first pondered an explication of his personally perceived state of existence with his now famous statement, *Cogito, ergo sum* 'I think,

therefore I am', he stimulated a debate that would continue for centuries on the topic of how individuals perceive their existence. In saying this, he adapted an epistemological view of knowledge by placing a focus on the rational aspects of thinking and being, as is evidenced by the Cartesian system that resulted from Descartes' system of reasoning. Thus in the ancient philosophical sense you have an opposite thought in the focus on empirical evidence of sensory evidence versus Descartes' rational focus on knowledge.

In more recent times, there is a fitting example from Classical Philosophy as is evidenced by Martin Heidegger's (1927) seminal work, *Being and Time*, in which he describes 'Being' as *Dasein* (Heidegger, 1962:7) 'there is' or a state of 'there-being' (Wheeler, 2020). Heidegger attempts a description of 'Being' rather than a definition of 'Being' as he contends that it (Being) has a universal nature that 'transcends' other universalities such as the concept of a genus (Heidegger; 1962:3). The universal transcendental nature of 'Being', Heidegger argues, is one that was begun by Aristotle who broke with the traditional way of thinking popularised by Plato. This line of reasoning was picked up again in the medieval times with discussions using the designator 'transcendens' in reference to 'Being'. Early in the first half of the 19th century, when Hegel uses the term 'indeterminate immediate' as an attempt in defining 'Being' when he formulated his 'Doctrine of Being', the first of three divisions in his Science of Logic, I see this line as a continuous line of reasoning.

'Being' as understood by Heidegger was not only the most universal of concepts, but was also a concept that eluded definition as it did not share the same character of a typical entity, hence its origin cannot be pinpointed as an aid in defining it, therefore the thinking patterns of traditional logic are insufficient in application in this instance. One of the few affirmative descriptions offered by Heidegger is that 'Being' is a self-evident concept (1962:4). He postulates that 'Being' is subject to an "...*a priori* an enigma"

(1962:4), which in my opinion, is in itself a theoretical reasoning in its purest form.

Heidegger postulates that we designate many things as 'Being', and proceeds to evoke examples that typically result from the use of our human senses, such as talking and seeing. Our behaviour and responses to entities he describes as how we 'comport' to things that confirm our 'Being', "what we are is 'Being', and so is how we are" (Heidegger; 1962:7). From this line of reasoning flows that the existence of ourselves and the realities that we experience, and the substance of things, confirm that 'Being' lies "...in *Dasein*, in the there is" (Heidegger; 1962:8). He takes a stance by stating that a priority of *Dasein* has announced itself. Heidegger's approach to 'Being' is essentially interpretivist as he says "[t]he phenomenology of *Dasein* is a hermeneutic in the primordial signification of this word, where it designates this business of interpreting" (Heidegger, 1962:62).

4.2.1 The phenomenological sense of Being

At this juncture, I wish to introduce a brief discussion on phenomenology, as it provides context to how we interpret and talk about the lived realities that we experience as well as the realities that others experience, which also comport to our sense of being. Phenomenology refers to the way in which reality is investigated by virtue of its intended meaning, remembered acts, and the way in which it is projected. Founded by Edmund Husserl, the theory holds that "Phenomenology is a philosophy of experience. For phenomenology the ultimate source of all meaning and value is the lived experience of human beings" (Armstrong, 2005).

Spiegelberg (1975) takes the view that phenomenology belongs to the domain of analytical philosophy. He portrays it to be a philosophical movement that uses consciously experienced phenomena as the subject matter of investigation

in a manner that is free from presuppositions and preconceptions. In Husserl's tradition of *transcendental phenomenology*, Husserl developed and applied a 'reduction' technique or bracketing procedure (*epoché*), which had as its goal to isolate the "field of pure phenomena given with absolute certainty" (Spiegelberg, 1975:5). As such the reading of the text should thus be taken as a "pure description of the phenomena given in consciousness" (Armstrong, 2005), or as Eagleton (1983:55) describes it, the reader should exclude all experiences that are not inherent in that conscious act. At the same time, it is an experience inclusive of the reader's "own ego, his acts of reading, and the page as read with all complexities of its modes of givenness" (Spiegelberg, 1975:5).

However, Spiegelberg (1975:7) contends that with the emergence of Martin Heidegger onto the scene, a new *turn* was introduced, in that Heidegger proposed a 'hermeneutic phenomenology' that purported to "interpret the ontological meanings of such human conditions as being-in-the-world, anxiety, and care". When reading a text in this *turn*, it is imperative to realise that sense experience *a la* Husserl is limiting, but in the hermeneutic phenomenological paradigm, it gains a communicative richness that goes beyond the sense to include what Spiegelberg (1975:11) terms as "nonsensuous data as relations, abstract entities, values, etc. as long as they present themselves intuitively". This means, therefore, there can be no innocent reading of the text (Althusser & Balibar, 1968). Gadamer's (1996) concept of the reader horizon that influences the reader's opinion in the act of reading, and which constantly forms or undergoes a process of 'fusion' comes to mind here (Weinsheimer: 1985).

With this grounding on the nature of Being now in place, our state of existence is better understood; which, as indicated earlier, provides context to how we interpret and talk about the lived realities that we experience as well as the realities that others experience. We can now look at how being in a social space creates opportunities for communication, and relations with other beings become a possibility.

4.3 SOCIAL SPACE

What is social space? How is it generated? In this section of the chapter, I describe the concept and origin of 'social space' as I apply it in this research. Perhaps a few words on the concept of 'space' first, before I launch into the discussion on 'social space'. As a departure point I choose to ground the discussion in the context of the research, therefore I will begin with a reference to phenomenology. "Questions of space and place have always been at the heart of phenomenological enquiry" state Riquet and Heusser (2016), in their invitation to an international conference with the theme *Shifting Grounds: Literature, Culture and Spatial Phenomenologies*, held at the University of Zurich in 2016. This invitation made by the English Department provides yet another link to the study of phenomenology and our understanding of the spaces we live in, an area of investigation that was thoroughly researched by well-known scholars such as Arendt, 1998; Bochner 2014; Heidegger, 1926, Husserl 1973; and Lefebvre 1991. Among such spaces, there are also Foucauldian heterotopias (Foucault, 1986) that present themselves, referring to the multiplicities of interpretations of the kind of space that is under investigation.

An example of one of the more profound insights that I came across in my reading of the literature on the notion of space is buried in a source that is perhaps a little off the tangent for my discussion here. However, the authors, Slakmon and Schwarz (2017:85), nonetheless say something that is very pertinent to my understanding of space: "We argue that student talk in virtual spaces can partly be perceived as placemaking and that such discursive placemaking is the bedrock of political agency". This notion of *placemaking* can be tied to the earlier sentiment of Lefebvre (1991:73) who argues for an understanding of space as a result of human activity, which therefore constitutes a social order, at once temporal, but also physical.

'Social space' as a concept is not a new terminological phrasing, as there is evidence that Emile Durkheim had earlier applied it late in the 19th century (Buttimer, 1969:418). I will comment first on the social aspect of 'social space', before I address its physical aspects. Lefebvre (1991:26) argues that social space is a social product; a viewpoint, which he accedes, is at once tautologous and obvious. In proving his argument Lefebvre makes the connection clear between social space and mental space, the last mentioned which is expressed via speech and writing, elements that belong to what we call 'language'. Therefore, that which is previously non-communicated is now given existence in the realm of the communicated. In this sense, Lefebvre echoes thoughts of the Bakhtin School in that the speech and writing aspect of our communication is that which would require a dialogical sequence or contestation to derive the implied meaning. The essence of the Bakhtin 'thinking' is that language is not systemic and abstract, but that it is very much tied to the historical context in which utterances are made. Selden, Widdowson, and Brooker (2005:146) capture it very succinctly in this statement: "Language cannot be neatly dissociated from social living; it is always contaminated, interleaved, opaquely coloured by layers of semantic deposits resulting from the endless processes of human struggle and interaction." Therefore, when I interpreted the narratives contained in *Zinky Boys*, I did so with the understanding that the narratives were themselves emergent from the historical context and were carriers of meaning that reflected the lived experiences of individuals.

At this point in my reasoning, I wish to point to a divergence that emanates from the Bakhtin School, which follows. The value that language has in this regard, and concerning the topic that is my focus, lies therein that Mikhael Bakhtin's writings also suggest that language is capable of disordering power, or the authority that wields it, and is used to unshackle opinions that are in opposition to established structures. I leave this statement here, as I will come back to this

line of reasoning later in the chapter when I discuss public spaces and the public sphere.

Two implications that flow from this thinking to see social space as a social product, says Lefebvre, is that natural space is disappearing due to the intervention of humans. However, the second implication is that space is produced as a result of the interaction of humans, a viewpoint that he buttresses using the example of a city, which is more than a mere collection of individuals and objects in a particular place.

The closest approximation that Lefebvre presents by way of defining what social space is, can be found in his description of social space (1991:73) as follows: "Itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur, while suggesting others and prohibiting yet others." However, Lefebvre comments on the very same notion that he expresses, by stating that the diverse nature of social spaces embraces the notions of mediators and mediations, their actions, ideological and knowledge factors, and their representations; hence making causal attributes on the basis of previous history, nature, and production inadequate (1991:77). This aspect of the 'historical' use of human interaction implies that there are multiple social spaces which may once have existed, that exist today, and will come into existence tomorrow.

No discussion of Lefebvre on the topic of social space may be deemed to be complete without counterbalancing it with the important contributions of Michel Foucault. Perhaps the principal and most widely known contribution of Foucault lies in his 1967 lecture on utopias and heterotopias, which was published in 1984 in a French journal *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*. This article was translated into English in 1986 by Jay Miskowiec and published in *Diacritics*. In his lecture, Foucault identifies six heterotopias, or spaces. These heterotopias comprise more than their physical elements. On the one hand, they are

physical geographic entities, but on the other, they are the praxis, indeed, praxes, of social and cultural nature. As pointed out by Geertz (1973) and Denzin (1989) the cultural context and historical situation are important considerations in this regard.

Foucault, whom I acknowledge as influential in both structuralist and post-structuralist *turns*, counterpoints the 'existence' of utopias, and I put the word existence in inverted commas, as utopias neither exist in physical space, nor in social space, but as idealist projections or abstractions of perfect society. In this sense, says Foucault (1986), they are an inverted representation of real society, which is in itself, imperfect. The counterpoint that Foucault suggests lies in societal representations in heterotopias, where physical spaces are linked to cultural and social activities. To illustrate this link Foucault uses the example of a mirror. The reflection of myself that I see in the mirror is utopian, in that I do not exist in the mirror, but in a heterotopia space that I occupy in front of the mirror. The reflection of myself is reflected by the mirror, which also exists in a heterotopia, and functions to reflect the utopian image of myself that is generated beneath the surface of the mirror. This concept of heterotopia is, I believe, an essential construct that requires investigation as it illuminates the interpretivist nature of human cultural activity in different social spaces.

Foucault suggests a heterotopology that embraces six principles and proceeds to immediately link the first principle to human culture, saying that all cultures undoubtedly form heterotopias taking different shapes and forms. The second principle is illustrated by an historical shift bringing about different uses of existing heterotopias. The example that is used is of the graveyard which formerly represented the sacred inner sanctum of the city where the dead rested, to the graveyard having to be located on the city outskirts as the bodies of the dead brought illness and contamination through the process of decay to the healthy in the city.

A third principle is that several spaces can at once be projected in one single place, such as the performing arts theatre with its clearly demarcated spaces of observer, actor (observed), or perhaps a film theatre that generates a three-dimensional world in the projection. Foucault refers to Persian gardens that are intricate in nature and which symbolise the coming together of the four corners of the world in one place. In the fourth principle, Foucault links heterotopias to time. Heterochrony begins, for example, the loss of life and perpetual decay of the body that begins at the cemetery. Another example that is used is that of the fairground that comes to life at certain times of the year when attractions are presented, which makes them temporal (chronique). An example that he uses of museums and libraries illustrates that objects of history, art and literature, can be spared the decaying effect of time by being preserved and transcending the limits normally imposed on it, in one place or locale.

A fifth and penultimate principle that is raised, is that of a system of admission and exclusion that is inherent to most heterotopia. Take as an example, pertinent to this study, the case of drafting young men, and their admission into the armed forces of a country, where only a select few may enter the barracks. Yet other heterotopias are dependent upon appropriate cleansing rites that need to be undertaken prior to admission. The last principle or 'trait' that Foucault refers to, is the illusionary function that heterotopias serve in creating spaces that show up the illusion in real space, or as an opposite. They function to generate an 'other' space that is meticulous and real, such as created by the Jesuit colonists in South America who created geographic spaces according to certain proportions and regulated social life according to synchronised activities.

In establishing his six heterotopias Foucault keeps the reference to the architectural arrangement of our society in play. As quoted in translation by West-Pavlov, (2009:154) Foucault states "...architecture...constitutes merely an underlying element insuring a certain distribution of people in space, a guidance of their circulation, as well as the codification of relationships between

them.” The continuation of this observation on space is of singular importance as Foucault proceeds to include architecture as an element of space that is present in a “field of social relationships, into which it introduces a certain number of specific effects” (West-Pavlov, 2009:154). My earlier statement on the influence of *locale* that was raised by Foucault in my discussion on heterotopias refers in this instance, in the sense that social spaces are not free from external influences such as *locale*, and ‘framing of the discussion at hand’. Having established that social space is the result of human interaction, it is now time to turn to the development of the concept ‘social space’.

4.3.1 The development of Social Space

Social space is an elusive concept to define, as can be seen in the previous section. It may perhaps be easier to describe it than to define it. In a reflective sense, therefore, social space is a space characterised by human activity wherein an overlap of social thoughts and discussions that are demarcated by their topicality and relevance, are occurring. This description sets it free of a physical space requirement, but does not free it from external influences such as *locale*, and ‘framing of the discussion at hand’. Koçan (2008) links the concept of social space back to the time of the Hellenic scholars, in particular, Aristotle. The metaphorical understanding by Aristotle of the social space focuses on citizen interaction in the social space, ultimately resulting in the facilitation of public communication in the public sphere. Koçan (2008:27) intimates that the “public sphere as social space is constituted in the systemic interactive practices of citizens”. From the use of the word ‘systemic’ and my earlier references to *locale* and ‘framing’, one could infer that the discussion has unfolded in the interpretivist social science tradition in the sense that nothing is interpreted and understood in isolation, but rather in the context of a larger canvas of events, both historical and present.

In the Habermasian sense, the liberty to discuss and decide on matters of mutual interest arose from the freedom that individuals achieved from feudal bounds that formerly restricted these acts of reasoning to individuals who were land-holders and nobility (feudal era). With the development of commerce and trade, a new order or modern era arose wherein absolute power exercised by the monarchy became eroded and watered down. Citizens, aided by the press and political avenues available to them, became 'literary' in their practice of art and criticism, which soon became a vehicle for political discourse and public debate (Habermas, 1989). However, the Habermasian phrase that is applied is that of *public sphere* rather than *public space*. In that context then, the public sphere has evolved from a *literary public sphere* to a *political public sphere*. In essence then, it is about groups of individuals who are engaged in human activity (exchanging ideas/conversation), who bring about social spaces.

It is, as Buttimer (1969:418) contends, from Durkheim that we have gained the notion of a "group framework, independent of the physical setting". Other scholars, who ascribe the work of Durkheim as contributing to the origin of the concept of social space and influencing later proponents of the notion, include Claval, 1984; Zdravomyslova and Voronkov, 2002; and Benson, 2009. In other words, the 'social environment' in which social differentiation manifests as context for interplay among participants, is what is referred to here. Buttimer (1969:418) identifies two early pioneers in this area, namely Paul-Henri Chombart de Lauwe and Maximilien Sorre, both French scholars who contributed to the establishment of the concept of social space. Although I recognise that Buttimer as a source is somewhat dated, I do contend that her research retains validity as it provides an accurate historical overview of the development of the notion of 'social space'.

Bourdieu (1985), linking up with Foucault's notion of heterotopias, later expounds on this idea by describing the social field as "a multi-dimensional space of positions such that every actual position can be defined in terms of a

multi-dimensional system of co-ordinates whose values correspond to the values of the different pertinent variables.” (Bourdieu, 1985:724). In this exposition Bourdieu accounts for the ‘space of positions’ which Maximillian Sorre (1957) stressed in his work *Recontres de la géographie et de la sociologie* [Meetings of Geography and Sociology – my translation], in which he argues for the need to consider the probability that social differentiation is influenced by physical conditions (Buttimer, 1969:419). Even later, in a lecture that was published as an article in a journal *Sociological Theory*, Bourdieu (1989:16) contends that social space can be compared to a geographic space that contains demarcated regions that signify commonality of characteristics, or properties, by the distance that agents occupy from one another.

My concern here is not to simply reduplicate Sorre and de Louwe’s viewpoints, but to consider the relevance that these views of social space may hold for interpreting the public moral argument made by individuals who narrate their phenomenological views in *Zinky Boys*. To my understanding, the primary contribution by Sorre in the application of the concept of social space to this study, lies in the differentiation between spaces of a social nature on the one hand and political or economic space on the other. Buttimer (1969:419) contends that Sorre articulates the observation that there is a tendency for groups to inhabit an own specific social space in which the preferences, aspirations and values are mirrored. It is this notion that is further developed and framed by Chombart de Louwe as a distinction between subjective and objective components of space (*ibid*). I believe that this distinction is of importance to my research in assisting to establishing the public moral argument that emerges from the narratives told by the survivors of the war and their immediate families, because a narrative is framed by the subjective viewpoint of the narrator (Rasmussen, 1995; Bloom, 1996; Breazeale, 2007).

Buttimer (1996:429) quotes de Louwe as defining objective social space as “the spatial framework in which groups live; groups whose social structure and

organization have been conditioned by ecological and cultural factors.” Bourdieu (1989:15) contends that Durkheim and Marx are theorists who were most consistent in expressing objectivist positions in social science. In opposition, the subjective social space is stated as “space as perceived by members of particular human groups”, and then interpreted by Buttimer (*ibid.*) as “subjective space reflecting values, aspirations, and cultural traditions that consciously or unconsciously distort the objective dimensions of the environment”. This means that the positions are somewhat contrasted, but they are both needed for a dialectical relationship to exist (Bourdieu, 1977).

At this stage, it is important that I reflect on the approach that I am employing with a critical comment. The work of Sorre and Chombart de Lauwe are essentially framed in the discipline of geography, and ostensibly the spatial arrangement of habitat preferred by individuals and groups within society. However, their relevance and value lie in the touchpoint with a sociological approach, in that clear statements on the value of the subjective order are recognised. Buttimer (1969:424) singles out attitudes, traditions, and aspirations as examples, and links the concept of social space further to anthropological terms such a biotope and ethnic domain. The value of their contribution in assisting to frame the current study lies in the recognition of not only the physical space or locale in which events occur, but also the inner space of the individuals and groups who may be participating in that event.

In this regard, I wish to recognise the relevance and importance of the contribution made by the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, who contributed much to develop our understanding of social space and the use of power. Bourdieu (1985) begins his explication on *The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups* by opposing himself to the popular Marxist theoretical stance of the 1980s, by deliberately breaking with the notions of privileged substance, economism based on the economic field, and objectivism. These breaks with

Marxist theory enable Bourdieu to position himself relatively free from Marxist theoretical influences to posit his viewpoints on social space.

Bourdieu favours the viewpoint of sociology as a topological framework of social space along multiple spatial dimensions (1985:723). This means that agents or groupings of agents act in a multi-dimensional social universe, whilst they are subject to the active powers of that universe that delineates their habitus. Buttimer (1964:240) aptly identifies one of these properties that is active in such a universe, as 'subjective space' that embraces cultural traditions and values that work against the notion of space as an objective entity.

Within social space one finds that agents are both capacitated and limited by their positions in space or, as Bourdieu (1985:725) describes it, 'their relational properties'; and their condition, or 'intrinsic properties'. In addition, Bourdieu adds the notion of the distribution of powers that are active within social spaces that act in upon agents. These notions are, as I see them, not isolated from the influences of time and context. Therefore, an agent acts in a social space as much as the active powers in that social space will allow, whilst framed by a specific social context in history that is populated by a set of actors who are subject to relational influences, not only as individuals towards one another, but also as agents. I choose the word 'frame' deliberately, as it both delineates and defines the context of action.

I think of this description of social space as sharing qualities of what I call socio-temporal (actor-in-time) space and spatio-temporal (context-in-time) space. (My discussion on temporal mapping in Chapter 5 provides more insight into these concepts.) These agents, then, are motivated by the influences of the economy and the state, and in the context of this research, represent and resist the power of the Russian and Afghanistan states.

4.4 REFLECTIONS ON THE PUBLIC SPHERE

I have deliberately avoided discussing the public sphere in the preceding text, as I felt it important to first establish a good grasp of social space before exploring the public sphere in any great detail. Pieter Duvenage (2007:325) states “the public sphere is a major issue in communication and media studies”. The positioning of the public sphere as a topic of research in the field of Communication Studies bears reference to this research, especially as the Soviet public moral argument (as extrapolated in this research) is presented in the public sphere. He emphasises the importance of Jürgen Habermas as a social theorist and philosopher, and in this instance, as a theorist in Communication Studies. Habermas is renowned for the work that he has done in bringing the public sphere to the attention of students and consumers of media and communication. The public sphere in this context is understood to be “...the space for reasoned communicative exchange” and a matter that has been of interest to Habermas (Habermas; 2004).

In further describing what the public sphere is, I would like to use a description offered by Carl Cassegard (2010) who states:

When we use this concept we usually have in mind a sphere of social life, distinct from the state and the official economy, in which citizens deliberate on their common affairs, often in a conflictual tension with the political system, and bracketing circumstances deemed to be of only “private” relevance.

This description is of significance to my study for two reasons: Firstly, Cassegard identifies and presupposes that for a social space to be a public sphere, there should be a “conflictual tension with the political system”, which is an important line of argumentation in this study as will become evident during the introduction of the truth speaker, or *parrheisia*. Secondly, the significance of “bracketing circumstances” holds phenomenological importance to how the interviewees in *Zinky Boys* relate to the events that they narrate.

Cassegard’s description echoes that of Fraser (1990:57) who descriptively comments on the idea of the public sphere as that “it designates a theatre in

modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk. It is the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, hence, an institutionalized arena of discursive interaction.” In her discursive analysis that follows she points out that it is identifiable as a separate space that is not controlled by the state and the troubles of individuals are not discussed. This is an arena, therefore, where matters that are at the level of public issue, are discussed.

The public sphere, when looked at from the present day, has a somewhat altered identity when compared to its earlier authentic version. I will first reflect on the view of Habermas (1991:15), who holds the opinion that the public sphere had its genesis in feudal society resulting from the establishment and development of trade routes between trade fairs in European cities, which dealt ostensibly in trading commodities; but a by-product, trade in news, directly resulted from this arrangement. The presence of postal services and printed press paved the way for frequent communication on matters of state and economy. I am reminded at this point of an historical novel written by Louis L'Amour, *The Walking Drum* (1984) which picturesquely describes merchant life in trade caravans and the trade fairs held in the European cities. One of the sub-themes deals with the importance of news to these merchants about the routes they were to travel and the possible markets and shortages of commodities in the cities where they wished to trade.

With European elite societies mostly holding sway with feudal systems, news was originated by those in power, and shared with the (elite) public relating to court events and visits, thereby laying the ground for a “new form of public sphere” (Habermas, 1991:21), that was not directly accessible to the common man. It could be said that one was a recipient of news from the court whose elitist patronage represented themselves in public.

Habermas (1991:26) writes that the idea of a ‘public opinion’ found manifestation toward the end of the seventeenth century while the English word

'publicity' found its way from the French word *publicité* into the English language. At this point in its development, the public sphere has not fully found its identity, rather, it was more of a representation in public of feudal culture in the form of a 'representative publicity', its development which I will highlight in the lines that follow.

In this regard Habermas (1991:5) contends "there were lower and higher 'sovereignities,' eminent and less eminent prerogatives; but there was no status that in terms of private law defined in some fashion the capacity in which private people could step forward into a public sphere." This means that there was a blurring of the lines between public and private spheres in feudal society. Those individuals of the nobility and those holding official or other positions in public, were recognised in the early evolution of the public sphere as representatives of the public voice or opinion.

As the 1991 title of Habermas' work indicates, a transformation of the public sphere occurred as a result of changes brought about by the economic development that was unfolding and engulfing the establishment of traditional feudal relations. Habermas (1991:18) describes it as "the manorial lord's feudal authority was transformed into the authority to "police" the private people under it, as the addressees of public authority, formed the public". To this opinion, Habermas (1991:19) adds the voice of Schumpeter, who noted

...that the old forms that harnessed the whole person into systems of supraindividual purpose had died and that each family's individual economy had become the center of its existence, that therewith a private sphere was born as a distinguishable entity in contrast to the public.

This private sphere formed the power base of merchants whose actions helped establish the early capitalist commercial system and through utilising political

journals, the press gained a foothold in disseminating news items obtained from the merchants. However, rather than becoming an instrument of the merchants, a seizure of the press occurred by state administration which increasingly intervened by dictating to the press on the purpose and content of their publications (Habermas, 1991:22).

While the common man and the illiterate were not directly advantaged, officials who represented the rulers and other personages of importance (here Habermas (1991:23) lists doctors, professors, scholars, pastors and officers) formed a new stratum of *bourgeois* who were distinct from the common man in common positions of shopkeepers and craftsmen. Through the formation of companies the merchants who were aided by individuals of core entities such as manufacturers, bankers and entrepreneurs, gained status and became the new *bourgeois*. Habermas (1991:23) writes "This stratum of 'bourgeois' was the real carrier of the public, which from the outset was a reading public". This resulted in state authorities increasingly involving themselves in regulating trade within and across their borders through legislation of mercantilist policies.

In this stratum, which more than any other was affected and called upon by mercantilist policies, the state authorities evoked a resonance leading the *publicum*, the abstract counterpart of public authority, into an awareness of itself as the latter's opponent, that is, as the public of the now emerging public sphere of civil society. (Habermas, 1991:23)

This counterpart, as Habermas calls it, developed into what is now labelled as the public and its *bourgeois* individuals, became opponents of the state. Utilising the press, critical reasoning found its way into public opinion through the daily press. It is at this juncture that political confrontation through the expression of public reason and opinion against the state, found its identity. Habermas (1991:27) puts it succinctly:

The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon

claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people's public use of their reason (öffentliches Raisonement).

In discussing social structures of the public sphere, Habermas (1991) outlines, among others, the establishment and development of coffee houses that now expanded the influence of the public sphere to include craftsmen and shop owners. While coffee houses were open to male clients in the population in its early iterations, a counterpart, namely the French *salons*, were places where women and intellectuals could gather to discuss matters of mutual public interest and voice their opinion (1991:34).

Of particular importance here is the development of the private sphere, which ostensibly is the realm of the market with the family as its intimate sphere (Habermas, 1991:55). Individuals were on the one hand owners of property and goods, but on the other, were individuals who had a private identity, or, for lack of a better word, human. This means that a strata in society comprised individuals who were both *human (homme)* and *bourgeois*. When this strata aspired to influence the power exerted over them, they turned to literary and art criticism, debating about their own experiences of how they were governed. Once this trend emerged, it contributed to the establishment of a public sphere in the world of letters, or a literary public sphere, in which was practiced a style of criticism of public authority, in what can be labelled as a 'political public sphere'. It is from this iteration of the public sphere that the true public sphere arose that would discuss and affect the politics of the day.

Habermas refers to a model example of the public sphere that performed in the political realm early in the eighteenth century that came about as a result of the use of the press as a critical instrument in the hands of the *bourgeois*. Through the continued literary engagement of government in Great Britain, shortly after

the outbreak of the French Revolution, a remarkable incident happened when the term “public opinion” was formally used in Parliament to signify the importance of the considered opinion of members of the public in governmental affairs (1991:66). Habermas writes in this regard (1991:89) “the self-interpretation of the function of the bourgeois public sphere crystallized in the idea of “public opinion.” This iteration of the public sphere was not to last very long as Habermas argues (1991:79) that “this phase lasted only for one blissful moment in the long history of capitalist development...”. He makes this statement considering that for a public sphere to be truly public and independent, it should remain free from the influence and directives of establishments of public authority.

It is this very phenomenon, the re-feudalisation of the public sphere, that turned it into an instrument of “purposive opinion management” (Habermas, 191:196) through publicity and public relations exercises. Therefore the public sphere was no longer separate from the state, but again, ‘captured by state’ in the service of cultural manipulation. Habermas writes of ‘special interest associations (1991:200) that “manipulate public opinion without themselves being controlled by it”. Habermas identifies the structural transformation of the *bourgeois* public sphere in the collapse of those institutions that generated “social-convivial interchange”, as well as the use of mass press circulation and the emergence of “equal citizen rights for all” (1991:202-203).

In summary, the coffee houses and salons in which the public sphere became emancipated via progressive iterations of the literary public sphere, through the emergence of civil society (the economy), and the political public sphere, at first opposed feudal government that practiced representative publicity, and later, ultimately, arrived at a political phase that highlighted the idea of consensus among citizens. With the collapse of the public sphere consensus was no longer to be found among the *bourgeois* only, but among all citizenry in general, utilising mass media to ensure that a majority public opinion would crystallise.

The various iterations of the public sphere up to this point in my representation had focussed on the socio-historic aspects of its primary development and decline. Habermas is very unflattering in his contention that the modern public sphere is no longer a true representation of critical reasoning by intellectuals and the *bourgeois* as he states that opinion is the result of manipulation. “For the criteria of rationality are completely lacking in a consensus created by sophisticated opinion-moulding services under the aegis of a sham public interest” (Habermas, 1991:195). In the place of the former feudal lords, one now has mass media and political role players who use mass media to generate public support for their various causes. Therefore, consent is no longer arrived at through argumentation, but through being engineered, much like the former feudal lords represented themselves as proponents of the views of all in the land. It is in a similar vein that the Soviet government positioned itself in the mass media and public eye as a benevolent neighbour to Afghanistan, aspects of which were discussed in Chapter 2. In recent years, alternative views and criticisms on Habermas’ view of the public sphere have come to the fore.

4.4.1 Alternative views and criticism on the Public Sphere

Criticism of Habermas’ seminal work on the public sphere was slow in finding the spotlight, largely because the work was originally only available in German, therefore some criticisms were slow in finding their way to the fore. Thomassen (2010) contends that two major criticisms against Habermas’ view of the *bourgeois* public sphere are the feminist exclusion and the *plebeian* exclusion. It should be noted that Habermas does acknowledge the exclusion of the *plebeian* sphere, which will find influence into the *bourgeois* as it operates at the societal level of which the *bourgeois* is part. Perhaps one could apply the label of a ‘weak public’ here which, whilst not making decisions, it does help to form the opinion of the *bourgeois*.

With regard to the feminist thesis, Nancy Fraser (1990) proposes alternate views to the model of the public sphere to the one that was advanced by Habermas. One of her criticisms of the public sphere is that it is an idealised concept that is not truly inclusive. To bolster her argument she refers to, among others, Joan Landes (1984:22) who writes on *Women and the Public Sphere: A modern perspective* and comments on the French salon culture, that “in continental Europe the salon was widely regarded as a powerful force, ‘a vast engine of power, an organ of public opinion’”. It is in this enclave that women were allowed to participate, contrasting with the male dominance of the *bourgeois* public sphere. Ryan (1992) supports this view that women did find opportunities that allowed them a public voice.

Fraser (1990) is at the same time critical of Habermas who argues for the understanding of the character of the *bourgeois* public sphere to the exclusion of other public spheres, by questioning if one could understand it in isolation. She refers to a ‘plurality of competing publics’ that functioned as “counterpublics [that] contested the exclusionary norms of the bourgeois public” (1990:61).

Fraser (1990) raises a further point of criticism. She declares that the idea that the *bourgeois* public sphere overlooks the importance of the eradication of social inequalities cannot merely be bracketed to enable participants to engage with one another on an equal footing in discursive interactions. I believe that the power relations that are inherent in society, make the concept of a utopian public sphere, where all are truly equal, a difficult vision to achieve in reality. It is no wonder then that Fraser (1990:66) suggests, “contestation among a plurality of competing publics better promote the ideal of participatory parity than does a single, comprehensive, overarching public”. Indeed, Fraser uses the label ‘stratified’ societies to allude to the origin of this inequality. She further points out that inequalities also hold true for egalitarian ‘multi-cultural societies’ as one cannot truly participate in a “zero degree culture’ (1990:69). It follows,

therefore, that contestation is a natural feature of any encounter within, between and among public spheres or subaltern counterspheres.

Lisa McLaughlin (1993:601) points out that “the identities and status of the participants” are, according to Habermas, of lesser importance than “critically reasoned argument”. In this sense, the public sphere takes on an ideological character that is exclusionary as the *bourgeois* by definition were individuals who owned property, and with regard to female individuals, only the elite participated in the earlier literary public sphere. Ultimately, women and plebeian workers, as well as slaves, were excluded from active participation in the public sphere. McLaughlin on Felski (1989) demonstrates the irony of the illusion that humanity is fully represented in the *bourgeois* public sphere by men who owned property. Thomassen (2010:49) contends that there is a clear bias for the inclusion of men and the exclusion of women in the public sphere, and the latter, when they do find a voice, having to contend on masculine terms. This line of criticism is adumbrated by Landi (2012:XIX), who states “some historians have criticized Habermas for being too restrictive, and for failing to account for a number of actors or phenomena constitutive of the public sphere in the modern era”.

This point is foreshadowed by Benson (2009:176) who recognises in the *bourgeois* public sphere the seedbed of an unavoidable emancipation of all strata of individuals by stating that “the principle of universal participation meant that inevitably access would have to be granted to women, former slaves, and other marginalized groups”. Benson further highlights Habermas’ viewpoint that the commercialisation of the press eroded the capability of the public sphere as an arena in which to debate in a critical fashion, and it became an instrument of advertising. Benson (2009) on Habermas contends that *Structural Transformation* plays an important role in rekindling the debate of normative and empirical understanding of the role of media in democracy. In his argument he highlights the elitist, deliberative and pluralist models of the public sphere as

normative models, followed by an explication of the empirical model. Benson (2009:178) argues,

Habermas's empirical model in *Structural Transformation* overlooks the myriad social forces (governmental regulations and subsidies, non-profit ownership forms, journalist unions, associations, ethical codes, and professional traditions) that can and often do temper such commercial pressures.

For Benson all is not lost to the domination of the forces of the state, who would capture the mass media to generate publicity and market its own ideals. Three empirical models are discussed by Benson (2009:183) to counter what he calls the understated and undertheorised potentially "pro-active role of the media in the public sphere". The empirical models count the 'Peters/Habermas Revised Model', in which Habermas accepts that the modern public sphere has multiple layers of complexity. The second empirical model discussed by Benson is Bourdieu's Field Theory, which recognises the emergence of journalistic, literary and artistic fields, which reflect their "particular vision of the social world on society as a whole" (2009:183). Bourdieu recognises Fields as areas of contestation, which, no doubt, is strongly influenced by *habitus*, (Benson does not include *habitus* in his discussion) as social dispositions do influence our thinking in whichever Field we may find ourselves. Benson concludes with a shorter discussion on New Institutionalism as a means to properly identify the public sphere and to identify how best the ideals of democracy can be achieved.

The question that now arises is whether the public sphere could manifest itself as a sphere in countries where freedom of speech is severely restricted in public. In the context of this study, it therefore necessitates an investigation into the heart of the Soviet State, namely Russia, and the Russian Public Sphere.

4.4.2 The Russian (Soviet) Public Sphere

Contrary to what one may expect given the popularised Western ideological and political discourse that used to be saturated with anti-socialist sentiment, a public sphere did exist in Russia and had been alive and well, periodically, even during the Tsarist regime. Louise McReynolds (1995) successfully demonstrates in her article on the rise of the Russian intelligentsia, that political culture in Russia was influenced by the mass circulating press that allowed and promoted contrasting voices against the Tsarist regime. While much of this agenda was driven by the intelligentsia, a literary elite group of voices, it was at heart much more overtly political in the public sphere than social, as is seen in the Habermas version of the public sphere elsewhere in Europe.

Evidence of a literary influence on the public sphere from pre-1865 can be seen from the monthly publications on “politicised discourse” (McReynolds, 1995:85), which is at the same time referred to as “thick” journals. The poet Alexander Pushkin is revered in this instance as an important literary persona aligned with this movement, and the December 1825 military *coup* is, according to McReynolds, ascribed to the influence of his writings (1995:85). The intelligentsia soon established themselves as voices of disgruntlement against the ruling regime, and garnished a popular following, beyond the readership of the “thick” journals. It is in the art of literary criticism that they commented on social issues in society, where what is understood to be of a ‘public’ nature, being interpreted as a ‘social’ nature, and established themselves as “agents of defiance against an oppressive system” (McReynolds, 1995:86).

It is interesting to note that the establishment and flourishing of the mass media commercial papers provided a voice in opposition to the intelligentsia by publishing daily publications, often countering their sentiments. However, without there being a specific date that marked a change in sentiment, the Russian newspaper press did adopt a change in stance early in the 20th Century by praising the intelligentsia for their aloofness from the Russian state. From being a competitor in the Russian Public Sphere, the newspapers were

now advancing Russian literary consciousness and political consciousness among its readership. Celebrated literary greats such as Anton Chekhov, Nikolai Gogol, and Leo Tolstoy, were revered in the press as social commentators who were advancing the notion of a loftier Russian culture in contrast to its Russian political structure.

McReynolds (1995:96) comments that ideology is a result of the “contestation for influence” in a particular dominant culture, a point that aligns with the sentiments of Foucault and Gramsci on the topic of ideology, and psychoanalytically explained by Louis Althusser with regard to the relationship between the individual and the society into which he is birthed. The ideological nature of the public sphere is clearly demonstrated in the differences that emerge from how the public sphere functions in different cultures and societies. An example is evident in this instance where there are parallels to be seen in voices heard against the established ruling class. When one reads Habermas closely, it is evident how the emergence of commerce and industrialisation, intricately weaved into the machinations of a developing mass mediated press, brought about contesting voices deliberating on what is good for the popular culture and well-being of citizens in the country.

Boobbyer (2009) on Finkel (2007) highlights the demise of the independent public sphere, which, for a brief period in 1921, when co-operative and private publishers were allowed to function, allowed the voices of the intelligentsia to be heard again. From late 1921 through 1922, the intelligentsia were targeted with ever-increasing constraints, such as clamping down on the former autonomy of universities. Boobbyer (2009) highlights the closure of the House of Litterateurs and the changes to the Union of Writers as a case in point. The role of Lenin in arresting and deporting key intelligentsia from Russia is foregrounded as a key turning point in the social history of Russia with labour and production becoming regime-driven goals for everyone. Therefore, the early 1920's mark the demise of the civic sphere in Russia and it only re-emerged again in the early 1950's

when there was again a longing by intellectuals to play a role in the public sphere. No doubt, this longing was in part a result of the voices of the deportees from the 1920's period being published in exile and becoming heard in the circles of the intelligentsia, to once again exert influence in public opinion forming, as pointed out by Finkel (2007).

Voronkov (2004) contends that the public sphere in the Soviet Union had a dualistic nature, where the private family sphere was removed from the official (open) public sphere that was ruled by laws. The traditional interpretation of a public sphere where citizens could debate issues of concern to the state, and often in opposition to the state, could not be directly applied to the Soviet Union. There was, however, the short-lived era of the intelligentsia who, following the relaxation of publication laws, did engage their readership on social matters, often with a political undertone. With the Leninist oppression in the early 1920's and Soviet oppression that followed it was no longer possible for Soviet citizens to risk it in public to express opposing voices against the state. For this reason Voronkov (2004) adapts an approach that he credits to Irving Hoffman and Philip Aries "as the sphere of sociability, communicative space in general, excluding private space". The period from 1920 to 1950 was extremely difficult for the average Soviet citizen who did not have the privilege of privacy, as the Stalin regime clamped down excessively on its subjects, with people living in communal living spaces, often several families at a time, with eavesdropping and informing on one another being the order of the day. Therefore, as another sphere in conjunction with the official public sphere, the private sphere could not exist or thrive due to the permeability of society.

An interesting aspect of societal life highlighted by Voronkov (2004) is the fact that citizens, who were governed by rules and laws, often followed unwritten conventions that worked around the restrictions imposed by the written rules. The conventions were not directly opposed to the written rules, and sometimes, as Voronkov (2004) contends, they gradually worked as a functional informal

sphere, to compensate for the inefficiency of the formal sphere of rule. This brought about a shift in social life to become one based on the efficacy of conventions, rather than blindly following the rules. Ironically, though, Soviets when in public spaces, paid lip-service to the official positions whilst in the communicative space of the public sphere, while in their private lives they held a totally different opinion. Thus, Soviets, when in public, would speak the expected nationalist rhetoric, but in their private encounters, among trusted family members, their discourse would be the opposite.

Especially from the post-Stalinist era onwards, a sphere developed that Voronkov (2004) calls the “private-public sphere”. It would, perhaps also be recognisable if I may use the language of Hannah Gramsci, as a sub-altern, or a counter-sphere to the official public sphere, but with one important discerning characteristic, it was a sphere, which did not access the media to publish the views of its agents. Whereas in the Stalinist-era one had great permeability in society that ensured that no private sphere could exist, one now had a private version of the public sphere that had almost watertight borders, that was impermeable. Voronkov contends that “even members of the authorities” (2004) participated in discussions in this sphere. In cases where matters from the private-public sphere found its way into the official public sphere, the agents of those messages were ruthlessly dealt with.

The death of Stalin in 1953 marks a critical time for the beginning of reform in the Soviet public sphere. In this regard, Voronkov (2004) provides three reasons why the public sphere in the Soviet Union changed in character. With the critical stance adopted by the Communist Party against the former Stalinist regime and the accompanying lessening of the fear of prosecution, the conditions for contestation improved dramatically. Finally, with the geographical changes brought about in living style of Soviets to take up more urban spaces outside of the forced communal clusters, a sense of real privacy was now enabled. Characteristic of the *perestroika* period, one finds a window of *détente*

where matters of private concern and criticism against the state did find a stage in the Soviet public space, leading to the alteration and decline in the private-public sphere. However, the new Soviet public sphere still retains much of the character of the former, in the sense that things may be talked about, but certain conventions remain firmly in place, such as the mentality of Soviets to speak as expected when in the public sphere.

On the political front where international relations are concerned, and this is an important area for this study, the issue of xenophobia and cultural-phobia needs to be discussed. The state actively engendered a dialogue of “friendship between nations”, “internationalism”, and “equality of all nations”, echoes of which can be heard in *Zinky Boys* as I shall demonstrate. Voronkov (2004) contends that “discrimination based on ethnic origin was widespread” in the USSR, and permeated into virtually every social aspect of Soviet life, as is also seen in the research of Solovei (2008) and others.

Von Seth (2011:16) contends that the press in Russia had become part of the state to “legitimise the political system”. As such, all press in Russia were under state control and it is only in 1990 that a measure of independence became possible with the approval of new media regulation. However, the freedom from direct state control did not happen overnight, it resulted from the introduction of the period of *perestroika*, which signalled an opening of the public sphere for readers to take up more prominent agency in participating in matters of societal and national concern. From 1984 there was a general rise in readership of the daily press, and coupled with Gorbachev’s reforms introduced from 1985 through *glasnost*, it collectively paved the way for open participation in the press. The worsening of the economic and political situation in Russia ensured, according to Von Seth (2011:27), that the continuation of the state to justify its actions to the populace in the press, ensured that agency in civil society resulted on the part of the readership of the press. Therefore, the popular view that the dissolution of the USSR is the cause for the new levels of freedom from

state control in many spheres of life, is not entirely accurate if one were to discount the role of active citizenship in the public sphere during the late 1980s, a period that immediately preceded these unprecedented levels of freedom.

An important aspect to address in this research is the identity of the Soviet armed forces that made up the invasion force. The translators to *Zinky Boys*, Julia and Robin Whitby (1992:xvi) identify the nationalities of the contingent of soldiers as emanating from Belorussia, Russia, Moldavia, Ukraine, Georgia, and Armenia. Soldiers from the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) were also included as draftees. Characteristically, these countries are non-Islamic in religious orientation while most of the Afghan resistance to the Soviet occupation came from Islamic rebels or sympathisers. Solovei (2008) published an article on Russian identity, which I found to have important connections to this research as it provides information on the identity struggle of everyday Russians in this period. Of particular interest is the use of the word 'ethnophobia' (Cf. Solovei, 2008:58) in the article, instead of 'xenophobia', as cultural, social and political features are deemed to be secondary drivers of classifications, following ethnicity, which is the chief cause of distinction in classifying others in this context. In his regard, the 'othering' of conscripts in the Soviet army should not be blindly interpreted to be cases of racism, but rather of ethnic-phobia, more commonly expressed as ethnophobia. In research referenced by Solovei (2008:62), it is demonstrated that native Russians experience a low indication of ethnophobia towards Belarussians and Ukrainians, whom are kin to them. Conversely, people from Central Asia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, are welcomed less, with Gypsies and Chechens at the top of the list of unwelcome ethnicities. In the analysis of the voices that speak in *Zinky Boys*, this aspect will be discussed against this background.

An empirical pattern that is established by Solovei (2008:63) is that there is a more positive perception of phenotypical similar groups with ethnic Russians, than those groups who are culturally more distant and foreign, who are not

positively received. Solovei concludes by indicating that a shift had entered into the post-Soviet Union years in that whereas the notion of inclusivity in the previous paradigm held sway, modern-day Russians were no longer expansionist in their thinking, but wanting to protect their cultural identity, hence the practice of ethnization of consciousness (2008:77).

In order to conclude this section it is important to comment in a more direct manner on the way in which Belarusians perceive the part in the war in Afghanistan. Astapenia (2013) contends that “the Soviet war in Afghanistan is rarely discussed in public. The freezing of all civil and political processes in the country may partially explain this.” He attributes this lack of public discourse to the fact that the Belarusian involvement as part of the Soviet occupying contingent “was a point of shame and disgrace” and that “many former soldiers refused to accept medals as they consider the war to be alien to Belarus as a nation” (Astapenia, 2013). Part of the ‘shame and disgrace’ could be attributed to the fact that many Soviets became drug addicts while in Afghanistan and returned home addicted to drugs (Kadykalo, 2015; Reuveny and Prakash, 1999). This is not something that they want to illuminate in the public spotlight; they rather focus their energy on helping their former comrades-in-arms, but it is clear that they are critical of the former Soviet Union that had caused them to be involved in the war in Afghanistan.

Public criticism against the state occurred as discussion by ordinary citizens about the power of the state and the way in which the state wielded its power (Habermas,1989). This effectively means that certain decisions by the state and the ways in which they were implemented were critically discussed in the *bourgeois* public sphere. In some instances such discussions were born as acts of desperation in defence against oppressive governments and states which were not providing its citizens with accurate information. Peters (1993:548) notably argues that “a turning point in modern political life is the battle against a secretive state in the name of “public opinion” and “publicity””.

Such was the case in the Soviet Union when Svetlana Alexievich published the 'public opinion' in *Zinky Boys* and provided 'publicity' about the stories of individuals who were affected by the Soviet-Afghan war.

The narratives of the individuals who were affected by the Soviet-Afghan war is the subject matter of this research, and need to be interpreted in an appropriate structure. Therefore it is necessary at this point, following up on my earlier comments on our sense of 'Being', and the context of the public spheres in which we act, the we now take a closer look at the actions of beings, or what they do. In this context then, by what framework are we to interpret the actions of the narrators in *Zinky Boys*? I shall begin by first discussing Anthony Giddens' concept of agency. Agency is important for this study as Fisher's probability test uses characterological coherence. The characterological coherence is evident in that (in the context of this study), characters are 'true to character'.

4.5 AGENCY

What is agency? Barker (2012:241) states that "agency consists of acts that make a pragmatic difference...". In saying this, he is supporting the notion postulated by Anthony Giddens (2010:9) that "[a]gency concerns events of which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently." Agency, therefore, implies human action in given social contexts, as it is assumed that humans act in response to the co-presence of other human beings. Indeed, as Giddens (2010:2) postulates that, aligned to the theory of structuration in social sciences, there are "social practices ordered across space and time" which are recursive in nature. It resonates strongly with the thought that, not only am I a product of culture, but I am also a contributor to generating culture through cultural interaction. Giddens' contention is that through human action, where humans choose to act, they recreate the conditions necessary for activities to

be enacted. He equates our state of Being, that is, being human, as being a “purposeful agent”. Along the lines postulated by Heidegger (1927) and discussed earlier in this chapter, there exists a ‘state of being’ and it is accepted that we comport to things that confirm our ‘being’, as, in my opinion, other humans are naturally inclined to do. In a sense, we comport our human existence through the re-enactment of conditions that serve to confirm our being human. Therefore, a central hermeneutic concept in structuration theory is that there is a sense of familiarity with “forms of life” conveyed in our actions.

In addition to familiarity, Giddens emphasises the notion of “reflexivity”, which, as part of the “continuity of practices” which enable agents to reflect on the “character of ongoing flow of life”, is also a sense of “self-consciousness” (2010:3). An additional key concept is that of purposiveness in structuration theory. Purposiveness in this context is opposing the earlier Foucauldian notion described by Hall (1996) in which subjects are not seen as purposive agents, but as products. Rather, these actions that are performed by agents are not acts committed in isolation, but in context, and that context is the ebb and flow of life, or what Giddens (2010:3) labels as “a *durée*, a continuous flow of time-space”. Therefore, I understand that for reflection proper to be enabled, it can only occur within this context of the *durée*, which ontologically is demarcated by historical events, or a frame of time-space flow. If I may reflect forward on the text of *Zinky Boys*, the question may be asked, given the period of censorship, what motivated the mothers of soldiers to speak out, to act as *parrheisiastes*? Was it motherly love for their child or grief, or perhaps a desire to expose the propaganda of the government of the day?

Giddens’ *stratification model* represented below (2010:5) highlights the context of action which cannot comprise only acknowledged conditions of action or intended consequences of action.

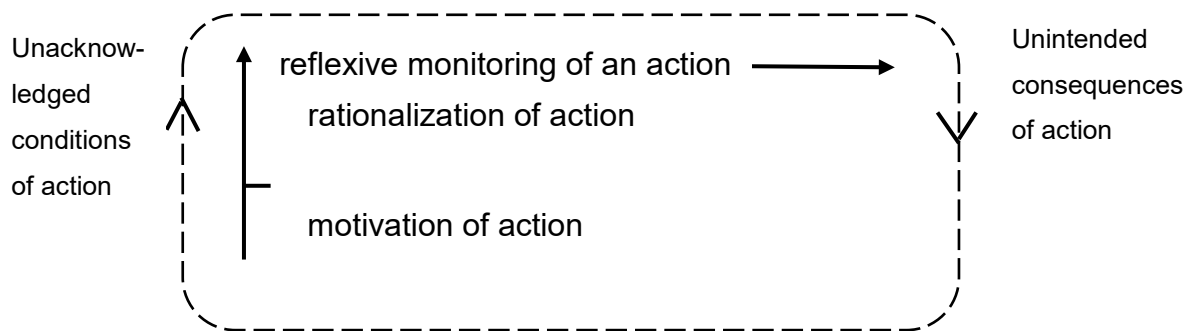


Figure 4.2 The Stratification Model of the Agent

Reflexive monitoring of an action refers to the continuous action of an agent reflecting on the activities they and others engage in, and is at the same time a monitoring of the context in which the action occurs. As explained by Saunderson (2013:53) "...a member of a specific culture would on a day-to-day basis be thinking about the manner in which he or she conducts him/herself against the conduct of others". The rationalisation of action, as the phrase suggests, is the rational explanation (discursive and practical consciousness's) that can be provided by an agent of action, or shall we say the grounds on which action is undertaken.

The motivation of action is a more elusive concept. It refers to the need aspect that motivates the behavioural action – in other words, which 'want' is satisfied by the action? In this regard, I am reminded of Frankfurt, who argues that persons want, choose, and are "moved to do this or that" (1971:7). Frankfurt identifies first-order desires, or the will of an agent to do something, and second-order desires or 'volitions' which are essential in determining that one is a person, and not a wanton agent (which does not possess these second-order volitions). Where, for Giddens, it is not always a truism that each action is directly motivated, as motivation of action spans more widely, to encompass an overall plan, for example. As such, the motivation of action is not necessarily a direct, conscious motivation, it may also be an unconscious motivation.

Frankfurt (1971:8) postulates the notion of an “effective desire” that moves a person to take action. One may find, therefore, that what an agent intends to do and what an agent wants, are not synonymous, as one may take alternative action in situations where the desire to do one thing is not as strong as the desire to do something else. The origin of this may lie in the idea that second-order volitions are preferences that do not, necessarily have a moral or rational basis as foundation.

A further notion that needs to be discussed here is the notion of moral responsibility for one’s agency. Frankfurt’s premise is that “[a] person’s will is free only if he is free to have the will he wants” (1971:18). Therefore, one cannot say that one can be regarded to be free of a moral responsibility for a deed committed if one did not have the free will at the time. One may be held morally responsible even though at the time of action, one felt that one’s will was not free at all. Here one needs to be conscious of the second-order volitions that may conflict, and from this conflict, an effective desire is yielded that results in action. Hence, one may not be accorded sole moral responsibility for an action, but full moral responsibility in cases where this action is shared. Take for an example, should a combatant decide by him/herself to shoot somebody, that person has sole moral responsibility for the deed. However, a combatant who is trained to shoot, and indeed, given the order to shoot at a target, or, being at war, through volition, fires together with others, has full moral responsibility for the effective action.

In the context of this study, it is important to highlight the importance of intentional agency (Grünbaum, 2010; Anscombe, 2000) versus unintentional agency. In Giddens’ (2010) discussion on the concept of the agent and agency, he takes great pains to illustrate the importance of the notion that an agent acts, or ‘does’ which will result in an intended outcome, and perhaps, in some cases, unintentional outcomes. He discusses unintentional outcomes of agency, using the classic paper authored by Merton in which he discusses the concept of

‘unanticipated consequences of purposive social action’, to illustrate his argument on unintentional outcomes.

The notion of unintentional outcomes of agency links in this context with a key study by von Seth (2011) who analysed newspaper articles that appeared in the Russian public sphere between the years 1978 to 2003. Von Seth found that, as Russia was gradually advancing through the period of *perestroika*, there was a shift in agency gradually becoming crystalized as the effect of the period of censorship that reigned during the Soviet era wore off. Where earlier there was a tendency to deliberately obfuscate who does what, the post-Soviet era heralded a clearer identification of agency, with unclear agency gradually diminishing altogether in printed media texts. To my mind this signals a sense of a willingness in accountability for action, as the threat of punitive sanctions against those who openly opposed Soviet regime, disappeared courtesy of *perestroika*. It also strengthens the role between agents and the intentional outcomes of their actions, rather than using linguistic devices in the writing of press articles to portray the results of the action of the Soviet regime as unintentional.

Giddens (2010:14) links agency with power as he argues that agents have the power to intervene through the causal exercise of power. Of course, there is the decision that the agent has to make first, whether or not to intervene in a matter or not. The result of this exercise of power by acting in on a given situation is equated to an intervention that has an influence on the nature of a given situation or a process that is unfolding. The individual, or agent therefore, has a capacity to effect a change through taking action which impacts to ‘make a difference’ in a situation (Barker, 2012).

Giddens makes two important observations (2010:15): The first is that action has a transformative nature, and second, that power is linked to the “intent or will, as the capacity to achieve desired and intended outcomes”. These two

points that are raised have implications for the narrative analyses that are to follow in subsequent chapters as the causal behaviour of speaking out against existing practices may be interpreted to position the interviewees in the text as change agents. Secondly, it is their desire that their stories be known, so as to bring the then current situation in Afghanistan into the public sphere, and lastly to express their opinion publicly.

The concept of agency is often associated with the possibility to effect change and the notions of freedom, originality, action, creativity and free will (Arendt 1998; Barker 2012; Giddens, 2010). Barker makes it clear that agency is “the socially constructed capacity to act and nobody is free in the sense of the undetermined” (2012:241). This means that agency is not meant to be misconstrued as undetermined, but as human interaction, and therefore agency is dependent upon social structures being in place. An agent is already a product of his/her cultural space and history, and sustains that cultural space through reinforcement of action. Therefore, there can be no undetermined act that originates from nothingness. Indeed, Giddens (2010:16) contends that structuration theory has at its core the notions of ‘system’, ‘structure’ and ‘duality of structure’. In this sense, structure is meant to be read as social structure, as a pattern of social behaviour or phenomena that is social in its nature. Through repetition of structures in social behaviour a systemic presence of that structure becomes evident, giving rise to the notion that social systems contain structural properties, which Giddens refers to as ‘structural principles’ and ‘institutions’.

Structure then, is interpreted to be manifest through the rules and resources of social systems. Regular social practices that are manifest through reproduced actions, form systems for social practice. When conditions are such that structures take on a recursive presence, they bring about the reproduction of social structures, which Giddens labels as ‘structuration’. He identifies a duality in the nature of structuration, as the recursive behaviour is both the result and

creator of the system in which it is exhibited, thus intrinsic to the nature and identity of individual agents. Structuration theory therefore holds that when action is produced in the context the *durée* of life, it is also a reproduction of action in that context. Giddens argues that “[h]uman agents always know what they are doing on the level of discursive consciousness under some description” (2010:26), therefore structure does not exist independently of agents’ knowledge of doing. Thus, one finds this duality as a basis for the “continuities in social reproduction across time-space” (Giddens, 2010:27). Indeed, the awareness of the reason of one’s action is a motif that is highlighted by Grünbaum (2010:341) who argues that it is a part of our experience of agency.

An earlier idea that is analogous to structuration, but which is perhaps more crude, is the idea of the double hermeneutic (Giddens, 2010). Elsewhere, Giddens (2013), advocates the idea of a single hermeneutic as an operating principle in the natural sciences, in that the world that is observed reveals its secrets to the observer, but does not change as a result of the observer’s findings and theories. However, social scientists make observations of and in the social world and make findings and postulate theories that find their way back into society and have the capacity to alter the nature and agency of that society. It is on account of this operative mechanism that I tie the double hermeneutic to structuration theory. Agents in society who generate repetitive patterns in social patterns produce systems of social patterns that find their way back into governing and shaping the behaviour of agents.

Thus, in studying our social world, social scientists are irrevocably altering the world that they are studying. As I explain in Chapter Five under the heading of bracketing the study, I found that the double hermeneutic is of particular importance not only in the context of social science research, but also to me as researcher in the context of this study.

A concluding thought on agency, Grünbaum (2010) suggests that one of the ways in which one could come to terms with the notion of agency, is to look at instances where it “breaks down or is missing”. He lists three examples, counting compulsive disorders, drug addiction, and including ‘blind obedience to authorities’ among them, but does not explore the last suggestion any further. There is a rich body of research, however, that does investigate the notion of obedience to authority, the most famous of these would, no doubt, be Stanley Milgram’s (1974) research into the concept of Obedience to Authority (OtA). The value of his research lies in the idea that OtA proposes that agents do not have as much free will as they think they have, and our decisions are not so much personal decisions as they are results of our social situation (cf. Giddens’ concept of structuration). Milgram directly argues that agents enter into an “agentic state” (1974:151) which means that they are without personal effective desire as postulated by Frankfurt (1971), but are implementing the biddings of others.

The theory of OtA has withstood the test of time for at least 50 years, albeit not without criticisms being directed at it, in my opinion the most significant of all, coming from a paper published in 2017 by Haslam and Reicher in the *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*. Haslam and Reicher provide an overview of the criticisms directed at OtA, but also point to the fact that the work done by Milgram is now forming the foundation of our understanding of the psychology of evil in society. In their paper Haslam and Reicher argue successfully that the obedience of participants in Milgram’s experiment are not due to the classic understanding of conformity or conditioning as in following orders. They suggest, instead, that participants had identified with the experimenter’s scientific goals and had “developed an associated desire to play their part in supporting and advancing them” (2017:66). By their own claim, research into social identity tradition such as the work done by Tajfel and Turner (1979) who established social identity theory (SIT) and Turner *et al.* (1987) with their development of self-categorisation theory (SCT), form the groundwork upon

which Haslam and Reicher's account rests (2017:67). Whilst conceding (2017:72) that there is some validation to Milgram's claims that there is "alignment of psychological and historical evidence" in the studies conducted into the behaviour of the Nazi perpetrators; Haslam and Reicher contend that, instead of being passive and mindless ('wanton' as described by Frankfurt, 1971), they are "motivated instruments of a collective cause" in which they see themselves as agents who are doing good (2017:72).

4.6 THE NARRATIVE PARADIGM

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, I employ a metatheoretical approach to the theory located in the interpretivist paradigm, which bolsters this thesis and finds expression in the theoretical *turns* experienced in the interpretivist tradition. Therefore, unlike research classically conducted at this level which find their expression in the selection and application of a singular theory, utilising the publications of peers collected during the most recent years, this research, because it is *turn-based*, is compelled to span the history of the occurrence of the phenomena under discussion. This is especially the case when studying the history, development and application of narrativism.

The concept of the narrative is not a new one. The narrative has been the topic of discourses and essays that were generated as early as the time of Aristotle, such as in the *Poetics*, in which he discusses the narrative form of the Epic as poetic narrative, but finds in favour of the Tragedy as a higher or more superior form of literature. Both the Epic and the Tragedy are members of the narrative family, and when the focus includes the persuasive ability of the narrative, it serves a rhetorical narrative function in the classical understanding of the narrative as summarised by Lucaites and Condit (1985).

At this point, I first wish to establish clarity on the classical understanding of the narrative, which is set out by Lucaites and Condit (1985), using the device of

distinguishing the respective functions as poetic narrative, dialectical narrative, and rhetorical narrative. For purposes of this study the poetical narrative function is a moot point, and therefore I shall not delve into it, suffice it to say that poetic narrative function is the domain of fictional, epic, myth, and imagined events which advocate a story within a story for the sake of the story, or to delight or to instruct.

Coming to the dialectical narrative function I do find touchpoints with this thesis, as the concern of dialectical narrative is singularly focussed on the transmission of knowledge, or the telling of the truth. It entails a commitment to objectivity to present knowledge as a truth, or to bear witness to an event without assumed bias, and it is on this point that the differentiation with poetic narrative is made, as the last is fictional. In this regard, I am reminded of Foucault's notion of the 'truth speaker' or *parrheisiastes*, who would be a narrator in the dialectical tradition, and sideshadowing (after the tradition of Bernstein, 1996) to the interpretation of the narratives of *Zinky Boys*, which I discuss in a later chapter, so too, the narrators (subaltern) of the micro narratives under analysis.

With regard to the rhetorical narrative, the purpose of the narrative is dependent upon the ability of the rhetor or the rhetoric to persuade the listener of the probability of the case. Therefore, in exercising the rhetorical narrative, the purpose of the persuasion is to achieve the enactment of interest, and to wield power through the application of tropes and figures and the display of the truth. As such, it prepares the audience for the proof of the argument by characterising the probability of the case. To quote Lucaides and Condit (1985:94), a rhetorical narrative is "a story that serves as an interpretative lens through which the audience is asked to view and understand the verisimilitude of the prepositions and proof before it." In this thesis I argue that one has to keep in mind that the stories in *Zinky Boys* are highly contextualised and dependent upon the relationship between author/teller and audience/listener as well as the purpose of the narrative.

Building on the notion of the story as narrative, Kriesworth (1992:637) states that narrative and story "...have come to displace *argument* and *explanation* in a whole range of recent philosophic, theoretical and cross-disciplinary contexts". As such, I align my praxis with Kriesworth's view that argument and explanation as devices used by the rhetor have been subsumed by what Fisher (1978) proposes, as compelling good reasons. Therefore, I do not advocate a classicist paradigm as application to this thesis, but rather support the idea of interpreting narrative and story. Much like Geertz (1986:377) states, "...stories matter, and so do stories about stories". Keeping in mind that one of the objectives of this study was to construct an intertextual narrative from the stories (micro narratives) of the survivors of the war, which I found to be akin to a *grand narrative* (intertext), as I set out in the chapter on the interpretation of the narratives.

Phelan postulates that 'narrative as rhetoric' implies that not only does narrative use rhetoric, or functions in the rhetorical dimension, but it implies action. It is "the telling of a story by someone to someone on some occasion for some purpose" (1996:8). It is as Enos (2013:454) states: "If we define narrative as mode of discourse in which at least one narrator recounts to at least one narratee at least two temporally related events, then we can understand the project of the narrative theory..." Prince earlier expands the concept of events in his description thereof as "...one or more real or fictive events..." (2003:58). Subsumed in this description is thinking that narratives are not merely commentaries or descriptions of events; they are usually associated with the recounting of a series of events and or situations, which make up a story about the person(s) and topic(s) under narration.

It is interesting to note that Hanan (2008) recounts theorists such as Mikhail Bakhtin, Wayne Booth, and Ernest Borman who have used narrative theory, but singles out Walter Fisher who was "first to propose the narrative as an

ontological phenomenon" (2008:3). As Hanan observed, Fisher (1987:17) says that "rhetorical experience is most fundamentally a symbolic transaction in and about social reality", hence he favours an ontological rather than an epistemological view of the rhetorical experience. It is in this context that Fisher stresses the role of people as storytellers in the narrative paradigm, be it as agents (authors) or audience (co-authors). Indeed, Fisher on Kenneth Burke concurs that in the understanding of the rhetorical; persuasion, meaning and rhetoric are inextricably linked, but to this he adds a dimension of scripting or role-play. It is from this notion that Fisher states that in opposition to Burke's conception of prescribed role-play, he holds the view that people play a part "in the interpretation and assessment of meanings in the world and in their choice of behaviours in given situations" (1987:18). This brings forth the view that human communication can be viewed narratively as the audience members are participatory message makers, and not merely passive audience members. For them, there is an agency in hearing and accepting the good reasons proposed by the narrators.

From the previously mentioned, I determine that narrative is at once ontological, or personal, in the sense that it is a personal experience of a narrative that is told, re-told, or heard, and in the hearing of it, is reconstructed to generate meaning to the listener, reader or observer. However, as a literary theory it is not untethered from larger movements in the field of literary theory, and has in the case of the narrative, manifest itself in a *turn*: "...current philosophical inquiry is marked as much by a turn towards narrativist and historical concerns..." as put forward by Kreiswirth (1992:636).

Kreiswirth (1992) provides a concise and complete diachronic construct of the narrativist decade of the 1980s that highlights the general interest in narrative, which precedes the 'narrative turn' coming into being. It is as Hyvärinen (2010:72) indicates, turns are retroactively created, and he continues to cite two prominent scholars whose work on narrative theory became focal as the

general interest in the narrative increased years after the publication of their work. These two are Hannah Arendt, whose seminal work, *The Human Condition* (1998), included a discussion on the narrative and action, which he contends was mostly overlooked until the general interest in the narrative brought it into the spotlight. Similarly, Bakhtin's work emerged as of importance in the debate on the narrative in the 1980's, notably his theories on dialogism that marked the methodological turn towards the realism of human communication and its influence on interpersonal communication studies. For the purpose of contextualising the narrative paradigm in my reflection on it, I wish to adopt Hyvärinen's 2010 classification of the turns in the narrative, as he contends that instead of a singular turn, there are four distinct turns in narrative theory.

The narrative turn has its seedbed in the Aristotelian discussion of the genres of literature, but germinated until the 1960s before emerging as something 'other' than fiction. Its linguistic DNA cannot be refuted, as its linguistic connection with Vladimir Propp and structuralism is indisputable as it is here that scientific narratology truly gained identity. Ryan (2005:344) credits French Structuralism as having helped the narrative concept to gain autonomy and to separate from fiction and literature, fully becoming a semiotic phenomenon that is not confined by genre or discipline. Indeed, as Roland Barthes (1966:251-252) indicates, the narrative encompasses a "prodigious variety of genres" establishing its presence in most every literary genre from myth to cinema. It is here that a conceptual change in the perception of the narrative is born, marking a "genuine narrative turn" as postulated by Hyvärinen (2010:73).

A second turn identified by Hyvärinen focuses on the narrative turn in historiography. As a study of the writing of history and written history, historiography provides fertile ground for the investigation of the 'telling of the story'. As Hyvärinen (2010:73) so eloquently articulates, "[T]hroughout its own history, historiography had always produced good stories". Initially, in

introducing the narrative theory of history, the analytical methods in narrative theory were not foregrounded, but rather the consequences resulting from the telling of the story in various ways. History, by implication, in the retelling of it, is a narrative-generating tradition. Hyvärinen reflects on the writing of Anna Greene (2008:91) who identifies the “narrative structure of life histories” as a focal point of the endeavours of oral historians. The effort of proponents of the narrative theory of history has centred on the “problems of representing the past in narrative forms, in narrative as cognitive form” Hyvärinen (2010:74). He identifies the augmentation to this by recognizing the ground-breaking work of Bernstein (1996) who argues against the fatalistic interpretation of *foreshadowing* and *backshadowing*, which he classifies as historical misrepresentation. Instead, he introduces the concept of *sideshadowing* that implies a varied richness of possible futures flowing from the present. It is within this context that narratives as explanatory tools in historiography are properly positioned.

A third turn in the narrative differs from the first two turns of literature and historiography, in that a maturity in seeing narratives as “material, theory and perspective for reading” (Hyvärinen: 2010:74) now manifested in the social sciences. Based on Bertaux’s (1981) argument in *Biography and Society*, Hyvärinen (2010:74) postulates “[t]he narrative turn in the social sciences implicated qualitative, often humanistically oriented research”. In conjunction with Lyotard’s disparagement of *grand narratives* and, narratives that I would position in the Gramscian tradition of the subaltern, the emergence of smaller stories as subject of study occurred. Additionally, argues Hyvärinen, the *life as narrative* metaphor in which narratives in the study of human lives brought a new understanding and growth in the study of the narrative, began to manifest.

Lastly, Hyvärinen identifies the cultural turn to narrative that signals a larger, socio-cultural change in society and the importance of narratives at the level of the common man, who, being enabled by advances in mediated

communication, is now able to access an audience, and to be heard in the telling of his story. Schaffer and Smith, as indicated by Hyvärinen (2010:77), single out the post-cold war decade as one of human rights in which life narratives put narrators of human rights violations and victims of abuse on stage, who tell their life stories, often in memoirs. It is in this turn of the narrative that I position *Zinky Boys*, which with the lessening of efficacy of censorship and control in the collapse of the Soviet Union, was allowed to propagate its subaltern narrative with its publication in 1992 as a translated work in English.

In summary, with the four turns now outlined, there is a need to identify between *story* on the one hand and *narrative discourse* on the other, following David Herman's (1999) suggestion for socio-narratology. Essentially, says Hyvärinen, it is recognising the difference between *what happened* and *how it is told*. Following the classification of Munslow (2007:18-23) Hyvärinen makes it clear that the first point of distinction in the actual temporal order is the narration, or the author-historian telling the story, and secondly, in the narrative act, the "assumed course of events" or story, and the historical discourse, are produced.

It is MacIntyre, who in *After Virtue* 1981:197 centres the importance of our narrative character by stating "[i]t is because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives that we live out that the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others". We are all storytellers in the eyes of MacIntyre. It is no wonder, then, that Fisher (1984:6) postulates the existence of *Homo Narrans* as a master metaphor. It is at this juncture, then, that I wish to turn to the work of Fisher in framing the narrative paradigm. I take as departure point, and as the main tenet for the discussion of the narrative paradigm, Fisher's monograph *Narration as a Human Communication Paradigm: The case of the public moral argument*. The reason for exercising this choice lies in the fact that Fisher explains the functioning and nature of the narrative paradigm very clearly, and this

constitutes, therefore, a primary source in gaining access on what the narrative paradigm, as intended by Fisher, really is.

Fisher (1984) on Fisher (1978), in penning his monograph on *Narrative as Human Communication: The Case of the Public Moral Argument*, refers towards his earlier writing in *Toward a Logic of Good Reasons* (1978:376), where he highlights the cognitive rational ability of humans and their reasoning ability, by stating “[h]umans as rhetorical beings are as much valuing as they are reasoning animals”. He further adds that humans exercise their reasoning to attain ‘good reasons’, which are not necessarily linked to argument, as compelling reasons may be uncovered in symbolic action. Here it is clear that Fisher places a premium on logic that uses ‘compelling reasons’ in ‘symbolic action’. This is a clear counterpoint to the traditional viewpoint of using *logos* (reason) as basis for argument. The implied and unspoken implication here is that agents cannot act as causal agents outside of given contexts to generate symbolic action, and similarly, that symbolic action cannot be accurately decoded by an audience to be a carrier of meaning, if there is no shared understanding of the context.

Quintessentially, as Fisher acknowledges, it is in the work of Alasdair MacIntyre (1981:201) who states “man is in his actions and practice, as well as his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal” that he finds the foundation for the narrative paradigm. The importance of identifying both actions (agency) and practice, is significant to me as I link it to Giddens’ notion of the resulting sense of familiarity that emanate from our action in the ‘forms of life’ or the *durée* of life (2010:3), as well as the ability to engage in reflexivity on mankind’s ‘continuity of practices’, resulting in a ‘self-consciousness’.

Fisher on MacIntyre (1981) acknowledges that MacIntyre further identifies the key concept of “enacted dramatic narrative” (ibid:200), which is the “basic and essential genre for the characterisation of human actions” (ibid:194). As such,

an 'enacted dramatic narrative' is a story that comes to life in the telling, in dealing with human actions and providing 'character' to it. In addition, there is an implied notion that the enacted dramatic narrative has both fidelity and probability, or trustworthiness, as I will shortly make clear in the paragraphs that follow.

The narrative perspective has, for Fisher, a duality in that it relates to both the real world and the imagined world, if we remember that 'man is a story-telling animal' also in his fictions. Thus, the Narrative Paradigm, to quote Fisher (1984:2) is "a dialectical synthesis of two traditional strands of rhetoric: the argumentative, persuasive theme, and the literary, aesthetic theme". In saying this, he is not making a new discovery *per se*, but is applying the traditional classification of poetic narrative on the one hand, and dialectical and rhetorical narrative on the other, to the narrative perspective.

Fisher's view of human communication in the contexts of its historicity and positioning (context and situation) is again, nothing new in interpretivist studies, but is useful to position the narrative paradigm as being context-dependent from the perspective of the poetical and rhetorical. The strength of the narrative paradigm lies in its emancipation of the narrative from the constraints of the rhetorical, which in its purest form is argumentative. In this regard a narrative, or good story that holds moral sway, may be regarded as compelling by itself and a genesis of 'good reasons' without having to resort to the use of argument to be interpreted for it to be compelling.

Fisher introduces a two-fold requirement for the narrative paradigm that is used to assert the validity of the paradigm through the notions of *narrative probability* and *narrative fidelity*, which, when met, provide compelling 'good reasons' and trustworthiness for stories to be accepted by the audience. The test of narrative fidelity is stated by Fisher (1987:105) as pertaining "to the individual components of stories—whether they represent accurate assertions about

social reality and thereby constitute good reasons for belief or action". He elaborates on this test of narrative fidelity by quintessentially noting, "[M]y concern is with the evaluation habit, the set of criterial questions that one is supposed to internalize so that one can ascertain the weight of reason in any given message, including one's own" (1987:108). Fisher then proceeds to state the following five components that make up the fidelity test in the logic of good reasons, which I paraphrase below:

- i) Establish the facts of the message, whether what is offered as evidence is indeed factual;
- ii) Determine whether any important facts have been suppressed or left out, and whether the facts presented have been distorted in any way;
- iii) Assess the patterns of reasoning (informal logic) that are used;
- iv) The fourth check concerns the relevance of arguments to the case, whether they are sound and complete with regard to the matter; and,
- v) does the message deal with the matter to hand?

The narrative fidelity test is of importance in this study, as I believe that the individual components that are found in the phenomenological narratives that are offered by the narrators do ultimately, in the intertext, provide a trustworthy version of their social reality that they portray. Here, a dialectical narrative in which the *parrheisiastes* (Foucault's 'truth speaker') acts as agent to convey the factual accuracy of the narrative is a distinctive marker. However, the narrative fidelity test is not intended to be used in isolation as facts offered in patterns of reasoning need to be relevant to the situation, and should show agreement with the subject under discussion. The counterpoint that is used in this instance is the probability test that is discussed below, which, in helping the audience arrive at a decision as to the 'good reasons' offered by the narrator agent, for his/her action and viewpoint, resonate positively with similar stories told in other narratives. In this regard, there is similarity with the rhetorical narrative. This point is of particular importance in arriving at an intertext, which offer key points

that are subsumed in the intertext, and establish a strong relationship and coherence with one another in telling the subaltern narrative. The probability test shows that such subaltern agents have characteristic markers that echo in other narratives in the anthology.

The probability test proposed by Fisher (1987:47) relates to the coherence of a story, or as he so eloquently phrases it, whether a story 'hangs together'. The probability test is paraphrased below:

- i) The story has structural coherence or argumentative coherence;
- ii) The story compares consistently well with other discourses through comparing and contrasting stories for material coherence; and,
- iii) The characterological coherence is evident in that (in the context of this study), characters are 'true to character'. The characterological coherence aspect is a key aspect in differentiating from the traditional logics.

In proposing the Narrative Paradigm Fisher provides another view in opposition to the existing rational world paradigm, and in so doing, labels it as a paradigm of human communication, applying the words "metaparadigm" and "metaphysical" in borrowing from Masterman (1970:65). The paradigm as described by Fisher is without a specific method of investigation, but sets itself in opposition to the traditional, rational world paradigm.

Fisher expands (1984:4) on the dominant 'rational world paradigm', which has been in existence since Aristotle and proposes the following quintessential argument:

1. Humans are essentially rational beings
2. The paradigmatic mode of human decision-making and communication is argument
3. The conduct of argument is ruled by the dictates of situations – legal, scientific, legislative, public, and so on.

4. Rationality is determined by subject matter knowledge, argumentative ability and skill in employing the rules of advocacy in given fields
5. The world is a set of logical puzzles which can be resolved through appropriate analysis and application of reason conceived as an argumentative construct. In short, argument as product and process is *the* means of being human, the agency of all that humans can know and realise in achieving their *telos*.

From the five points raised above, it is clear that rational human beings are capable of arguing, but are limited to the specific dictates of situations, which call for an objectivity evidenced in subject matter, and the use of analytical and argumentative constructs. Seen from this viewpoint the human ability to reason is seen as the character trait that marks human existence. Therefore, the philosophical ground of the rational world paradigm is epistemology, or its knowledgebase (fact-basis).

By contrast, the philosophical ground of the narrative paradigm is ontological, squarely grounded in the social sciences. This is characterised by agents who construct their individual experience-paradigms or knowledgebase of the situations that were experienced by them, from the phenomenological experiences they underwent. These experiences that have been internalised, constitute the identity of the 'who we are', therefore it can be said that the narrative paradigm has an ontological characteristic.

It is important to now turn to the audience in the narrator–audience relationship. Fisher points out that for a rational world paradigm a competent “public” that has ‘public or social knowledge’ is required as recipient or target audience of the intended argument, and in stating this viewpoint he follows in the footsteps of Bitzer, (1978) and Farrel (2009). Further, certain expectations are in place for individuals who constitute the public decision-making citizenry, such as sharing a common language, subscribing to the values of the state, information (context) relevant to the questions that confront the community, as well as an understanding of argumentative issues and various forms of reasoning and their appropriate assessment.

The aforementioned requirements stipulated by Fisher clearly indicate that accessing the linguistic code is the foremost expectation for an audience to be considered a public audience, which operates in a public sphere. This is followed by the requirements of the individuals having to support an ideological viewpoint, and sharing a contextual understanding, in order to be susceptible to the identification with particular needs, and amenable to proposed solutions conveyed via a reasoned thought pattern.

Fisher (1984:4-5) postulates that the rational paradigm has a major shortcoming in requiring a specialist or knowledgeable audience and relying only on the rational appeal of logic in conceiving arguments, it became limited and specialist in its application as rationality is a learned human activity. This shortcoming is made clear in the opposition to the rational world paradigm that grew out of the modernism movement and naturalism. The naturalism movement entails two schools of thought, on the one hand, there is the fundamental supremacy of physics and mathematics in the pursuit of logical structure as a scientific knowledge. The other school of thought is seated in knowledge of the human sciences through the practice of the social sciences, involving psychology, social sciences and biology. The first type of naturalism (physics and mathematics) is empirical in nature as it practices a scientific-objective approach that is rule-based by the laws of physics and mathematics. Fisher (1984:5) argues in this regard that the naturalism movement has indicated the shortcomings of the rational world paradigm in that it has lost its appeal as an approach to be used in everyday argumentation. Similarly, the human sciences school of thought that sought to reconceive the rational paradigm through reconceptualising the variables such as knowledge, the public, logic and validity, reason and rationality, did not achieve its aim to restore rationality to everyday argument. Hence, the only option remaining to Fisher is to reaffirm the existence of the rational world paradigm and to propose an alternative in the place of the modernism-naturalist paradigm, that alternative

being the narrative paradigm. Fisher (1984:6) proposes the appeal of the narrative paradigm in its ability to provide conveyance to public moral argument and “all other forms of argument for human communication in general”.

Fisher (1984:6) recognises the existence and use of root metaphors that are used to present the indispensable nature of man. Without negating the validity or importance of any of the existing root metaphors, Fisher proposes *homo narrans*, not only as an addition to the list of root metaphors, but also as the master metaphor. For Fisher the plot of the ‘human experience’ stands central and the other existing root metaphors become the subplots in the language of the narrative perspective.

Fisher’s argument is that the existing root metaphors take on a functional relationship of *recounting* and *accounting for*, human choice and action. Autobiography, biography and history are typically used to recount experiences, while argument or theoretical explanations are typically used to account for something. In Fisher’s view, recounting and accounting for “are the stories we tell ourselves and each other to establish a meaningful life-world” (1983:6). Therefore, they are also used in the style of the poetic narrative as later summarised by Lucaites and Condit (1985), meaning stories are expressed using the language and devices of prose, poetry and drama, to articulate the ‘truth’ about the human condition.

Finally, in an attempt to ground the Narrative Paradigm theoretically, Fisher (1984) brings in established theorists such as Burke (1968), Heidegger (1949) and Gadamer (1982). In the context of the last two theorists, Fisher on Heidegger quotes “[w]e are a conversation...conversation and its unity support our existence” (1984:7). However, I regard his reference to Burke’s definition of “man” as the “symbol-using (symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal” (Burke, 1968:16) as the theoretical grounding of the Narrative Paradigm, as it encapsulates the idea of human beings as storytellers “as a generic form of all

symbol composition” (Fisher, 1984:6). In the context of symbol composition Fisher explains that symbols are created and communicated as stories in this instance.

Fisher then sets out (1984:7) to identify the presuppositions that structure the narrative paradigm in the following five points:

1. Humans are essential storytellers
2. The paradigmatic mode of human decision-making and communication is ‘good reasons’ which vary in form among communication situations, genres and media
3. The production and practice of good reasons is ruled by matters of history, biography, culture, and character (along with the kinds of forces identified in the Frenzt and Farrell language action paradigm)
4. Rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative beings – their inherent awareness of *narrative probability*, what constitutes a coherent story, and their constant habit of testing *narrative fidelity*, whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives.
5. The world is a set of stories which must be chosen among to live the good life in a process of continual recreation. Fisher states “[I]n short, good reasons are the stuff of stories, the means by which humans realise their nature as reasoning-valuing animals” (1984:8).

From the aforementioned five presuppositions it is easy to identify with Fisher’s construct of the narrative paradigm as humans are essentially storytellers, and are motivated to act by good reasons in given contexts. In addition, Fisher identifies our innate ability to evaluate all stories for validity, and lastly that we are all subjected to the moral appeal of living a good life that necessitates making the right choices to ensure continuity. The ability to evaluate and value reasons lie at the core of human nature, be it on the basis of *logos*, or as Fisher proposes, the universal narrative impulse which is a natural development of socialisation. It is no mystery, therefore, that Fisher proclaims that ontology is the philosophical ground of the narrative paradigm.

Fisher highlights the quality of the shareability of reality by quoting White (1980:6) who published his views on the value of narrativity in the

representation of reality, and particularly by stating: “narrative is a metacode, a human universal on the basis of which trans-cultural messages about the shared reality can be transmitted...” This quote by White, is used by Fisher in his argument in which he postulates that societal form is not constrained by the narrative paradigm in its actualisation. The critical point, on which his argument depends, is the binary opposition of the methodology of acquisition of a person’s attributes. In this instance, because a rational world paradigm is a taught construct, not everybody has equally successfully mastered acquiring it as a personal attribute, and the same aptitude in rational ability will not be present in equal measure. Therefore, the rational world paradigm stands in opposition to the narrative paradigm, or more specifically, the notion that everybody in the process of socialisation naturally acquires the narrative impulse.

Fisher further alludes to the statement of MacIntyre (1981:197) who claims “...we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of narratives”. He uses MacIntyre’s claim to bolster his hypothesis that there is meaning in narratives, not only for individual persons, but at the meso- and macro-levels as well, where communities and cultures constitute and interact.

With the line of reasoning that Fisher follows, and which I have sought to represent here, he postulates that narrative fidelity and probability are not opposites of rationality, but function in the place of rationality in the narrative paradigm. Therefore, for Fisher, while they function in contrast, they do not contradict the notion of rationality. The term that is applied in this instance is *narrative rationality*.

Fisher acknowledges the work of Burke (1955) in stating that “the operative principle of narrative rationality is identification rather than deliberation” (1984:9). I believe this to be a key tenet of the narrative paradigm, as the ability

to identify with narratives, irrespective of the culture or society, functions as a touchpoint, or a narrative metacode that has human appeal, and even, in some cases, universal appeal. In setting narrative rationality apart from the more traditional notion of rationality, Fisher reminds us that operative principles support this distinction, namely narrative fidelity and narrative probability.

Narrative rationality is, therefore, a normative construct in describing and evaluating narratives, but not in the sense that it follows laws or conforms to thinking patterns; rather it is a social experience deducing from and contributing to one another's minds. Here Fisher (1984) is following both Booth (1974), who provides the example of minds making inferences and building other minds in societies, and Burke (1955) who singles out 'identification' as the operative principle, which is a long-established principle.

The characteristics that make narrative rationality appealing are that it has a descriptive praxis and offers opportunities for critique, as posited by Fisher "an ideal democratic society" (1984:9). Narrative rationality is therefore in opposition to the systemic hierarchy offered by traditional rationality, which both includes and excludes those qualified to evaluate and make judgements on matters.

Fisher (1984:10) advances the idea that a space for social-political critique is provided by the narrative paradigm, where people evaluate the stories that they are told. It is in making such judgements that they recognise the moral application of just and true in the stories they hear. No structure in society is without this ability to evaluate, and even to get it wrong, as Fisher (1984) contends that political and social decisions (even those made by the elite) are not spared this risk.

There are four important features of the narrative paradigm that are provided by Fisher which I briefly want to refer to and to draw the attention to at least two of the four which I perceive to occupy positions of prominence in understanding

what constitutes the narrative paradigm, by bolding their print. Fisher (1984:10) notes the four as follows, which I paraphrase below:

1. The narrative paradigm provides space in which to understand the dichotomies of modernism: Fact-value, intellect-imagination, reason-emotion, and so on.
2. **Secondly, Fisher argues that narratives are moral constructs and in representations of reality through narratives one cannot do so devoid of morality.**
3. Thirdly, with reference to the work of Medina (1979), Fisher proposes that the narrative paradigm is consonant with the notion of reason. Here the communicative and narrative existence of humans are likened to that of the biographical. Therefore, reason has a nature that is narrative and symbolic.
4. **Lastly, Fisher proposes the thought that the narrative paradigm offers the means of solving the difficulties of public moral argument.**

Fisher (1984:12) presents the differentiating features that sets the public moral argument aside from reasoned discourse of the type used in more formal settings such as arguments in court; theological and academic debates, or arguments in specialised communities. The differentiating features are:

1. It is publicised, made available for consumption and persuasion of the polity at large
2. It is aimed at what Aristotle called “untrained thinkers”, or to be effective, it should be.
3. PMA is a form of controversy that inherently crosses fields. It is not contained by subject matter and because its realm is public-social knowledge, public moral argument naturally invites participation by field experts and is dominated by the superiority of their arguments.
4. PMA, which is oriented toward what ought to be, is undermined by the ‘truth’ that prevails at the moment. The rational world paradigm and presence of experts in PMA make it difficult for the public of untrained thinkers to win an argument.

5. PMA is moral in the sense that it is founded on ultimate questions – of life and death, of how persons should be defined and treated, of preferred patterns of living.
6. PMA refers to good reasons in the narrative paradigm and inferential structures in the rational world paradigm
7. PMA may also refer to public controversies – disputes and debates – about moral issues e.g. war

4.7 CONCLUSION

As indicated earlier in the introduction to this chapter, the chapter's purpose is to describe the theoretical lens that I use to approach this thesis. I use this metatheoretical perspective to, *inter alia*, spell out the ontological, epistemological, teleological, axiological, and ideological considerations that articulate my positioning with regard to this task at hand. These considerations influence my production-oriented intertextual reading (after Alkier, 2005) of *Zinky Boys* in which, if I may adapt Eco's (1991:58) phrasing, there is an *intentio operis* and *intention lectoris* in a dialectical positioning. In short, this refers to what the text signifies in relation to its textual coherence or how the texts speak to themselves and others in the anthology of *Zinky Boys*; as well as how, as reader, I interpret what the texts say, influenced and limited by my metatheoretical awareness.

Therefore, considering how the study is anchored, the decision to use Fisher's narrative paradigm is important and therefore discussed in this chapter as it justifies the value-based approach that I use rather than the more classical rational world paradigm. In addition, as Fisher points out that narrative paradigms have an ontological basis, I selected the narrative paradigm as it serves well as an approach through which to investigate the phenomenological experiences of the narrators in *Zinky Boys*. Since Fisher (1984:12) argues that the narrative paradigm offers means of solving the difficulties of public moral

argument, I argue that it is important to incorporate the notions of social space and public spheres, as this is a published anthology that brings private phenomenological experiences of agents into juxtaposition with the intentions of the Soviet Union. Of note is the section on the Russian public sphere in the chapter that serves in establishing both the encyclopaedia of the *intentio operis* and *intention lectoris*; as I read, interpret and respond to the texts making up the volume of *Zinky Boys*.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

*We were told that this was a just war, that we were helping
the Afghan people to put an end to feudalism and build
a wonderful socialist society.*

Svetlana Alexievich, *Zinky Boys: Soviet Voices from the Afghanistan War*

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the methodology used in the study, showing how it is enclosed in the interpretivist paradigm as a qualitative study. The methodology used included the application of a textual analysis and constructing an intertext of the various texts contained in the anthology of *Zinky Boys*, followed by the extrapolation of the public moral argument made in the anthology. In this introductory section of the chapter, I first position the study in the narrative turn, before providing a framework for the study by mapping out the methodological approach to the study in the section dealing with framing the study.

The interpretative process, including textual analysis, are discussed before matters relating to the data handling are deliberated. It is in this section that I motivate why the older of the two available translations of the anthology was chosen as a primary source for study. Since the field of textual analysis can be broadly applied to most written texts, I felt it important to bracket the study as best as possible within the Russian public sphere, and to provide a temporal map which would draw attention to the double hermeneutic practice of researcher influencing the subject of research in the interpretative process. This is followed by a discussion on the procedural progression in broad brushstrokes.

The chapter then outlines the processes followed in constructing the intertext and the extraction of the public moral argument, and positioning it in the

Russian public sphere. The discussion on the approach used in the interpretation of the public moral argument follows, after which the chapter concludes with a brief discussion on the theoretical considerations including the quality criteria, transferability, repeatability and conformability of the study.

As indicated earlier in this introduction, there is a need to briefly describe the narrative turn and the ripple effect that it has had in the Humanities and Social Sciences. In the Theoretical Survey in Chapter Four I have already set out the four distinct turns as classified by Hyvärinen (2010). They were the Aristotelian seedbed years with a focus on literature, the turn in historiography, the turn of seeing narratives as “material, theory and perspective for reading” (Hyvärinen: 2010:74). Additionally, Bamberg (2016) indicates that there has been an interest among Communication researchers in narratives covering lived experiences, which is noticeable by a turn in the social sciences towards the narrative, which comprises the fourth. In continuation on the point that I made in Chapter Four that the cultural turn to narrative includes narratives of the common man, I wish to point out that the mediation through mass communication allows these narratives to become topical content for consumption in the public sphere. It is in this last turn that I position this study.

With this reminder in place, I acknowledge and feel obligated to reproduce below the taxonomy offered by Bochner (2014:12-13), who demonstrates the maturity of the field of study of narrative inquiry:

By 2007 this turn toward narrative and storytelling research had swept across the human sciences, producing a host of new fields dedicated to narrative inquiry and narrative practices.

His classification can be tabularised as follows:

Table 5.1 Taxonomy of Narrative Inquiry

Field	Authors
Narrative anthropology	Behar, 1996; Jackson, 1989, 1995, 2002; Myerhoff, 1978; D. Rose, 1993; Turner and Schechner, 1988
Narrative Gerontology	Kenyon, Clark, and De Vries, 2001
Narrative Medicine	Charon, 2006; Charon and Montello, 2002
Narrative Psychiatry	Coles, 1989; Schafer, 1981a, 1981b, 1994; Spence, 1982
Narrative Psychology	Freeman, 1993; Lieblich and Josselson, 1997; McAdams, 1993, 1997; Sarbin, 1986
Narrative Sociology	Richardson, 1990; Loseke, 1992; Maines, 1993; G. Becker, 1997
Narrative therapy	White and Epston, 1990; Parry and Doan, 1994; Lieblich, McAdams, and Josselson, 2004
Narrative Ethnography	J. Bruner, 1987; Van Maanen, 1988; D. Rose, 1993
Narrative Pedagogy	Witherell and Noddings, 1991
History as Narrative	H. White, 1981, 1987
Narrative and the Law	J. B. White, 1985; Bellow and Minow, 1998; Brooks and Gewirtz, 1998
Wounded Storytelling	Kleinman, 1989; Couser, 1997; Frank, 1991, 1995

Narrative inquiry struggled to establish its identity as a science, and to be recognised as scientific research in a world that was largely positivist, empirical and quantitative (Bochner, 2014). Similarly, whilst Textual Analysis enjoyed prominence by communication practitioners using a qualitative methodology (Fürsich, 2018), there is a growing interest in quantitative practices using computer-based software solutions (Smith, 2017). Notwithstanding the earlier dominance of quantitative practices in research and the more recent

quantitative interest in textual analysis and narrative inquiry, there is clear evidence of support for qualitative approaches to narrative inquiry in the Communication field.

5.2 FRAMING THE STUDY

As indicated in the introduction, the purpose of the study was to conduct a textual analysis and to generate an intertext of the narrated phenomenological experiences that are printed in *Zinky Boys*, which would provide a window in on the public moral argument that is subsumed in the anthology. When dealing with phenomenological narratives of individuals there are decisions to be made as to the position that the researcher takes in approaching the texts, classically, either following a positivist, empirical and quantitative approach, or charting an interpretivist, qualitative approach. In this instance, I chose to follow an interpretivist, qualitative approach as this is an approach that is well suited to conducting textual analyses (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 1999; Hawkins, 2018; Mckee, 2003), as is revealed below.

Memo on Figure 5.1 Methodological Approach

Figure 5.1 reads from the bottom to the top as indicated by the directional arrow. The horizontal levels in the table are permeable to allow the identified elements to exert influence across the artificial horizontal barriers implied by the tabular structure.

My metatheoretical positioning lies in the interpretivist paradigm from which I chose a qualitative locus as my stance within the tradition of the interpretivist turn, rather than an empirical, positivist view of the world, which is incompatible with a post-modernist, interpretivist positioning. It is as argued in Chapter 4 of this study, I follow a praxis of linking multiple theories that have philosophical links, are interdisciplinary, and framed by the turn that holds sway in a given paradigm to frame the study.

The method that is practised (as indicated in the title of the thesis) is a textual analysis of the collection of narratives in *Zinky Boys*. This textual analysis is firmly rooted in the narrative turn to which I had drawn attention earlier in this introduction as well as in the previous chapter. I chose a textual analysis as methodology as it is often used in research to understand how people make sense of life in general and events in life, in this instance from a phenomenological narrative viewpoint. The phenomenological narrative viewpoint in which the lived experiences of individuals come to the fore, aligns strongly with Fisher's narrative paradigm; which has an ontological bias, that was used to corroborate the resultant public moral argument through the tests of Coherence and Fidelity, providing trustworthiness in the study.

Narrowing down my approach, in a sense bracketing my approach, I selected the Rhetorical Criticism approach to the study as I attempted to put in place an orderly method that would look at the persuasive aspects of the narratives. Not

only in understanding the individual within society and context, but specifically to find societal criticism in the particular context of the Soviet-Afghan war. This notion aligns with the description that Boyle and Schmierbach (2015:322) offer that rhetorical criticism goes beyond textual analysis, investigating how that content works. Therefore, the question of what is the persuasive and public moral argument in the text was included in the scope of the study as the methodology makes allowance for it.

The Contemporary Rhetoric perspective was, for the purpose of this study, most flexible as it allowed me to posit questions about the narrative text and its context, the ways in which the narrative texts construct reality or realities for the readers, as well as the moral viewpoints of the narrators that are encapsulated in the narrative texts. Taking cognizance of the multi-nationality of the Soviet contingent in the war, a post-structuralist approach was selected as the most logical perspective as it allowed a multitude of emic cultural viewpoints to arise from the text.

Finally, the anthology of narratives (texts) that was studied, was used to extrapolate an intertext. This resulted in the formulation of a plausible and authentic public moral argument in the Russian Public Sphere, which was the purpose of the study.

Straining the public moral argument from the intertext required a double hermeneutical interpretation of the texts, an attribute which Giddens (2010:284) says 'characterises' social science as there are "cultural, ethnographic or 'anthropological' aspects" embedded in social research. Therefore, it was only possible to generate a public moral argument after comparing the texts with one another to generate an intertext, where the polyphonic voices that are contained in the anthology were qualitatively themed through first identifying the attributes of each text and its artifacts.

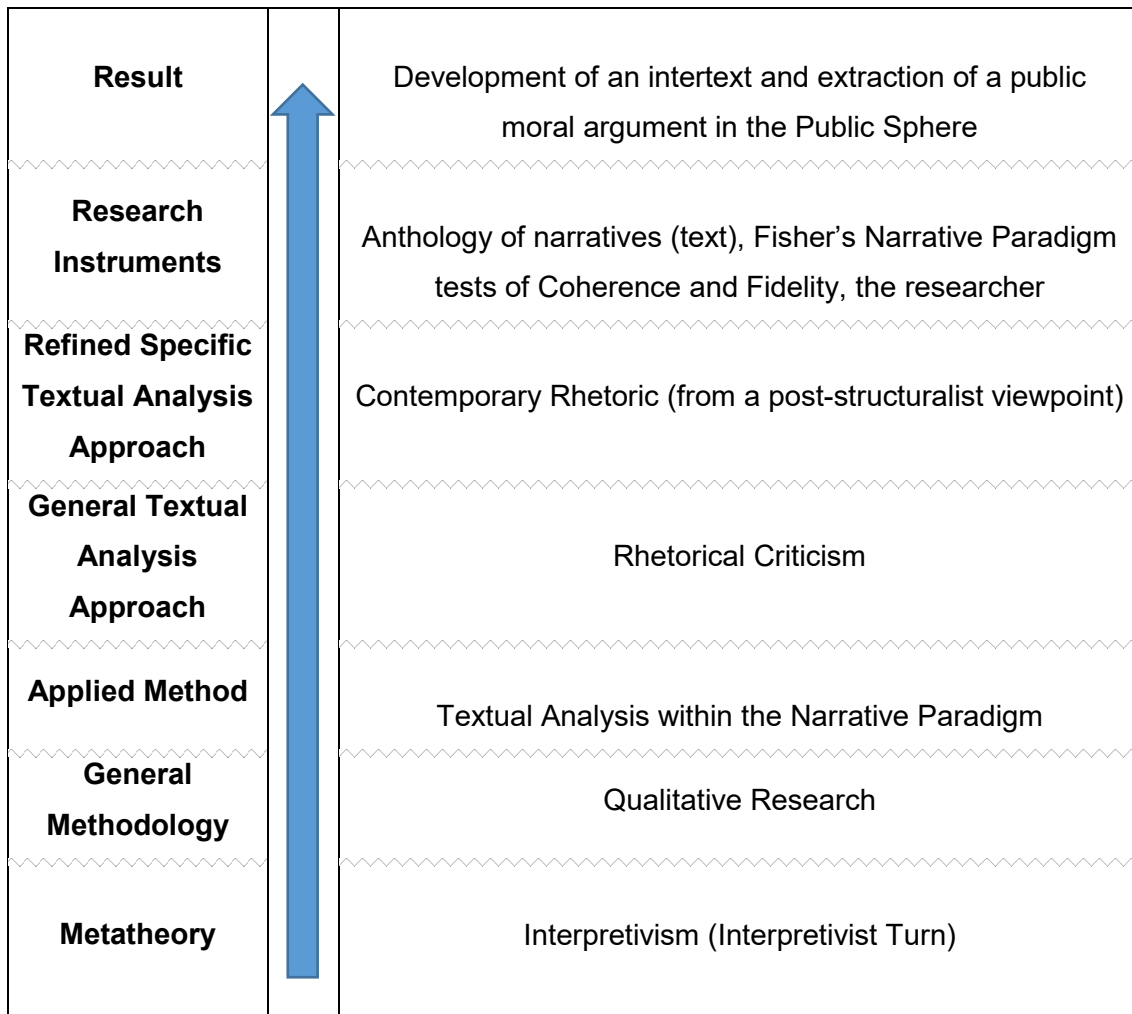


Figure 5.1 Methodological Approach

It is important to link this chapter on methodology to the theoretical framework of the study, which assists in delineating the methodological structure. A key concept that I postulate in Chapter Four, is that I see and understand the narrator as a 'being' in a specific context, who is communicating a public moral argument. This necessitated a decision to position the study within the narrative paradigm, and to conduct a textual analysis of the narratives offered. However, in framing the scope of such an analysis I chose to focus on Habermas' theory of the public sphere, specifically the Russian public sphere, as the anthology of texts has been published in book form for public literary consumption.

This resulted in my positioning the study within the interpretivist turn, which would accommodate the variables that I had included in the frame. I began thus, by studying the concept of ontology as it is offered as the philosophical grounding of the narrative paradigm. The narrator finds himself or herself in a specific situation in the co-presence of others, which required a study of social space, the public sphere, and ultimately, the Russian public sphere. The narrator is not passive, but narrates a story of his/her action of the past, which brings into play the notions of power and agency. Finally, I turn to the narrative paradigm and the tests of coherence and fidelity.

5.3 THE INTERPRETATIVE PROCESS

5.3.1 Textual Analysis

In discussing the interpretative process, I first begin by referring to the practice of Textual Analysis, described by McKee (2003) as the study by researchers of how people make sense of the world. McKee does not imply that it is merely a descriptive process, but indicates that it is a process in which data is gathered, with sensitivity to cultural and subcultural positioning. To McKee it is an interpretive act of how the subjects under study employ strategies of sense-making of their world. It is described by Boyle and Schmierbach (2015:323) as the “qualitative counterpart to the typically quantitative content analysis and involves the in-depth analysis of the content of various kinds of social artifacts, referred to as *texts*”. Researchers typically not only explore the apparent meanings, but also the hidden and interpretative meaning of the text.

Frey, Botan and Kreps (1999), have more of a text-based focus than a sense-making subject approach, by focusing on textual analysis as a method used by communication researchers to describe and interpret messages. The purpose, according to them, is to describe the structure, functions and content of the message, which is closer in stance to content analysis, which investigates the

linguistic features of text. However, from that viewpoint they then make it clear that there are four different approaches to practising textual analysis, distinguishing among content analysis, rhetorical criticism, performance studies, and interaction analysis. In their taxonomy, this study fits into the rhetorical criticism category, specifically contemporary rhetoric, as it centres on narrative criticism-based strategies of investigating the persuasive force of the message. Hence, an approach that is well suited to extrapolating an intertext and public moral argument as I intended.

Textual analysis has a rich history, notably the introduction of the idea that texts have multiple meanings (polysemy) as posited by Barthes (1977 & 2013). It is for this reason that a singular, *über* interpretation of a text is in its conception not a popular idea with post-structuralist textual analysis practitioners. Therefore, there is no acceptance of a singular analysis-type in practice among them, as combinations of various analysis types are often used (Fürsich, 2018). In the same vein, I believe it pays to be mindful of Deleuze and Guattari's (1987:1227) viewpoint of exteriority, which can

change meaning drastically depending on the interactions they are part of and the concrete conditions of their exercise or establishment (for example, the way in which total war and popular war, and even guerrilla warfare, borrow one another's methods).

Whilst it is not the purpose of this study to investigate linguistic and semiotic analyses (as is done in context analysis), it is worth noting the differentiation between signifier and signified (Ferdinand de Saussure's *signifié* and *signifiant*), which has become a popular concept taught to freshman university students. In this context, as Chandler (2017:14) on Hjelmslev indicates, it is the differentiation between form and mental concept. It means therefore, that words and their denotative meanings or messages do not have stable relations that generate repetitive meaning; as the conditions, culture and context of text

messages may connote meaning that is not similar to the assumed meaning ascribed on the basis of exteriority.

I regard *Zinky Boys* as the primary text for textual analysis and the other sources that I use in this thesis as secondary texts. However, I would be remiss if I did not point out that there is an important limitation in the study as I study a primary text, which has been translated from the original Russian into English, albeit with the author's approval. I am aware of a more recent translation by Penguin Books which I shall not use as a primary text as I hold a post-structuralist view that each translation of a text as a text in itself, which has unique characteristics and a voice of its own. Therefore, to avoid polyphonic voices speaking at cross-purposes with one another, I shall keep to the older translation, which I had already identified as the primary text to be used in this study.

An additional argument that I wish to add to substantiate my decision arises from my personal experience as a reader of the text, taking cognisance of my 'horizon of expectations' which is influenced by my personal experience of warfare during the early 1980s as a conscript in the South African Defence Force. I am in agreement with the opinion expressed by Maksymchuk and Rosochinsky (2017:62), who present the argument that translating "...Alexievich's writing poses a special challenge for her translators". The authors use a comparative stratagem by referring to the Greek character of Thucydides in *History of the Peloponnesian War*, whose historical narratives are "...tight, polished, self-contained. Like well-crafted arrows shot by an orderly formation of skilled archers, these speeches have causal gravity, an aim, a point" (2017:61). The contrast with Alexievich is remarkable in that her narrative reporting is deliberately much less polished; the narratives sounding like live voices, stammering, emotional, confrontational, and at times drifting in focus. It is this very aspect that decided me against using the Penguin translation that is,

by contrast, much more smoothly written than the live voices heard in *Zinky Boys*.

The following comparison of the same text in translation proves the point.

Exemplar A provides a different reading experience, more polished, with refined descriptions about the wounded soldier's feelings upon awakening. The writing style is reflective, with smooth transitions from one sentence to the next. The thought pattern feels orderly and smooth. To me, personally, it reads more like prose than an emotionally laden narrative.

Exemplar A

Only the voices got through to me ... No matter how hard I strained, the voices had no faces. They kept going away and coming back again. It seems to me like I just managed to think, 'I'm dying.' And then I opened my eyes ... I came round in Tashkent, on the sixteenth day after being blown up. When you recover consciousness you feel really lousy, you think things will never get better ... Not coming back any more would have been more comfortable. Mist and nausea. It's not even nausea, but choking, as if there's a load of water in your lungs. It takes a long time to get out of that state. Mist and nausea ... Your own whispering makes your head hurt; I couldn't speak louder than a whisper. I'd already been in the Kabul hospital. In Kabul they opened up my skull and it was full of mush. They took out small pieces of bone and screwed my left arm together without any joints. The first thing I felt was regret that nothing would ever come back. I wouldn't see my friends again, and worst of all – I wouldn't be able to get on to the pull-up bar.

Alexievich, Svetlana. *Boys in Zinc* (Penguin Modern Classics) (p. 24). Penguin Books Ltd. Kindle Edition.

Exemplar B has a more clipped, direct, reporting tone in the voice of the narrator. By comparison to the first sentence in Exemplar A the reporting in Exemplar B has a more authentic voice than that of Exemplar A, which is written in a more sophisticated manner, not resembling someone whose brains were 'mushed'. To my reading experience Exemplar B is more direct and personal, in which the voice and emotional state of the narrator is clearly heard.

Exemplar B

I could hear voices, but the voices had no faces attached, however hard I tried to make them out. They faded away, came back, faded again...I remember thinking, I 'm dying – and then opening my eyes. I came to in Tashkent sixteen days after I was wounded. My head hurt when I whispered – I couldn't speak out loud. In the hospital in Kabul they'd opened up my skull, found a lot of porridge and taken out a few bits of bone. They put my left hand back together, but with screws instead of knuckles. The first thing I felt was sad. Sad I'd never be going back there, never see my friends, never work out on those horizontal bars again.

Alexievich, S. 1992. *Zinky Boys: Soviet Voices from the Afghanistan War*. (p13)
New York: Heinemann.

In closing my argument, it is also worth noting the difference between the last sentences in the chosen exemplars:

Exemplar A: I wouldn't see my friends again, and worst of all – I wouldn't be able to get on to the pull-up bar.

Exemplar B: Sad I'd never be going back there, never see my friends, never work out on those horizontal bars again.

The translation in Exemplar B has a more definitive voice of finality to it with the repetitive use of the word 'never', and the clarity provided in the last phrase, "never work out" which suggests a physical action that would occur in a gymnasium or exercise room. In addition, a 'pull-up bar' and 'horizontal bars' are completely different apparatuses.

In concluding my argument on the choice of translated text to analyse, I again draw on the examples above to state that in translating written text from the original to the target language one may run the risk of trying too hard to avoid translating sentences in the same style that has been done before. It is clear that that Bromfield has used the original text, but it is also clear that special

effort was taken not to duplicate the earlier Whitby translation, effectively 'plagiarising' from the original. Many sentences in translation have the same style of expression, but differ only in that the words chosen are synonyms for one another.

Compare the two exemplars again:

Exemplar A: *Only the voices got through to me ... No matter how hard I strained, the voices had no faces.*

Exemplar B: *I could hear voices, but the voices had no faces attached, however hard I tried to make them out.*

It is clear from the exemplar above that there is a striking similarity in what the translated sentences convey – and indeed, there should be in order to maintain translation equivalence. However, to me, as a reader, too much effort has gone into duplication avoidance strategies by relying on the use of synonyms (tried/strained), thus resulting in the newest translation speaking to me with less of an authentic voice.

As already indicated in the title of the study, I had chosen to do a textual analysis of the narratives contained in *Zinky Boys*. Narrative analysis is the qualitative counterpart of content analysis, the latter is more at home in the positivist paradigm, and is dealt with quantitatively. The primary consideration that necessitated a decision in favour of a qualitative approach is technical in nature as the text of *Zinky Boys* had originally been written in Russian, and was only translated into English for the first time in 1992 by Julia and Robin Whitby.

In addition, my decision not to opt for a-priori themes and to practice an emic approach in reading the text, allowed themes to emerge qualitatively from the text. Whilst this is also possible in the case of content analysis, I felt that my ontological disposition as a war veteran would be better suited in the qualitative

context. Narrative analysis belongs to the domain of contextualising strategies (Maxwell, 1996:170), and as such to avoid a mixed-method approach I decided to do a qualitative narrative analysis rather than a quantitative narrative analysis.

Aligned to the description provided by Hawkins (2018) my approach to conducting the textual analysis was guided by a question. The guiding question in this study is 'what public moral argument about the Soviet participation in the Soviet-Afghan War is provided by the narrators in *Zinky Boys*?' To provide answers to the guiding question, there were two questions that first needed to be answered that helped to generate information that guided me in this regard. These questions are, 'how did the Soviets feel about their involvement in the Soviet-Afghan War', and 'how do the narratives contribute to the establishment of an intertext in *Zinky Boys*'?

Whilst I do not experience any discomfort in dealing with texts in translation, I do find the idea of doing a statistical analysis of a work in translation abhorrent. My reason for stating this is that no matter how careful the translators were to attend to the aspect of equivalence in the translated work, they bring much into the text and generate an alternative text, once or even twice removed from the original, much as suggested by Plato with his concept of *mimesis*. To apply content analytical strategies to such a text could not possibly result in a truthful rendition of the intention of the narrators. In fact, as I demonstrated earlier in this chapter, there is a second translated version of the text (2016) published by Penguin, which to my impression, is even further removed from the original text due to the perceived excessive care the translator took to avoid possible copyright infringement of the Whitby version. Furthermore, the reductive strategies employed in content analysis would limit a thick description resulting from the data as one would be dealing with data out of context. Geertz (1973:312) accredits the origin of the notion of a 'thick description' to Gilbert Ryle. Further on, Geertz summarises

[a]nalysis, then, is sorting out the structures of signification-what Ryle called established codes, a somewhat misleading expression, for it makes the enterprise sound too much like that of the cipher clerk when it is much more like that of the literary critic-and determining their social ground and import. Here, in our text, such sorting would begin with distinguishing the three unlike frames of interpretation ingredient in the situation, Jewish, Berber, and French, and would then move on to show how (and why) at that time, in that place, their copresence produced a situation in which systematic misunderstanding reduced traditional form to social farce (Geertz, 1973:314).

It is the last sentence in the extract above that conveys methodological significance in that Geertz points out that the researcher has to distinguish the “frames of interpretation ingredient in the situation...and would then move on to show how (and why) at that time, in that place, their copresence produced a situation...”. It is for this very reason that I had provided the concept map in Chapter Four as frames of interpretation required extensive explication and demarcation, helping to bracket the study as I explain in the next section on handling the data.

5.4 DATA HANDLING

In this section of the chapter, I introduce a brief discussion on bracketing in the context of the text. Tufford and Newman (2010) describe bracketing as a qualitative research method in which the preconceptions held by the researcher is lessened. I refer to temporal mapping as well, a concept discussed by Denzin (2001), which indicates that the phenomenon is studied within the context of its occurrence. As such, these phenomenological narratives represent the social structures that influence them, and carry meaning in several contexts, such as, for example, the cultural-historical context of the Cold War. Therefore, in handling the data, I attempted to allow the voices of the narrators to speak for themselves, and to reflect their phenomenological experiences in the context,

setting and time of the occurrence, limiting my own opinion in the act of interpreting as far as possible.

5.4.1 Bracketing in the context of the text

Bracketing in the context of the text refers to the act of bracketing off or framing the context within which I wished to practice my interpretivist agency. I am of the opinion that the intended audience of the author and contributors to the anthology finds itself in the public sphere. Take here into account the earlier opinion of Habermas that the literary public sphere that formed in the coffee houses became a sphere in which literature and politics were discussed. Therefore, I wished to study the texts contained in *Zinky Boys* as an anthology of published texts in, and intended for the public sphere.

The problem in bracketing off the text as a printed object is that it remains an anthology of phenomenological narratives that need to be brought to life through the act of reading. In reading the text through the act of interpreting text, context, and filtering it through the reader's experience, it takes on a life of its own and a multitude of existentialist possibilities. No two readers will produce exactly the same interpretation of the text, as their ontological and epistemological filters and frames are dissimilar. Therefore, I was satisfied to position the text in the public sphere, and narrow that sphere down to the Russian public sphere. However, it is when it comes to dealing with the text in the narrative paradigm that the double hermeneutical bind enters the fray; altering my perception of the text purpose, existence, and messages that it produces.

Therefore, taking cognizance of Giddens' (2010) notion of the double hermeneutic, I recognise that at one level, the text speaks and tells a story. However, at another level, the reader-researcher interprets and attributes meaning to the agency of the narrators in the text, perhaps misconstruing or

altering the intended meaning that the text generates for the reader, hence the need to provide a topical survey of published literature about the war in Chapter Three.

Giddens (2010:374) describes the double hermeneutic as:

The intersection of two frames of meaning as a logically necessary part of social science, the meaningful social world as constituted by lay actors and the metalanguages invented by social scientists; there is a constant 'slippage' from one to the other involved in the practice of the social sciences.

Therefore, in the interpretivist context, I find bracketing far more difficult to apply, other than to allow my endeavours to be absorbed and dictated to by sound textual analysis practices and Fisher's tests of coherence and fidelity contained in the narrative turn. Moreover, attending to the concepts of bracketing that foreshadow the depth and range of analysis helped to frame the interpretive act. Thus, the practice of textual analysis in the narrative paradigm opens up multitudes of possibilities in interpreting the text, but in this instance it benefits from a specific focus provided by the goal to render a public moral argument from the intertext.

Concerning interpretation, I need to make it clear that I am influenced by my earlier experience as a conscript in the South African Defence Force during 1982-1983, and intermittently for shorter stints of four to six weeks per annum for several years thereafter. Not only were some of the practices outlined in *Zinky Boys* familiar to me; but the Russian forces were familiar as well, as we did engage them in battles in Angola, albeit they were mostly deployed in the role of military advisors. Thus, here I found myself in a bind as I was reading and interpreting the agency of my former adversary, concerned about whether that would cloud my interpretation or create a conflict of interest. I was relieved; however, to find that at several levels there were touchpoints in their and my personal experiences, our lived experiences, to which I could strongly relate. As

much as *Zinky Boys* is their story, I found that it is also my story. Having read and analysed the anthology I experienced a feeling of kinship with the narrators and their texts, which at once is very liberating in the sense that I believe it has opened my mind and heart as a researcher to be receptive to both the text and context.

I have pondered my position in the continuum of the insider/outsider positioning in qualitative research, and have at times thought that there is no real sense of belonging with the insider group in the dichotomy. Likewise, my lived experience does not make me comfortable with the idea that I am a complete outsider to the stories and narratives that are told in *Zinky Boys*. It is only when I read the work of Dwyer and Buckle (2009) that the conundrum resolved itself with the solution that they suggest below:

Drawing on Aoki's (1996) work, insider and outsider are understood as a binary of two separate preexisting entities, which can be bridged or brought together to conjoin with a hyphen. This hyphen can be viewed not as a path but as a dwelling place for people. This hyphen acts as a third space, a space between, a space of paradox, ambiguity, and ambivalence, as well as conjunction and disjunction. (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009:60)

In the context of my discussion above, I see myself as neither insider, nor complete outsider; but as a receptive and responsive reader who has insider experience, who is not a member of the insider group, as I do not share the language and culture of the narrators. I identify strongly with the words of Heinemann (a Vietnam veteran who visited and met with *Afgantsi* in Moscow) in the introduction to *Zinky Boys* (1992:ix-x):

What came through most forcefully was that no matter the nationality – Americans fighting in Vietnam, Soviets in Afghanistan, South African conscripts in Angola, British troops in Northern Ireland, Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle East – the reality of being a soldier is dismally and remarkably the same; gruelling and brutal and ugly. Regardless of

the military or political reason (always decisions made by politicians and 'statesmen' far removed from the realities of the field), for ordinary everyday grunts the results are always the same; it is soul-deadening and heart-killing work. ...The similarities of the United States' war in Vietnam and the Soviet war in Afghanistan are striking and ironic, and prove to me that we as people have a lot more in common than we might think.

In the extract above Heinemann points to the universality of the suffering of soldiers during any war. The effect of war on the soldier is not dependent upon the reason why there is a war. As this thesis demonstrates, the psychological impact of the suffering encountered during times of war holds a life-changing effect on the combatant. The commonality of the suffering of individuals is capable of bridging the ideological positioning of the war, with the result that there is a universal character identifiable in the suffering of the soldier whose altered frame of reference alienates him from everyday life in society, as is demonstrated in *Zinky Boys*. However, this suffering for the soldier is tied to a particular context and timeframe, therefore there is a need to study the phenomenological experiences in the socio-political timeframe during which they were encountered.

5.4.2 Temporal mapping

The concept of temporal mapping refers to the understanding of messages, not in isolation, but as representations of the social structures that influence them, in such a way that they may carry political, cultural, ethical and historical contexts. As described by Denzin (2001), temporal mapping is the process of connecting persons to situations. The aspects of "determining the temporal sequencing and organisation of actions in the setting" as well as "locating settings and persons in space" help to constitute the temporal map Denzin (2001:87). Another way of expressing this process is to describe it as a sense-making process as Denzin (2001:87) states, "[t]emporal mapping focuses on *who* does *what* with *whom*, *when* and *where*". The supporting reasons

advanced by Denzin include understanding the social structure under study as a whole, providing a historical or biographical positioning in relation to the event, the history of the locale or site where the action occurs, and finally, it involves personal experience. The temporal map, therefore, assists to aid the researcher in understanding the phenomenon under study as comprehensively as possible.

Denzin (2001:107) adds to this process by stating that a “full or complete thick description is biographical, historical, situational, relational, and interactional”. It should be kept in mind, though, that from the post-structuralist viewpoint that I hold, that a thick description is not a panacea to interpretive studies such as textual analysis. In this instance, I have paired textual analysis with Fisher’s Narrative Paradigm as it helps to focus on “how the intratextual reality of an account is shaped by its emplotment of characters and events” (Warnick, 1998:172). Implied morals entrenched in the text, for example, elements of the Public Moral Argument, can be discovered through such, and application of the paradigm aided by the coherence and fidelity principles of the narrative paradigm.

5.4.3 Procedural progression

In textual analysis there are four main approaches which may be used (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 1999). These are: rhetorical criticism, content analysis, interaction analysis, and performance studies. The data collection method that I chose to use in this study is rooted in the rhetorical criticism approach because this allowed me to study the relationships generated between text and context, how the text constructed reality for the audience, and what it suggested about the narrator. Therefore, at the macro level, the method could be said to straddle both the Social Movement Studies approach and the Biographical Studies approach as it collected data for analysis from the narrated private texts of individuals that have helped to influence the historical development towards the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

The primary data collection for this study was already complete because the interviews that were held with the survivors of the Soviet-Afghanistan war are already transcribed into text and are published in an accessible format as a book. Therefore, I approached the data as secondary research data, keeping in mind that the data in translation has resulted from the reconstituted memories of those who were interviewed, whilst at the same time probably affected by their cultural schemas (Bartlett, 1932). What was of importance to me was to read the text with sensitivity within the context of the text, to ensure that appropriate selections were made and they were correctly interpreted.

The research methodology that was proposed comprises a textual analysis of social artifacts or interviews that have been recorded as text in *Zinky Boys: Soviet Voices from Afghanistan*. Preference was given to the 'textual analysis' method as it is the qualitative counterpart of 'content analysis' (Boyle and Schmierbach, 2015; Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014; Maree, 2007; McKee, 2001). Both manifest and latent content were explored to gain an understanding of the characteristics of the text, which were then be unitized and themed using an emic (inductive) approach.

The themes resulted from the patterns that were found during the reading of the texts and the resulting coding emerged following a constant comparative technique approach where paragraphs were used as the first units for analysis. Where paragraphs were not demarcated due to the narrative structure of the text resulting from the phenomenological recounting of the participant, I inserted markers to delineate breaks in topics, following the advice of Maksymchuk and Rosochinsky (2017) on working with texts in translation. These units were then coded into categories or attributes that emerged from going through the data without predetermining categories before starting the process. In the main, the purpose was to find the true meaning of each individual concept.

Each narrative by a respondent in the anthology that I selected for study was treated as a text or artifact. Therefore, where themes emerged, they could be grouped together to form main and sub themes. This approach allowed me, for example, to treat the texts relating to women in the anthology as a grouping from which a main theme would emerge, either from the mothers as narrators, or women as participants in the war.

The data coding categories were derived directly from the text as is done in conventional analysis, but using the constant comparative technique, and were filtered for narrative rationality (probability and fidelity) as proposed by Fisher (1987). This step was important, considering the work of Bartlett (1932) in which he postulates the Theory of Remembering, pointing out that our memories are imaginative reconstructions of past events. From the various narratives that were analysed it was anticipated that an intertext would emerge that would highlight the perspectives held by individuals about the war, which then constitutes the public moral argument as espoused by them.

In working with textual analysis (Frey, Botan & Kreps, 1999), it is considered to be a method used by communication researchers to describe structure, content and messages in texts. To this end, all of the samples that were used in the textual analysis of this study were extracted directly from the text of *Zinky Boys: Soviet Voices from the Afghanistan War*. As no a-priori themes have been selected the sampling size was not reduced to narratives of specific individuals. However, since the literature study has shown that the role of women in war is a distinguishing feature of Alexievich's writings, care was taken to include, among others, all of the narratives that emanate from the mothers and women who were interviewed.

5.5 CONSTRUCTING AN INTERTEXT

The concept of intertextuality has gained in identity and prominence since its introduction as a literary concept by Julia Kristeva, who further developed the concept basing it on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, who first demonstrated the relational existence of texts (Van Zoonen: 2017). Raj (2015:77) contends that the notion of understanding text as text in “socio-cultural textuality” is a Bakhtinian view that alludes to a “universal phenomenon that elucidates the communicative interconnections between a text and the other and text and context”.

In a sense, therefore, this thesis itself is an intertext as it references other texts on the topics discussed here in order to advance meaning. It speaks to the manner in which the reader is influenced by his or her reading of other texts, and the retention of what was read and how that frames a context from which the reader approaches the text and derives meaning from it. Much like Georges Polti (1924) strained 36 dramatic situations from his reading of classic Greek texts; it proves the point that the concept of originality is not necessarily infinite when it comes to the writing of stories.

Jacobmeyer (1998) provides a viewpoint of intertext being second nature to literary discourse...

Thus, on a subconscious level, the writer of postmodern fiction always and inevitably falls prey to intertextuality, in the sense that no written or spoken utterance can possibly be free from the influence of (all) other texts. Just as it is in the nature of all writing to defer meaning endlessly, from one linguistic sign to the next, so meaning is being sought – and deferred - by calling up different (literary) texts. The point which Jacques Derrida makes about the 'différance' of writing can be observed on any level of textual production - up to the automatic and inevitable weaving of texts. Intertextuality is therefore second nature to the literary discourse as such (especially if taken literally: the 'running to and

fro' designated by 'discourse' already refers to the [inter-]textual movements).

This interdependence of the text upon other texts is underscored by Raj (2015:80) who likens the interpretive act as “a process similar to the process of compiling a text”. In this sense when I constitute an intertext from the narratives offered in *Zinky Boys* I am being cognizant of this aspect of intertextuality, and deliberately looking for dependency in other texts in order to theme out the public moral argument of the narrators. Raj so eloquently captures the argument by stating “[t]he ‘text that is’ is ‘texts within’ and the ‘meaning that is’ is ‘meanings beyond’” (2015:80).

5.5.1 Extrapolating the Public Moral Argument (PMA) through textual analysis

In order to extrapolate the public moral argument from the narratives, a textual analysis had to be undertaken first to find the meaning in the statements made by the narrators, and to identify the themes that were emergent from the text. The narratives of *Zinky Boys* were scanned into digital format and saved in *NVivo 12* as cases, which were then allocated case numbers that precede the headings that were replicated as they occur in the text itself. Through a process of codification, the narratives were analysed for structural coherence of emergent messages from *Zinky Boys* by identifying key words or codes that were captured internally in a code book generated by *NVivo*.

Subsequently, the codes were themed from the code book, by looking at the frequency of allocation per code and the structural and argumentative coherence that these codes had with one another. By linking and grouping codes together themes and sub themes began to emerge which identified the material that was included for analysis in chapters 6-8.

In the analysis of the narrative extracts included in each theme and sub theme findings began to emerge which were identified and reproduced in the intertext. As stated by Raj (2015) a text was compiled by extracting the texts within and the meanings beyond the text, into an intertext. The thematic intertext comprises the validated statements made by the narrators through applying Fisher's (1984) fidelity test and probability test. The application of these tests corroborate the social reality of events and whether there is coherence among the narratives that together, provide compelling good reasons for the reader/researcher to accept the statements derived from the analysis.

Finally, the public moral argument was extracted from the compiled intertext, to fulfil the aim of the research that was stated in the research proposal as follows: The purpose of this textual analysis is to investigate the responses of survivors and affected individuals of the Soviet-Afghanistan war during the 1980s, which emerge from their remembered and narrated experiences. By so doing I uncovered the public moral argument that is made by them which emerges from the narratives told by the survivors and their immediate families. An understanding of this argument will help to shed light on how accounts of individual phenomenological narratives bring contrary views against the practice of upholding ideology through physical violence to the surface.

5.5.2 Positioning and interpreting the PMA in the Soviet (Russian) Public Sphere

The final aim of the research was to achieve an understanding of the public moral argument in the Soviet Public Sphere, which I did by presenting the PMA in a thematised format in Section 8.4 of this thesis. The motivation for this is that the public moral argument, just like any text, has to be interpreted and understood in its social and historical contexts (Denzin, 2001).

Whilst the majority of the narratives had recognisable epiphanic moments in the lives of the individuals who volunteered the narratives, the overriding purpose was to identify and present the public moral argument, which also had the task to present epiphany. Therefore, locating the epiphany in the intertext extrapolated from the narratives, and projecting it into the PMA (at issue level), assisted me in preparing the way for a coherent and cohesive representation of the PMA, which ultimately, spoke in polyphonic voices as a chorus, saying *We, the Afghantsi*

5.6 METATHEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Regarding the positioning of the study in the interpretivist paradigm which draws on qualitative approaches, I state the following positions:

Epistemologically I do not see permanence in knowledge, but consider it as a construct that is clouded by my interpretation of narrated events in their social and historical contexts. Thus, I take cognisance of the nature of qualitative research and its traditions of interpretivism, hermeneutics and social constructionism, which determine my methodological positioning. Therefore, from an ontological position I will use a first-person 'I' perspective as researcher, as some of the realities of war that make up much of the substance of the texts have also been experienced by myself, albeit in a different setting. Sensitivity towards the meta-theoretical position of the Soviet subjects in the study will be shown by attending to the Semiosphere (linguistic-turn) within which their remembered phenomenological experiences take place. Methodologically the research was started by generating a topical survey of existing literature about the history or context of the Soviet involvement in the war which is well documented and reflected in Chapter 3, from which point the texts as provided, and the intertext generated through analysis, were used to provide a basis of comparison for the emergent intertext. Finally, from an axiological position with acceptance of the presence of my bias, which prevents

a value-free study, the values and value judgements of the narrators were taken into account.

5.6.1 Quality Criteria

The aspects of qualitative rigour that are discussed below pertain to the qualitative research approach:

Credibility in qualitative research is difficult to ensure from the perspective of the researcher. However, in the case of this research the methodology followed within the Narrative Paradigm ensured that there are both probability and fidelity within the narrated texts by virtue of an intertext that was constructed from the analysis of the narrated texts, thereby ensuring credibility.

The transferability of the results of the research undertaken in this qualitative research tradition could, for example, in future be tested by replicating the research methodology on Soviet involvement in another context of war, say for example, the Soviet involvement in Angola during the same time period, that is, the 1980s. Whilst there is universal suffering in war across cultures and nations at the individual level, the Soviet context would delimit the successful transferability of the findings to other non-Soviet wars, as it is also a cultural experience.

The dependability of the research is not measured in the quantitative sense, but rather achieved, as stated elsewhere, through testing for probability and fidelity as used within the context of the Narrative Paradigm. The notable focal point here was that I needed to be sensitive to describing the changes in the setting and whether or not it impacted how I approached each text.

Conformability was achieved by documenting the processes that I followed in checking and rechecking the data during the data selection, coding, and

analysis phases. Further, the data coding practice through using the constant comparative technique ensured that the attributes resulting from the reading remained constant through several readings of the text.

5.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

From an ethical perspective when one works with a textual analysis there is no direct involvement with any interviewees. Therefore, no permissions need be sought from the interviewees whose transcribed and published narratives are bound in a published book form. However, as researcher into the phenomenological experiences narrated by survivors of the war, I had to ensure that I bracketed out my personal bias and opinion to ensure that the authentic voices as intended by the narrators featured as core data in the study.

5.8 CONCLUSION

I began this chapter by introducing the methodological approach that I took to this research. The research was designed around the narrative turn in the interpretivist paradigm, following a qualitative research methodology. The research method employed is an analysis of a published anthology of interviews of survivors of the Soviet-Afghan War using textual analysis in the research technique to extrapolate an intertext and public moral argument. The instruments used included the anthology of narratives as text to be analysed, Fisher's Narrative Paradigm tests of Coherence and Fidelity, and myself as the researcher, whom I see as an interpretive instrument.

Following a qualitative approach to the research design, no a-priori themes were selected as part of the research design, to enable an emic approach that would allow themes to arise through the process of codification and theming. As opposed to quantitative research that narrows coded texts down through a

reductive approach, this approach opens interpretations up and allows for thick descriptions of the interpretivist act.

I am sensitive to the debate that ensued in the conflict between the quantitative and qualitative research approaches, or positivist, post-positivist and interpretivist worldviews, since the popular emergence of qualitative approaches since the late 1980s. Following the long tradition of empirical research practice associated with 'scientific' research, interpretivist practices presented a number of challenges as they typically did not begin with an hypothesis or theory-centred approach to the research design, but worked through observation towards hypothesis and theory formulation. However, in this research design, I followed the latter approach, but demonstrate in Chapters 3 and 4 that I frame my worldview for this particular project in the qualitative approach. Therefore, it was necessary to first select and identify the narrativist paradigm from within which a textual analysis was conducted. Demonstrating sensitivity to the text and its perceived intention and audience, I used a selective interpretation approach to centre my interpretation of the text within the Russian public sphere. This was necessary to allow an intertext to be derived that is sensitive to the context of the text through the application of Fisher's tests of coherence and fidelity, and finally to refine the public moral argument, which was the purpose of the research. In the next three chapters that follow, I will undertake the thematic analysis as indicated earlier in this section.

CHAPTER 6: THEMATIC ANALYSIS: GEWALTRAUM AFGHANISTAN

Sometimes I wonder how things would have turned out if I hadn't gone to the war. I'd be happy, I think, and wouldn't have found out things about myself which I'd rather not have known. Thus spake Zarathustra: Not only have I looked into the abyss but the abyss has looked into my soul . . .

Interview: Private Gunlayer in *Zinky Boys*

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis contains three data analysis chapters, which are presented in Chapters 6 through to Chapter 8, containing the four major themes; *Gewaltraum Afghanistan*, *Soviet Agency in Afghanistan*, *Soviet Victims of Afghanistan*, and, *Afghanistan in the Public Sphere*. These chapters address the second and third research objectives of this study, namely to examine the value judgements made by the survivors in their narrations, and to interpret the intertextual narrative contained in the texts of *Zinky Boys*. A schematic representation is presented below:

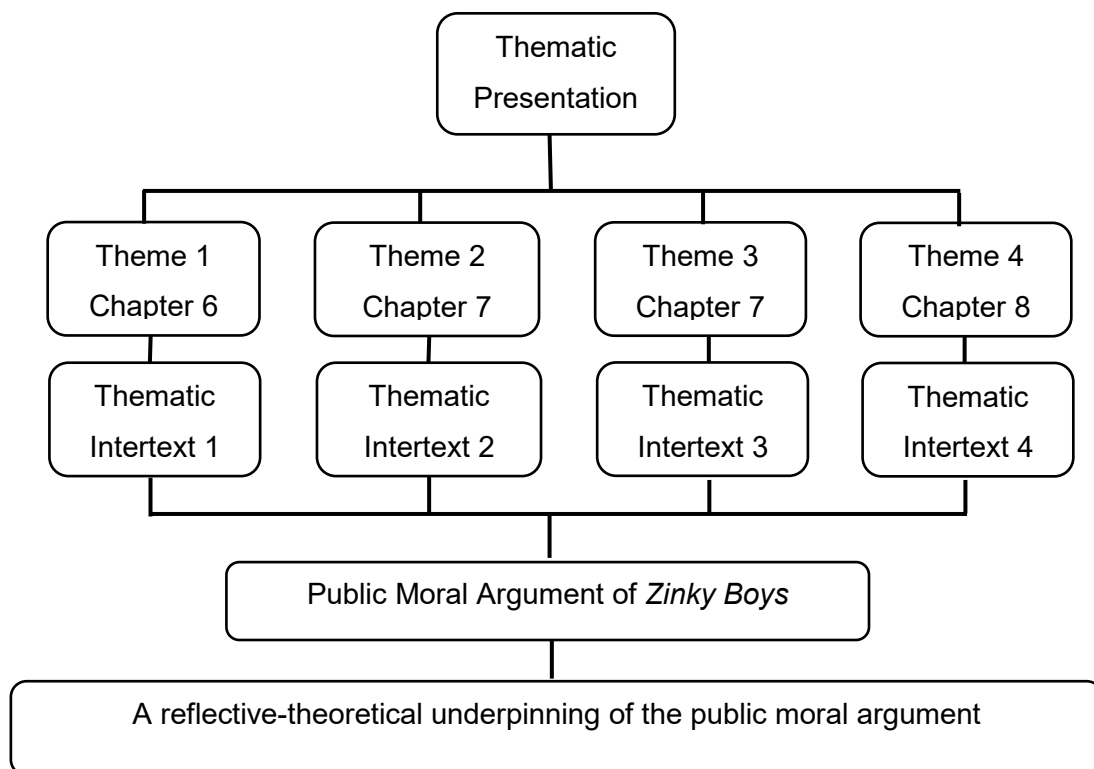


Figure 6.1 Mind map of thematic discussions in chapters 6-8

The theme that is discussed in this chapter is presented as the *Gewaltraum* of Afghanistan, and spans the whole of the chapter. The theme is presented through four sub themes as follows: life in Afghanistan, violent expressions during the conflict, the horror of war, and the emotional strain suffered by forces and their families. The reason why this theme is portrayed as the first theme, is because it provides requisite information that is of a contextual nature to enable the reader to engage in an appropriately grounded reading activity for the remaining themes.

The first sub theme, *Life in Afghanistan*, analyses the conditions under which the Soviet forces were required to work, ranging from their institutionalisation into life in the armed forces, to the physical conditions that they had to endure. This sub theme brings to light the less than ideal conditions that hampered the forces in the achievement of their goals.

The second sub theme, *Violent expressions during the conflict*, depicts the violent nature of the war in Afghanistan as well as the normalisation and acceptance of violent behaviour in the psyche of those involved in the conflict. This sub theme reflects their behaviour in the *Gewaltraum* towards the local population and the mujahedeen.

The third sub theme, *The horror of war*, investigates narratives that portray the nature of the war and injuries sustained by the armed forces and civilians alike. The focus specifically centres on the casualties incurred and their concomitant effects, as well as the influence thereof upon individuals.

The last sub theme analyses the emotional impact of the violence through the emotional strain that it wrought on both the armed forces and their families. From suicide to the incapacitation of some individuals through pain and suffering, to the expression of grief, both of soldiers and their mothers. It highlights the role of mothers in the lives of their sons as well as the role of

mothers acting as truth speakers in raising the matter of the war in the public conscience.

In keeping pace with the research design, I applied aspects of Fisher's fidelity and probability tests to ensure that the narratives provide 'compelling good reasons' for the storying of the public moral argument. Hence, frequent reference is made in the analysis below to the social reality wherein either the factual accuracy, or presentation of facts, reason or logic, and relevance to the matter at hand is made, as discussed in the theory of Chapter 4. In addition, aspects of the structural coherence of the stories analysed and their comparison to others, and characterological coherence is referred to, in order to demonstrate probability in the narrative data offered in *Zinky Boys*.

In each instance prior to the discussion of a theme, a mind map is provided that further demonstrates the relationship of the theme and its sub themes. In the first theme under discussion *Gewaltraum Afghanistan*, the discussion unfolds around four sub-themes, namely *Life in Afghanistan*, *Expressions of violence during the conflict*, *The horror of war*, and *Emotional strain suffered by forces and their families*.

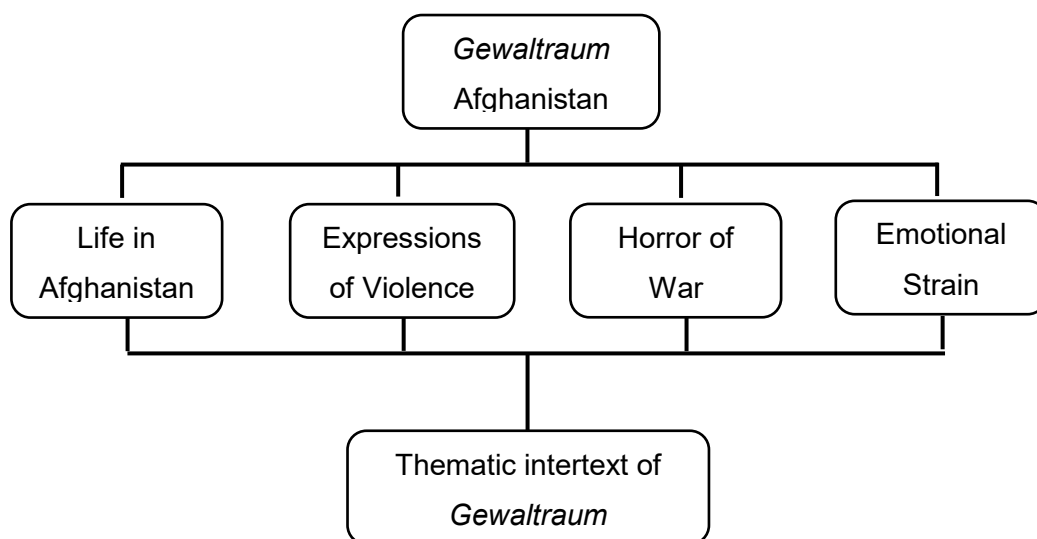


Figure 6.2 Mind map of the theme *Gewaltraum Afghanistan*

6.2 THEME 1: GEWALTRAUM AFGHANISTAN

This theme is a composite description of the violent social and physical landscape (*Gewaltraum*) of Afghanistan. In it, the horror of war and death is described which leaves nobody untouched. The resultant emotional strain and responses thereto describe the severity of the impact of war on humans. Violence against as well as by civilians is a common feature, including practices of mutilation and torture. Whilst the physical conditions are challenging, survival in Afghanistan for the Soviets is made even more challenging by the lack of much needed equipment and supplies.

Behrends (2015b) describes the entire Afghanistan landscape as a metaphorical *Gewaltraum* (violent space). The violence encountered by Soviet soldiers permeated every aspect of life, not only on the battlefield, but also in the barracks and everyday encounters with civilians, to such an extent that it affected and changed their Referenzrahmen (frame of reference). Thus, with their behavioural norms transformed, these soldiers were capable of extreme acts of violence in almost any situation.

Sub Theme 6.2.1 Life in Afghanistan

I begin this sub theme with a description of life in the Army, Afghanistan and in the Limited Contingent of Forces. As departure point, I discuss what life was like in the army for these young conscripts and career soldiers who were absorbed into and transformed by the military institution. An example of the total institutionalisation that the troops were subject to, is described in the narrative provided by narrator 11 Sergeant Major Medical Instructor in a Reconnaissance Unit who states:

Narrator 11: Sergeant Major Medical Instructor Reconnaissance Unit

Army life itself kills the mind and saps your resistance to the point that they can do what they want with you. Six a.m. - reveille. Three times or more, in succession, until we've got it right: reveille - lights out! Get up - lie down! You've got three seconds to fall in for take-off on a strip of white lino - white so that it needs to be washed and scrubbed every day; 180 men have to jump. out of bed and fall in in three seconds; 45 seconds to get into number three fatigues, which is full uniform but without belt and cap. Once someone didn't manage to get their foot bindings on in time. 'Fall out and repeat.' He still didn't manage in time. 'Fall out and repeat!'

The opening line of his statement is important. *Army life itself kills the mind and saps your resistance to the point that they can do what they want with you.* This line is important because it is evidence that individuals were compelled to behave in the way that the military institution desired. The principle of normalising individual behaviour to conform to those of the group is also found in Foucault's 1975 publication *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison*. However, in line with Goffman's description of a total institution, the military is an institution in the service of protecting society. In instances of changing individuals to assume the identity and behaviour desired by the institution, the methods that are used in training include breaking down the individuality of recruits to ensure that they all identify with the common image of being a soldier in the armed forces, particularly their own unit (Davies, 1989). It is also reminiscent of the discussion of the fifth principle of Foucault's heterotopology (1986) that I discuss in Chapter 4 (Cf. Section 4.3).

A fifth and penultimate principle that is raised, is that of a system of admission and exclusion that is inherent to most heterotopia. Take as an example, pertinent to this study, the case of drafting young men, and their admission into the armed forces of a country, where only a select few may enter the barracks.

In this context, this process of total institutionalisation is a physical and psychological process of forcing the individual to think in unison with the rest of the unit and to function in harmony, while stressing their inclusivity in their group. They have an interdependency upon one another and vigorously defend one another against those outside of the group, such as the enemy. At such levels of indoctrination the emotive urge to belong and identify often overcome those of reason and value judgements associated with the determining of whether a particular action is reasonable or justifiable. As the narrator states in the extract, one surrenders the free will of the individual to that of the powers in authority to the extent that they merely have to command you to do something, which you will then do. This argument that is proposed by the narrator is a sound argument as I have experienced the same during my two years of service in the South African military. In addition, the story compares well with training procedures in the Army as experienced by myself and as narrated in *Zinky Boys*.

This status is often achieved by the repetitive physical onslaught on the individuals and the group being trained. If one person does not work together with the others the whole group is made to do the action repetitively until the individual learns to collaborate in unison or the group starts exerting pressure on the individual to bring his aberrant behaviour into line with the others. Individuals who are being trained in this manner learn to forego a 'normal' life where individual rights are respected and become accustomed to being treated with aggression and being shouted at. This becomes a 'new normal' and acceptable behaviour from others in command towards one. In addition, performance is measured against set standards and individuals learn to comply meeting these behavioural standards. It is indeed, as Behrends (2015b) describes, that there is a new frame of reference in place, according to which these individuals have to learn to behave. It is not only in training and in army life that the frame alters, it is also the case when the individual is deployed in combat to a conflict zone. That zone has its own unique requirements and

standards of compliance that need to be met that calls for adjustment. Therefore, a soldier who is deployed in a combat situation is very far removed from his old self, and is a creation of his army and government that sends him into combat, devoid of his own free will and old self.

The routine of army life continues even in deployment, as narrator 24 1st Lieutenant Mortar Platoon describes:

Narrator 24: 1st Lieutenant Mortar Platoon

We lived a regular routine of getting up early and reporting for work. We had a mine-sweeper tank, a sniper unit, a mine-detecting dog, and two APCs to provide protection. We covered the first few miles in the armoured vehicles, just as long as the tracks of previous vehicles were clearly visible on the road. Dust covered everything like a fine powdery snow. If a bird landed on it you could see the traces. If a tank had passed that way the day before, though, special care was needed, because the caterpillar tracks could be concealing a mine. After planting the device the mujahedin would recreate the tracks with their fingers and clear their own footprints using a bag or an unrolled turban.

The narrator describes his life upon arriving in Afghanistan. There was a regular routine to their getting up early and reporting for the day's work. The conditions that he describes are of dirt roads and a lot of dust, so much so, that if a bird walks on the surface of a vehicle that is covered in such dust, its footprints would remain visible. This dust has a way of asserting its presence into every nook and cranny, even into one's clothing and it especially settles on areas that have a lightly oiled cover, such as the moving parts of one's rifle. These vehicles and associated equipment need cleaning again after such an outing.

A dangerous route that needs to be swept, would be one that had been used by a tank on the previous day, as the insurgents would plant a mine inside the caterpillar track made by the tank in the sand. It is very easy to plant the mine and to reconstitute the scene to look like it has been undisturbed since the tank last traversed that route. All routes leading to and from the base need to be

swept for mines every day of the year as the enemy forces would sneak up into a road under cover of darkness in the night to plant their mines and lay booby traps for the armed forces who have to leave the base. The structural coherence of the narrative fits well with the planting and camouflaging of mines in dirt roads, and makes sense as a factual account of events and social reality in conflict situations.

These are phenomenological experiences narrated as life-experiences. It is not only the soldiers who had no privacy or individuality to their lives, but the supporting staff as well, as is explained by narrator 25 Doctor Bacteriologist.

Narrator 25: Doctor Bacteriologist

The very day I arrived the medical director called me in. 'What makes a woman like you come here?' he asked me, and I was obliged to tell the story of my life to a complete stranger, a military man at that, someone I might just have met in the street. For me, that was the most unpleasant and humiliating aspect of life in Afghanistan: the complete absence of privacy and intimacy. Everything took place on a public stage.

The narrator is confronted here with a blurring of the lines between the public and private spheres. Her personal history is of private relevance and does not have to be shared with other individuals, especially somebody who is in a position of power over her, who demands to know what the reasons are that persuaded her to do duty in Afghanistan. As Cassegard (2010) intimates this is a conflict between the bracketing circumstances of the individual's private life and the political system represented by authority in the army (Cf. Chapter 4 Section 4.4).

She has to answer to the medical director's query about why somebody of her stature and qualification would want to be in Afghanistan. Very little information is available about this particular doctor in *Zinky Boys* other than that she is 45 years old. She finds the *complete absence of privacy and intimacy* to be the most unpleasant and humiliating aspect of life in Afghanistan. She explains that

everything took place as if on a public stage. This is a particularly difficult challenge for someone who is not used to life in a conflict situation.

Elsewhere in her narrative we do learn, however, that she was looking for a different life as she states *[l]ife here was exactly the same as everything I was running away from at home*. She is an exception to the run-of-the-mill interviewee who tells of their longing to be home and out of the conflict as she, opposite to this line of behaviour, declares *I can't stand it back home either. It is worse than over there*. This particular narrator has difficulties in adjusting back to civilian life and expresses the wish to be deployed again to a place where there is a war going on as *[w]ar's better than this. It gives you a justification – or an excuse – for anything you do, good or bad*. Having been conditioned to life in a military and conflict zone there is a sense of loss when one returns to a 'normal' life in civilisation. In this instance, the argumentative coherence of her argument and the logic that she uses provides compelling good reasons to believe her argument. As is the case with so many of the narrators in *Zinky Boys* I too had some difficulty in adjusting after spending a year in a conflict zone. In conforming to military life and being conditioned to it does provide a sense of security and justification in what one does. In my own interpretation, the fidelity and probability aspects of these statements made, rank as accurate and provide good compelling reasons for me to believe what they have narrated.

Narrator 27 A Mother, remembers how her son came to be deployed to Afghanistan.

Narrator 27: A Mother

Andryusha himself never understood how he came to be chosen for the paratroop battalion and Afghanistan. He was terribly chuffed about it, though, and didn't try to hide his feelings. I know nothing about military matters, so perhaps there's something I don't understand here. But I wish someone would explain to me why my son was kept busy bricklaying and plastering when he should have been

training for war. The authorities knew what they were sending those boys into. Even the papers published photographs of the mujahedin, strong men thirty or forty years old, on their own land and with their wives and children beside them . . . How did he come to join the paratroop battalion one week before flying off to Afghanistan? ... They were just raw boys, almost children, who were thrown into the fire and accepted it as a matter of honour. Well, that's the way we brought them up. He was killed within a month of arriving in Afghanistan. My boy, my skinny little thing. How did he die? I'll never know.

The extract reproduced above, shows that military life does not only affect those who are enlisted in this military, but also those who are close to them. It not only shows the agony that a mother has to go through when she loses her son in Afghanistan, but also the state of under-preparedness of some of the troops that were deployed to Afghanistan. Her concerns are two-fold. Firstly, she does not know why her son was sent to Afghanistan as a paratrooper, and that he could join the battalion one week prior to be sent away to Afghanistan. In the context of the interview itself, it is made clear by the narrator that the correspondence that she had received from her son informed her that he was mostly busy working in a furniture factory to make new tables for their unit. He and three other men did not receive the training that the rest of the unit did, which was a specialised training for mountain warfare, tactics and firearm practice. Normally the paratrooper unit is regarded as one of the elite units of the armed forces, therefore it is strange that somebody with so little training would be able to join a paratrooper unit which is normally reserved for the fittest and 'best of the best' soldiers.

The second argument that the narrator makes is that she does not have any information on why and how her son had died. The fact that he had died within a month in Afghanistan could be taken to mean that he had not received proper orientation to the conditions there, or he was simply just unprepared to participate in a war such as the one that he was involved in due to a lack of proper training. The mother-narrator states ... *I wish someone would explain to me why my son was kept busy bricklaying and plastering when he should have*

been training for war. The authorities knew what they were sending those boys into. This is a direct accusation at the government, which bears the responsibility of training their armed forces appropriately for the type of combat they are expected to participate in. This may be interpreted as an example of institutional violence, as identified according to Sieca-Kozłowski's (2013) classification in Chapter 3 of this thesis. It is also supportive of the Chernyaev Diary (1985) discussed in the same chapter, in which the level of training and preparedness of the Soviet troops are questioned. In this instance, the mother's argument is relevant to the case of institutional violence and her narrative compares to others published about the war, lending it fidelity and probability.

The mother-narrator's lament is one of shared responsibility... *[t]hey were just raw boys, almost children, who were thrown into the fire and accepted it as a matter of honour. Well, that's the way we brought them up.* She apportions the blame between herself (parents) and the government in saying this is how we brought them up, thereby implying obedience to the government or motherland. The statement that they *were thrown into the fire and accepted it as a matter of honour* is symbolic on the one hand of the hell that they experienced in Afghanistan and on the other hand that of serving the motherland, and being honoured to act as a vessel for the government that is trying to Sovietise Afghanistan.

The difficulties of mountain combat are explained by narrator 33 A Soldier, who states:

Narrator 33: A Soldier

Mountain operations? Well, you carry your gun, obviously, and a double issue of ammo, about 10 kilos of it, plus a mine, that's another 10 kilos, plus grenades, flak-jacket, dry rations. It comes to at least 40 kilos. I've seen men so wet with sweat they look as though they've been standing in torrential rain. I've seen the orange crust on the frozen faces of dead men. Yes, orange, for some reason. I've seen friendship and cowardice . . . What we did had to be done.

The narrator refers to a type of combat that is conducted in the mountainous areas of Afghanistan and identifies the equipment that has to be carried by foot soldiers. The equipment estimate provided by the narrator comes to a total of about 40 kilogrammes of weight that has to be carried by the soldier. Given the climate of Afghanistan that is discussed in Chapter 2 and elsewhere in this thematic analysis, there is evidence of extreme temperatures in both summer and winter. In summer, the soldiers lost a lot of moisture due the physical exertion they had to engage in. The narrator says *I've seen men so wet with sweat they look as though they've been standing in torrential rain*. This is an indication of the extreme conditions they had to endure whilst carrying their equipment. Having personally undergone military training in comparable conditions, I believe the claims have a high probability of being accurate. In addition, where extremely cold conditions occur, the *orange crust on the frozen faces of dead men* refers to the drying out of the skin as the dead cells discolour due to the extreme cold.

The narrator remarks laconically *[w]hat we did had to be done*. This is indicative of their state of indoctrination that they believed there was no other way to achieve their objectives other than with armed force and that they were justified to do so.

Narrator 38 Private adds to this image of exertion in extreme conditions by stating *[t]hirst was a torture. You drink your water-bottle dry before you're half-way to wherever you're meant to be going. Your tongue is so swollen it sticks out of your mouth and won't go back...* With such difficult conditions, the argument adds weight to the struggle by Soviet soldiers to dislodge the mujahedeen from their mountains. The mujahedeen were better acclimatised and were not encumbered by the heavy equipment that needed to be carried up the mountain, as they had several hideouts and stashes of weapons and ammunition in the mountain at their disposal. Afghanistan is mostly dependent on melting snow from the mountains for its water in the dry regions where there

are no major rivers; hence the soldiers had to carry their water rations with them, and each litre of water adds another kilogram of weight to be carried. In the rugged mountain terrain where the troops moved, vehicles could not be used to transport water as there were mostly trails for humans or the donkeys and camels, which transported the equipment of the smugglers and mujahedeen, for example, and were hard to patrol, as pointed out in Chapter 3 of this thesis, lending credibility to the statements above.

The soldiers also had to endure the hardship of suffering hunger, as narrator 47 Private, Intelligence Corps explains:

Narrator 47: Private, Intelligence Corps

We were hungry every minute of the day. There were two 20- gallon drums in the kitchen, one for the first course, a watery cabbage-soup without a scrap of meat, and one for the second course, a gooey paste of dried potato mash or pearl barley, also without meat. Oh, and canned mackerel, one tin between four of us. The label said: 'Year of manufacture: 1956. Consume within 18 months.' In my year and a half in Afghanistan I stopped being hungry only once, when I was wounded. You were looking for ways to get or steal food the whole time. We climbed into the Afghans' orchards and gardens, even though they shot at us and laid mines to blow us up with. We were desperate for apples, pears, fruit of any kind. I asked my parents to send me citric acid, which they did. We dissolved it in water and drank it. It was nice and sour and burnt your stomach.

From the account provided by the narrator it is clear that the type of food did not meet the daily required intake for adults, especially active adults who have to fight a war. There would be a *watery cabbage-soup without a scrap of meat* as one of their meals of the day. This meal does not contain protein, and a soldier on a mission requires at least around 100grams of protein to prevent compromising muscle growth (Deuster, Kemmer, Tubbs, Zeno, & Minnick, 2012:12). The soldiers therefore experienced a constant hunger for better food as they were not getting their daily recommended intake of calories and vitamins.

It is not merely the fact that the food was inadequate, in some instances it was also inedible as the narrator remembers *Oh, and canned mackerel, one tin between four of us. The label said: 'Year of manufacture: 1956. Consume within 18 months.'* This is a dangerous situation to be eating food that had been canned so long ago because, as is commonly known, most tinned food in the 1950s were sealed using lead-containing solder of at least 25%, according to the US Federal Register (1993:33862). The lead-containing solder is poisonous when consumed, even in small quantities. By 1980 the food would have been 24 years old and no longer fit for human consumption as the best before date expiry was 22 years ago.

The narrator continues by stating *[y]ou were looking for ways to get or steal food the whole time.* This statement explains what motivated many of the troops in Afghanistan to engage in acts of stealing food or trading equipment for money or food. The references to the trading or bartering among one another or even with the local population are abundant in the text. It is also supported in the literature about the war, as Reuveny and Prakash, 1999 support the view that Soviet soldiers were selling off their equipment to raise funds with which to buy food and drugs. The narrator explains how they stole food from the local population by plundering their orchards and gardens, even though they were shot at, and had to negotiate the danger of potential mines. He uses the word 'desperate', that they were *desperate for apples, pears, fruit of any kind.* He went as far as to ask his parents to send him citric acid, which they then dissolved in water to drink. Whilst citric acid is a natural occurring compound in several citrus fruit types, it is different in manufactured and concentrated form, as used in the beverage industry. It is not manufactured with the intent to be dissolved in water and consumed as such.

In hospitals, the patients had access to better food as the narrator states that this was the only time that he was not hungry. He states *[i]n my year and a half*

in Afghanistan I stopped being hungry only once, when I was wounded.

Narrator 25 Doctor Bacteriologist lists some of the supplies that were available in the hospital kitchens, *meat, smoked sausage...Bulgarian biscuits*, which is indicative of the fact that those in hospital received better food than the frontline soldiers.

The shortage of food is another example of the inadequate logistical support that the soldiers received at the hands of the Motherland. The shortage of food is provided as one of the many reasons that explain the dissident behaviour of the Soviet troops and compares consistently well as a narrative throughout the text under study. In using Fisher's fidelity and probability tests I am convinced that the rations issued to troops were of poor quality and inadequate, therefore there is compelling good reason to accept the views presented in the text.

Narrator 32 Private Tank Crew provides an overview of what life was like for him in Afghanistan.

Narrator 32: Private, Tank Crew

From my first days in Afghan I thought I was in paradise. For the first time I saw oranges growing on trees. I hadn't yet seen mines hanging like oranges from those same trees (the tank-aerial touches the trip-wire and triggers the bomb). When the 'Afghan wind' blows, your porridge is full of sand, the sun is blotted out and it gets so dark you can't see your hand in front of your face. A few hours later the sun comes out and you see the mountains again. Not a sign of war. Then - a burst of machine-gun fire, a mortar attack, the crack of a sniper's bullet, and two of your mates are dead. Sun, mountains, and the gleam of a snake in the sand.

The narrator expresses his sense of wonder at seeing oranges growing on trees for the first time in his life. The image of fruit and orchards of fruit trees is not an alien concept in this context, as I have reported in Chapter Two on Noorzoy (1985) who claims that before 1979 up to a third of Afghanistan's exports were fruits and nuts. It is, therefore, especially in the very early years of the war, an agricultural hub of exports. However, the narrator introduces an unnatural

image in the next sentence, that of *mines hanging like oranges from those same trees*. The same tree could, therefore, either be a source of nourishment or a source of death. It is these same mines that are responsible, not only for military deaths, but also the countless civilian deaths and maimed individuals.

Afghanistan is a hostile environment. The narrator explains the severity of the sandstorms that blot out the sun and find their way into your food. When the dust settles, the mountains are visible again when the sun comes out. These mountains are often intriguing to many of the Soviet troops who come from agricultural lands that do not have natural mountainous features. References to mountains are plentiful in the text of *Zinky Boys* and occur in 22 of the narratives. For many of the interviewees the mountains held a peculiar fascination, such as **Narrator 35 A Nurse**, recalls *I saw Afghanistan from the air. It is a big and beautiful country, with mountains, and mountain rivers, which reminded me of the Caucasus, and vast open spaces like so much of our own country*. She compares the vastness and beauty of the mountains to that of the Caucasus mountain range that extends between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. It is these same *Hindu Kush* mountains that are mentioned in Chapter Two, which contribute to the hostility of the environment, and *[m]ines were everywhere, on mountain paths, on the roads and in houses* (**Narrator 24 1st Lieutenant mortar platoon**).

Normally mountains are associated with serenity and calmness, but in the case of Afghanistan, they are strongly associated with concepts of ambush and death. The narrator in the extract says *Not a sign of war. Then - a burst of machine-gun fire, a mortar attack, the crack of a sniper's bullet, and two of your mates are dead*. His association with the country Afghanistan is expressed in the metaphor of a serpent as he concludes *[s]un, mountains, and the gleam of a snake in the sand*. The gleam of the snake in the sand is most like the river that meanders through the land, but because it is likened to a serpent it changes from a live-giving image to one of ambush and death like a snake waiting to

strike. The narrator exaggerates by stating that mines were planted in ambush everywhere, which reaffirms the view Afghanistan was a violent space in which the Soviets felt threatened and unsafe.

Narrator 39 NCO in the Security Service describes the beauty and apparent serenity of Afghanistan:

Narrator 39: NCO in the Security Service

The rivers there are incredibly blue. I never realised water could be such a heavenly colour. Red poppies grow there like daisies do here, the mountainsides are like bonfires. Big camels gaze at everything like old men, and they never get frightened. A donkey got blown up by an anti-personnel mine- I used to see him in the market, pulling a cart full of oranges.

Because the rivers originate in the mountainous regions of Afghanistan from snow and glacier-melt, they are very clear, such as the Kabul River that flows through the city of Kabul. The colour here is described as *heavenly*, by implication as blue as the heavens on a clear day. This contrasts sharply with the red colour of the poppies, which she compares to the abundance of daisies in her home country. She uses the words *the mountainsides are like bonfires*. It is these same poppies that are the source of the drug trade and fuelling drug abuse in Afghanistan.

She further describes the camels that appear very sedate in their behaviour and the donkey, which she often saw *in the market, pulling a cart of oranges*, now blown up by an anti-personnel mine. In Afghanistan, as reflected in *Zinky Boys*, it is not unusual to see persons or animals that were routinely going about their business to be killed by hidden devices such as landmines or to be shot by either side of the conflict. The images used to describe Afghanistan are contrasting sharply as images of life and images of death. There can be no peace for the Soviet contingent, which is made unwelcome in Afghanistan. The presentation of the landscape descriptions have argumentative coherence

throughout the text as several narratives support the contrasting conditions and lurking death that awaits the unwary. Using Fisher's fidelity and probability tests the social reality described in these extracts are compelling and in alignment with documented geographical facts, lending compelling good reason to accept these descriptions by the narrators.

Narrator 40 Private remembers the magnificence of the countryside and the repulsion of death, which coexisted for soldiers in Afghanistan.

Narrator 40: Private

*My first fatality was a chap we pulled out of a tank. 'I want to live!' he said - and died. It's unbearable to look at anything beautiful, like the mountains, or a lilac-covered canyon, straight after you've been in battle. You just want to blow it all up. Or else you go all soft and quiet. Another lad had a slow death. He lay on the ground and started to name everything he could see, and repeat it, like a child who's just learning to talk:
'Mountains ... tree ... bird ... sky ... ' Until the end.*

There are repetitive images in the text about the beauty of the Afghan landscape and the sharp contrast with the ugliness of death, which is its constant companion. Narrator 40 Private remembers his first encounter with a fatality of his own forces and the desire that the injured soldier expressed – *I want to live!* This is a desire for life and to live that is expressed on several occasions, which I explore elsewhere in the thematic discussion. The point that I am making is that in *Zinky Boys*, the symbiosis between life and death is portrayed like two sides of the same coin. Similarly, the beauty of the countryside and the ugliness of war are two constant companions.

The narrator says *[i]t's unbearable to look at anything beautiful, like the mountains, or a lilac-covered canyon, straight after you have been in battle. You just want to blow it all up.* The behavioural change in individuals that is brought about by traumatic events and the intimate exposure to violence, results in

abnormal behaviour. The urge to respond with violence becomes overwhelming and is often the stimulus for unsanctioned action taken by individuals and groups in response to violent incidents.

The memory of the second casualty is particularly disturbing. As he lay on the ground he named everything that he could identify within his visual range. This behaviour, though disturbing, is not unusual as during such traumatic and stressful incidents, one can view detail with stark clarity. In contrast to other soldiers whose deaths are described in *Zinky Boys* this casualty does not call out for his mother, but names natural objects in nature. The Soviets who were deployed to Afghanistan were faced with life-threatening situations on a daily basis and were often expected to deal with extreme violence. The incongruity of these images of destruction and death contrast sharply with the images of the beauty of Afghan landscape.

Afghanistan is a country of extreme weather conditions, as remembered by narrator 47 Private Intelligence Corps who comments on the heat.

Narrator 47: Private Intelligence Corps

Show those kirzachi to an African, who's lived with heat all his life, and he'd faint! Yes, even in Third World African countries soldiers are issued with lightweight boots, trousers and caps, but we were expected to do heavy building work - and sing as we worked! – in 40 degrees Celsius while our feet were literally cooking.

The narrator comments about the equipment, specifically their clothing that was issued to them. He mentions *kirzachi*, which are boots of a waterproof material in several layers, but not of natural leather. Coming from a colder region the soldiers had difficulty adapting to the heat in Afghanistan. He claims that people who have lived in Africa and are used to the heat would faint if they had to wear those boots.

In preparing for logistical support to the soldiers, the first soldiers who arrived inevitably had to do the spadework in constructing military bases for those who would follow. Here the narrator tells that they had to do heavy building work *in 40 degree Celsius while our feet were literally cooking*. It is not only the *kirzachi* that were a source of discomfort to the soldiers, but also the foot bindings they were issued with instead of socks.

In a similar memory about the heat, **Narrator 10 Civilian Employee** recalls *[t]he temperature was 60 degrees Celsius and there were enough flies in the toilet to lift you from the ground with their wings. No showers*. This comment shows that the extreme heat that was experienced by the Soviet Limited Contingent was indeed severe. In Chapter 2, (Cf. Section 2.2.3), of this study, I make the following remarks pertaining to the climatic conditions in Afghanistan.

In Kabul the winter months stretch from late October to March during which the city frequently experiences sub-zero temperatures and snow, whilst the summer months could be quite warm reaching highs in the range of 32 degrees Celsius. The city of Kandahar which is situated in the south of Afghanistan in the desert region, for example, reaches temperatures of 40 degrees Celsius in the summer for almost two months continuously (June and July) whilst it seldom drops to below zero.

As stated by the narrator, they were issued with older equipment while *even in Third World African countries soldiers are issued with lightweight boots, trousers and caps...* The Soviet Army is by contrast a modern army, which had emerged victorious from the Second World War and had made great strides in developing nuclear potential during the Cold War, yet the equipment they were provided with, was in some instances obsolete and dated, or not available in other situations, as shall be demonstrated forthwith. This argument is high in probability as it is consistent with narrative reports throughout *Zinky Boys* and relevant to the case made that the Soviet soldiers had to make do with

equipment that was not customised to the terrain and conditions that they had to face.

Other than having to cope with extreme weather conditions the soldiers and their support personnel often had to cope with difficult situations while having inadequate supplies. Narrator 11 Sergeant Major Medical Instructor in a Reconnaissance Unit provides one of the most striking narratives of the conditions under which the medical personnel had to do their work.

Narrator 11: Sergeant Major Medical Instructor Reconnaissance Unit

There was a general shortage of medication. Even the iodine ran out. Either the supply system failed, or else we'd used up our allowance- another triumph of our planned economy. We used equipment captured from the enemy. In my bag I always had twenty Japanese disposable syringes. They were sealed in a light polyethylene packing which could be removed quickly, ready for use. Our Soviet 'Rekord' brand, wrapped in paper which always got torn, were frequently not sterile. Half of them didn't work, anyhow - the plungers got stuck. They were crap. Our home-produced plasma was supplied in half-litre glass bottles. A seriously wounded casualty needs two litres - i.e. four bottles. How are you meant to hold them up, arm-high, for nearly an hour in battlefield conditions? It's practically impossible. And how many bottles can you carry? We captured Italian-made polyethylene packages containing one litre each, so strong you could jump on them with your army boots and they wouldn't burst. Our ordinary Soviet-made sterile dressings were also bad. The packaging was as heavy as oak and weighed more than the dressing itself. Foreign equivalents, from Thailand or Australia, for example, were lighter, even whiter somehow ... We had absolutely no elastic dressings, except what we captured - French and German products. And as for our splints! They were more like skis than medical equipment! How many can you carry with you? I carried English splints of different lengths for specific limbs, upper arm, calf, thigh, etc. They were inflatable, with zips. You inserted the arm or whatever, zipped up and the bone was protected from movement or jarring during transportation to hospital.

In the last nine years our country has made no progress and produced nothing new in this field - and that goes for dressings and splints. The Soviet soldier is the cheapest in the world- and the most patient. It was like that in 1941, but why fifty years later? Why?

The narrator begins by recalling the shortage of medication, which may be due to the Soviet Contingent having either used up their supplies, or else the supply system failed. He explains how they used medical equipment from the enemy, and lists the origin of the products as follows: *Japanese disposable syringes; Italian-made polyethylene packages [of plasma]; French and German [sterile dressings], [f]oreign equivalents, from Thailand or Australia; and English splints.* In mentioning the foreign-manufactured and supplied equipment, he compares them to the Soviet equivalent that they had been supplied with. In many instances, these captured foreign supplies were superior to the Soviet issue, which again points to the probability of institutional violence whereby the Soviet Union would deploy its troops without adequate supplies and functional equipment.

The narrator makes it clear that the Soviet forces had to make do with equipment that rather belonged to the Second World War than a more modern conflict some 40-50 years later. He sounds off in the most exasperated manner: *the Soviet soldier is the cheapest in the world – and the most patient. It was like that in 1941, but why fifty years later? Why?* To make the incongruity of the situation clear he cites the following examples in his comparison. The syringes, for example are described as follows: *Our Soviet 'Record' brand, wrapped in paper which always got torn, were frequently not sterile. Half of the didn't work, anyhow – the plungers got stuck. They were crap.* He refers to the supply of blood plasma as *supplied in half-litre glass bottles. A seriously wounded casualty needs two litres – i.e. four bottles...and how many bottles can you carry?*

He compares each item to the foreign-made equivalent, which clearly shows more development had gone into those products. The most startling claim is perhaps that the narrator states *[i]n the last nine years our country has made no progress and produced nothing new in this field.* Given this situation it would indeed be difficult to keep morale high among the soldiers and the medical staff.

Narrator 35 A Nurse goes to the length of bringing back *a suitcase full of surgical needles, clamps and thread* when she returned from leave going back to Afghanistan. Throughout the text of *Zinky Boys* the repetitive complaint of the insufficiency of equipment and resources emerges as a pattern of logic throughout the text and it forms an inherent argument that the soldiers were overwhelmed not only by the elusiveness and resilience of the enemy, but were also poorly supported by the Motherland. These accounts come across as consistent and credible, therefore there is good reason to believe these views.

The effect of the shortage of supplies in the medical field resulted in several losses, which may perhaps have been saved, as **Narrator 5 A Nurse** remembers *[b]ut we did not save everyone we could have. That was the worst thing of all. We lost so many because we did not have the right drugs...* Often these drugs would be used by the medical staff themselves, who would use the drugs to numb the psychological pain of the war and the terrible conditions they had to endure. In the explanation given to institutional violence in Chapter 3, mention is made of wrong-doing on the part of medical staff, that includes the personal use of drugs intended for broader use by patients.

Narrator 35: A Nurse describes her first operation in the theatre in a field-hospital in Faizabad in Afghanistan:

Narrator 35: A Nurse

In Faizabad I was the theatre sister and also put in charge of the surgical ward. The field-hospital consisted entirely of tents. My very first operation there was on an old Afghan woman with a damaged subclavian artery. When I looked for surgical clamps I discovered there weren't any, so we had to hold the wound together with our fingers. When you touched the surgical thread it crumbled into dust - it hadn't been replaced since the end of the last war in 1945.

She recalls the operation that she performed on an old Afghan woman. Much of the critical equipment was not available, such as clamps to clamp down arteries

to stop bleeding. As a substitute, they had to insert their hands into the wound and hold the arteries closed with their fingers. The most shocking image from this extract is that the surgical thread was so old that it *crumbled into dust – it hadn't been replaced since the end of the last war in 1945.*

This is evidence to my mind that the Soviet government was not making a full-scale commitment to the initiative in Afghanistan. As reported by Afridi, Yousufi, and Khan (2014:2197) the “Soviet agreed to pull out its 115,000 army from Afghanistan by February 1989”. If 115,000 soldiers are the only soldiers deployed, and if a total of 620,000 Soviet soldiers (Sieca-Kozlowski, 2013) had toured Afghanistan, it is not a full-scale commitment for the whole of the Soviet Union. In addition, the frequent mentions in the literature to a limited military contingent shows that either the Soviets thought the initiative would soon be over, or they had completely underestimated the effort it would take to Sovietise Afghanistan. The numerous references by medical staff lend characterological coherence to the argument of the medical corps members who had to battle not only the extreme conditions, but shortages of supplies as well. The examples used are relevant to the underlying argument in the text that Soviet Army was not well-supported by the Soviet Union. The argument is thus successfully made by the provision of compelling good reasons which support the emergence of this theme.

Other essential equipment was also in short supply In addition to the inadequacy of medical equipment and the obsolete condition of some items. **Narrator 04 Private, Motorised Infantry Unit** recalls *[t]hey were so short of things over there we didn't even have a bowl or spoon each. There was one big bowl and eight of us would attack it.* This soldier was deployed early in the war as he returned to the Soviet Union in 1981 and it could be that items such as eating utensils were later no longer in short supply as this is not a common observation in the text.

Narrator 05 A Nurse, recalls the lack of equipment in the early phase of her deployment.

Narrator 05: A Nurse

There was no equipment: one syringe for all the patients, and the officers drank the surgical spirit so we had to use petrol to clean the wounds. They healed badly for lack of oxygen, but the hot sun helped to kill microbes. I saw my first wounded patients in their underwear and boots. For a long time there were no pyjamas, or slippers, or even blankets.

The narrator speaks from her context as a medical practitioner and brings the unhygienic conditions to light by stating there was *one syringe for all the patients*. By the 1980s the disposable syringe and needle was widely in use by medical practitioners since the disposable syringe and needle was developed in the mid-1950s (Levy, 2014). The implication here is that it is not only the syringe, but also the syringe needle that has to be re-used and this is a non-sterile device that has to be used on multiple patients.

In addition, it was difficult to clean the equipment and to properly sterilise them as the *officers drank the surgical spirit so we had to use petrol to clean the wounds*. Because of a lack of surgical spirits the equipment could not be cleaned properly and sterilised. This means that some of the officers in the medical division, such as doctors, would be under the influence of the surgical spirit that they had been drinking, and would thus be operating under the influence of what they had consumed. The number of accounts that consistently portray an image of constant struggle due to the inadequacy of supplies, particularly in the case of the medical support services, render these accounts highly probable and convincing, as there is strong coherence across these narrations in the text.

The effect of this situation is that they resorted to using petrol to clean the wounds which had an oil base. Because of the viscosity of oil it does not evaporate completely from surfaces as medical alcohol does which has a high

evaporative characteristic. In addition, the ingredients of petrol include toxic substances and more than 150 chemicals, and in developing countries such as Afghanistan in the 1980s the petrol would most likely have included lead and BTEX compounds e.g. benzene, which are harmful substances to humans. The result of this state of affairs is that the wounds healed badly.

Narrator 05: A Nurse

In the village nearby the Afghans were walking around in our hospital pyjamas and with our blankets over their heads instead of turbans. Yes, that's right, our boys had sold them. And I couldn't really blame them. They were dying for three roubles a month- that was a private's pay. Three roubles, meat crawling with worms, and scraps of rotten fish. We all had scurvy, I lost all my front teeth. So they sold their blankets and bought opium, or something sweet to eat, or some foreign gimmicks. The little shops there were very colourful and seductive. We'd seen nothing like it before. The boys sold their own weapons and ammunition knowing they'd be used to kill them.

The illegal trading of equipment for money or drugs is exposed by the narrator-nurse, who paints an incongruous picture of villagers *walking around in our hospital pyjamas and with our blankets* as the soldiers and support staff had sold them. Earlier the narrator points to the fact that she saw her first patients in their underwear and boots. The Nurse's narrative reports on the first phase of the war, therefore she uses the words *first patients*. It is plausible that in later years, there was more equipment available and better facilities would have been in place as this state of affairs is not a common theme that runs throughout the text.

The narrator is defensive of this behaviour of selling equipment as she says the soldiers were grossly underpaid, *three roubles a month* and had to eat *meat crawling with worms, and scraps of rotten fish. We all had scurvy, I lost all my front teeth*. Such conditions are difficult to work under and would impact negatively on the morale of the troops. In the end, they would be so desperate for better food that they would sell off equipment for more money so that they

could buy fresh fruit or vegetables in the market place. However, it is not only the lack of nourishing food that proved to be a weakness, but also the penchant to buy drugs.

As part of her explanation of why they traded army equipment, she states that they *sold their blankets and bought opium, or something sweet to eat, or foreign gimmicks*. With Afghanistan lying on the Silk-route, which is a major trade route, the trading and selling of opium is a long-established practice and the poppies that grow in the countryside from which opium is produced were in abundance. As indicated in Chapter 2, the opium production and trade in Afghanistan is a key area of involvement by outside forces, notably the US, which used the money obtained through drugs to fund the supply of arms to the resistance (McCoy, 1997). In Chapter 2 of this thesis (Cf. Section 2.2.4), I cite an excerpt quoted from McCoy in which he states:

During the 1980s, while the Soviets occupied Afghanistan, the CIA, working through Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence, spent some \$2 billion to support the Afghan resistance. When the operation started in 1979, this region grew opium only for regional markets and produced no heroin. Within two years, however, the Pakistan-Afghanistan borderlands became the world's top heroin producer, supplying 60 percent of U.S. demand.

This quotation verifies the drug trafficking in Afghanistan at this time, and mentions the involvement of the CIA and the Pakistani Inter-Service Intelligence, who were supporting the trafficking and consumption of drugs. The drug trafficking and consumption aspect is discussed in more detail in the theme of Agency (Cf. Section 7.2.2).

An aspect that is implied in this extract from *Zinky Boys* as narrated by the Nurse, is that there was an absence of or incapacity to implement discipline in the ranks. It is implied that the soldiers had contact outside of the barracks with local population and were able to successfully establish a trade industry to trade

off some of their equipment for money or drugs. I repeat a quotation of Macdonald (2007:153) whom I cite in Chapter 3 (sub theme 3.3), who grasps the essence of it by stating “[a]s one mujahid said, '[w]e try to poison the Russians with it ... they sell opium and hashish mostly but now also heroin to the Russian soldiers in exchange for guns and to poison their spirit.’” Most likely, there was a lack of will to enforce discipline, or the officers were also part of the trade, as indicated in the extract discussed in this theme. Officers sometimes ordered troops to steal for them, in which instances the soldiers had to obey them as they were not questioning whether their behaviour was right or wrong, they were conditioned to follow.

What does emerge as a common theme from this analysis, however, is the fact that equipment was often sold or bartered to the local population. The Nurse says *[t]he little shops there were very colourful and seductive. We'd seen nothing like it before. The boys sold their own weapons and ammunition knowing they'd be used to kill them.* These lines contrast the conditions that they had been accustomed to at home. Due to the Cold War embargos very little by way of modern technology had found its way into the open markets in the Soviet Union. These reports of selling equipment are recurring narratives in the analysis of *Zinky Boys* which provide fidelity to these claims and the consistency with which these stories occur, provides compelling good reasons to believe these narratives as accurate.

As I indicated in Chapter 3 (Cf. Section 3.6), a clear case is made by Reynolds (2009) as well as Harari (2016), that the Soviet Union, though a fierce competitor of the West in technology, was lagging behind in computer technology. The references in *Zinky Boys* to the Japanese cassette-recorders that are available for sale is an example of such technology. **Narrator 13 Private Signals Corps** recalls *[t]hen I remember seeing planes taking off for home with a cargo of zinc coffins, plus suitcases full of leather jackets, jeans, women's underwear, China tea...* These are typical items that were hard to

come by in the Soviet Union at the time due to the trade limitations with the open markets of the West. There appear to be inconsistencies in how these items were handled and shipped into the Soviet Union, as in some instances there are reports of these items being confiscated by customs, as recalled by **Narrator 11 Sergeant Major Medical Instructor**: *Customs stole all the gifts we had with us, even the perfumes, scarves and watches with built-in calculators. 'Sorry, boys, not allowed!' they said, but we never got a receipt for anything. Our presents were their perks.* This quote shows that the customs officers did not follow the proper procedures in handling confiscated goods as they did not issue receipts, but kept the goods for themselves and their families at home as 'perks' of their jobs.

Using Fisher's fidelity and probability tests in this sub theme to determine whether there are compelling good reasons to accept these narratives, I believe that they are factually presented. The narrators use remembered facts from a phenomenological viewpoint, which are relevant to the identified theme and argue authentically and compellingly. With regard to probability, the stories are each highly individualised, pertaining to the life-experiences of the individuals who narrate those incidents. In the context of the individual narratives, as well as across these narratives in the themed discussion that I present here, there are strong elements of argumentative coherence for the text and the derive theme as a whole, with comparative narratives supporting the issues reported on. The characters do not strike me as being discordant, therefore I see evidence of characterological coherence in how they report their phenomenological experiences.

Sub Theme 6.2.2 Expressions of violence during the conflict

I begin this subtheme by referring back to two paragraphs that I presented in Chapter 3 (sub theme 3.2) that reflect on and discuss Sieca-Kozlowski's (2013) classification of types of violence which I find applicable to the Soviet-Afghan

War. Two types of violence are of importance here, namely violence of the physical type that includes bodily injury and wounds, and institutional violence in which the objectives of war would lead to the issuing of irregular instructions, unacceptable practices, or unwarranted use of power, as already demonstrated earlier in this chapter.

This classification is important to gaining an understanding and differentiation among the various types of violence that Soviet veterans had to endure during their tour(s) in Afghanistan, and the negative reception that they were subjected to as war veterans. At its core it is a tragic account of how "...regular Soviet youths were transformed by the wild war they were ordered to fight...some of them started to enjoy being violent" (Behrends, 2015a:173).

In the extract provided below, narrator 30 Private Gunlayer philosophises on the psychological aspect of his involvement in Afghanistan.

Narrator 30: Private Gunlayer

To kill or not kill? That's a post-war question. The psychology of war itself is a lot more urgent. The Afghans weren't people to us, and vice versa. We couldn't afford to see each other as human beings. You blockade a village, wait 24 hours, then another 24, with the heat and tiredness driving you crazy. You end up even more brutal than the 'greens', as we called our allies, the Afghan National Army. At least these were their people, they were born in these villages, whereas we did what we did without thinking, to people quite unlike us, people we didn't understand. It was easier for us to fire our guns and throw our grenades.

He explains that while one finds oneself in a situation of war there is no time to consider and debate ethical aspects relating to the justification of one's actions. Elsewhere in the text it is clear that at the macro level, the Soviet troops were indoctrinated with propagandistic statements about upholding the honour of their units, and strengthening their southern borders, and helping Lenin's motherland to flourish (**28 1st Lieutenant, Battery Commander**). In Chapter 3 (Cf. Section 3.6), I make the following observation:

An important theme that is highlighted by Maley (2010:868) is one of mortality and he cites up to 240 deaths on a daily basis in Afghanistan over a period of a decade and states, “[t]his high level of mortality was accompanied by shocking and extensive war crimes and human rights violations”. This theme is also picked up by authors such as Braithwaite (2011) and Behrends (2015a).

In Afghanistan it is a situation of kill or be killed, as you are not viewing your enemy as you would look at your people back home. Here the culture of the enemy is poorly understood, and in their behaviour, the Afghan people are perceived as quite unlike the Soviet soldiers, and are not held in the same esteem.

The extreme heat and severity of the conditions to which they were exposed in Afghanistan drove the Soviet soldiers to the limit of their endurance, especially in situations such as the one described above, where a village is blockaded. What is difficult to envisage is how in the context of bringing about an ideal state of Sovietisation where the peasants would be made free from feudal oppression; their fellow countrymen, or ‘greens’ as referred to here by the narrator on account of their uniforms, are renowned for their brutality against their people. What is more shocking, however, is that the Soviet soldiers would view Afghans as something other than human beings, or people. At the psychological level, this is a necessary adjustment in the make-up of a soldier to dehumanise the enemy, as one would otherwise not be capable of aggressive behaviour, which includes acts of killing the enemy if you took a view of them as fellow human beings, parents, children or mothers.

This attitude is further clarified in the words of Narrator 28 1st Lieutenant Battery Commander who comments about killing as follows:

Narrator 28: 1st Lieutenant Battery Commander

I think that was the most incomprehensible thing of all over there - the attitude to death. As I said before, the whole truth you'd never . . . What's unthinkable here was everyday reality over there. It's frightening and unpleasant to have to kill, you think, but you soon realise that what you really find objectionable is shooting someone point-blank. Killing en masse, in a group, is exciting, even - and I've seen this myself - fun.

In the extract above the narrator relates how the psychological processes determine their behaviour, such as the attitude to death. Earlier in his interview, he responds by saying *I didn't go over there with a desire to kill people. I am a normal man*. However, he now implies that the whole truth of what happened in Afghanistan is beyond belief, he uses the work *unthinkable*. There is an admission that it is *frightening and unpleasant to have to kill*, but that this thought of killing soon loses its unpleasant and frightening character as it pales to comparison in having to shoot somebody *point-blank*. Alexiev (1988:62) refers to a commissioned soldier's testimony that in some instances where soldiers did not obey orders, explanations were used to remedy their behaviour:

All of a sudden, I saw that several (soldiers) were not shooting. What was the problem? It turned out that they couldn't shoot at a person from such a close distance. Just like that. It was necessary to conduct explanatory work with them.

It is only when you stare death in the face that you become aware of your mortality. When you are wielding power and are commanding instruments that have the capacity to maim and kill you feel invincible, as he says that there is a thrill or excitement in killing when you are multiples in a group. Killing one-on-one is a challenge, but in a group it takes on a different cast. There is a schizophrenic nature to how he defines himself as a normal man, but at the same time, he says killing humans can be fun. This is a classic example of what Behrends (2015a) refers to when he refers to the transformation of the Soviet youths who started enjoying being violent. The narratives in *Zinky Boys* consistently tell of incidents of excessively violent behaviour. Not only because

it is a war, but because of the transformation that these individuals underwent, first, in respect of the expected behaviour by the military as total institution, and secondly, because they were consumed by the *Gewaltraum* of Afghanistan in which violence was the only accepted tender.

This violence is not only seen on the battlefield, but in the everyday terrorising of the local population as narrated by narrator 30 Private Gunlayer who remembers:

Narrator 30: Private Gunlayer

The first time we drove out to a village the battalion commander taught us how to behave towards the local populace: 'You call all Afghans, regardless of age, "batcha", which means "boy", roughly. Got that? I'll show you the rest later.' On the way we came across an old man. 'Halt! Watch this!' The commander jumped down from the vehicle, went up to the old man, pushed his turban off his head, poked his fingers in his beard. 'Right, on your way, batcha!' Not quite what we'd been expecting. In the village we threw briquettes of pearl barley to the kids, but they ran away thinking they were grenades.

The disregard that soldiers developed for the local population is particularly disturbing. Soviet soldiers, who had been in Afghanistan for a while, were like the battalion commander who held individuals and their status in disregard. Alexiev (1988:20) explains “[s]ome Soviet officers went so far as to show open contempt for all Afghans in front of their soldiers, obviously regarding them as barely human savages.” In the extract, he explains that all Afghans are to be called *batcha*, meaning ‘boy’, and he demonstrates to the troops by pushing an old Afghan man’s turban off his head and poking his fingers through his beard. This behaviour is insulting and brings dishonour to the old man in three ways. Firstly, the turban is worn as a reminder of their obedience to Allah, and secondly, beards are worn as it is commanded by the *Qur’an*, and men model themselves on the image of the Prophet of Islam who wore a turban and beard. Finally, respect is normally shown to older people in the community by greeting

them first or serving them first, and to call a man of such social standing a *batcha* or 'boy', is insulting to his social standing and dignity.

The narrator states that this behaviour was against their expectation as such behaviour did not fit in well with the discourse of propaganda that implied that they were trying to Sovietise Afghanistan, and bring about improved conditions such as described elsewhere in the text - flush toilets, Volga cars, tractors, breeding-bulls, office desks, and tablecloths (**Narrator 08 A Military Adviser**). As reported by **Narrator 13 Private Signals Corps**, *[w]e went to Afghanistan to build socialism but found ourselves penned in by barbed wire*. Similarly, in the case of **Narrator 05 Nurse**, the statement is made *[w]e were told that this was a just war, that we were helping the Afghan people to put an end to feudalism and build a wonderful socialist society*. The behaviour that the Soviet soldiers were taught did not fit the overall profile of the discourse that they were there to improve conditions for all in Afghanistan. There is argumentative coherence in these statements to support the argument that the Soviet Union had not briefed their soldiers honestly about their involvement in Afghanistan. The repetitive tales of violence perpetuated against the local population are relevant to establish the case that this was a factual social reality for the Soviets in Afghanistan. In analysing these narratives, there are, in my interpretation, compelling good reasons to accept these accounts as both probable and true.

What is of concern is the image of soldiers tossing briquettes of pearl barley at the children, who ran away thinking they were grenades. Pearl barley is a nutritious form of grain that can be used to make flour or used to make a gruel or porridge. What is horrifying is the association that the children have that the packages that were being thrown at them were grenades. This implies that there is a strong connotation of past violent behaviour that is associated with the presence of these soldiers.

The scale of the violence practiced is particularly sickening to those reading *Zinky Boys*. Narrator 05 Nurse recalls:

Narrator 05: Nurse

One junior lieutenant I know went back home and admitted it. 'Life's not the same now, I actually want to go on killing,' he said. They spoke about it quite coolly, some of those boys, proud of how they'd burnt down a village and kicked the inhabitants to death.

In his admission to people at home in the Soviet Union, the junior lieutenant admits that his life is not the same now. He has a strong desire to go on killing. There is a possible addiction to violence discernible in what he says. In addition, other veterans who had returned to the Soviet Union spoke with a sense of pride about their action of burning down a village and kicking the inhabitants to death. Pride associated with such memories are indicative of a failure to cope with the psychological trauma induced by the war. Sieca-Kozlowski (2013) identifies and equates the similarity of the psychological trauma that was experienced by the Soviets to that of the experiences of American soldiers who fought in Vietnam. The Russian terminology that is used is *Post-Travmaticheskoe Stessoe Rasstroistvo (PTSR)*, or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as it is known in the English speaking communities.

These inhabitants would be elderly men, women and children, who are not combatants, but civilians going about their daily lives. How can soldiers be proud of such an immoral deed, to kick civilians to death? This is a particularly gruesome act of violence, even murder, and it is no surprise, therefore, that the Soviet soldiers were feared by the local population. Braithwaite (2011:323) cites a number of unsanctioned deeds that are associated with amoral behaviour in times of war, such as torture, rape, murder, cruelty to prisoners, and forceful pillaging which are prone to happen especially if the army is invading a foreign territory.

A worrying feature that emerges from the text is the continued references to villages being razed (flattened). Narrator 35 A Nurse recounts:

Narrator 35: A Nurse

The things I'm telling you are all horrible...Do you think I was too prejudiced by that old Afghan woman who spat at us? There's more to that story, in fact ... She was brought in from a village which our Spetsnaz had dealt with. She was the only one left alive. And if you want to go right back to the beginning, it all started when two of our helicopters were destroyed by machine-gunfire from that same village, and the pilots were finished off with pitch-forks. Who started it, and why, and when? We didn't try and work it all out, we were just so sorry for our own people.

In the extract quoted above the nurse tells of a wounded old Afghan woman who was brought into hospital onto a stretcher. She asks the interviewer whether the Afghan woman was prejudiced against her by spitting at her, and continues to say that she actually has good reason to do so. The old woman's village had been razed by Spetsnaz forces because the village was harbouring mujahedeen who had brought down two helicopters with machine-fire from within the village. However, the most gruesome part of the story is that the villagers finished off the pilots by stabbing them with their pitch-forks. In retaliation to this act, the Spetsnaz wiped out the entire village.

What is perturbing is how even the nurse's frame of reference has changed in that she does not say that she feels any regret at innocent villagers being killed, instead, she is *feeling sorry for [her] own people*. As is often heard in many squabbles and arguments, she asks, *who started it, and why, and when?* It is as if those who continue to perpetrate the violence feel justified in what they are doing, as they have not begun the fight. This description fits well with what Baev (2012:249) refers to the "self-propelling dynamics of violence in Afghanistan" that contributed to the failure of the Soviet campaign in Afghanistan. Once begun, retaliatory violence is hard to stop, even if it means taking the lives of the civilian population. This is not a new phenomenon, as there are numerous

examples of the Allied Forces razing cities with bombs during the Second World War, as is evidenced by Dresden in Germany, and Tokyo in Japan. Here the objective was to hit back at the civilian population in an effort to stop the military forces from their offensive.

In another example of violence against villagers narrator 20 Private grenadier regiment recalls:

Narrator 20: Private grenadier regiment

Our company was combing through a village. I was patrolling with another lad. He pushed open a hut door with his leg and was shot point-blank with a machine-gun. Nine rounds. In that situation hatred takes over. We shot everything, right down to the domestic animals. In fact, shooting animals is the worst. I was sorry for them. I wouldn't let the donkeys be shot- they'd done nothing wrong, had they? They had amulets hanging from their necks, exactly the same as the children. It really upset me, setting fire to that wheat-field - I'm a country boy myself.

The private narrates an incident that occurred during one of their patrols in a village. When one of their own forces is killed in an ambush, he states: *In that situation hatred takes over. We shot everything, right down to the domestic animals.* This is an example of excessive violence in response to the incident, *everything* in this situation means people, women and children, including the domestic animals. His comment in this situation is that he feels sorry for the animals and prevented the shooting of the donkeys that had amulets around their necks. It is unsettling that he compares them to the Afghan who also wore amulets around their necks. Further, that he felt upset at them setting fire to the crop of wheat, he being a *country boy*. In applying Fisher's narrative paradigm tests of fidelity and probability I find the detailed descriptions form a pattern of logic that is relevant to establish the fact that villages were razed. In the repeated narratives telling of the razing of villages there is a consistency that emerges when compared to other similar narratives. I find there are compelling

good reasons to accept that these incidents did happen and formed part of the social reality experienced by the Soviets in *Gewaltraum* Afghanistan.

What is horrifying in this incident is that the regard that should have been held for the value of a human life is absent. How is it possible that you are more distressed at domesticated animals being killed, you prevent donkeys being shot, and are upset at a wheat field being burnt, but you have no qualms about human life being wasted so needlessly? As stated in Chapter Three, Behrends (2015b:721) reports that the attempt at the Sovietisation of Afghanistan resulted in regular outpourings of violence with reports on the war and notably the violence (2015c:676) being withheld from the public, and its place fake news about the Sovietisation of Afghanistan is printed in the press in the Soviet Union.

The situation had gotten so out of hand that even the customary respect that was to be shown to the dead was no longer honoured. Alexievich reports in the prelude marked 17.5 The Second Day, in *Zinky Boys* that an anonymous phone caller, whom she tagged as her leading character states:

Leading Character

Yes, I was a killer and I'm covered in blood. ..But I saw him lying there, my friend who was like a brother to me, with his head cut off, and his arms, and his legs, and his flayed skin ... I volunteered for the very next raid. I watched a funeral procession in a village, there were a lot of people there. The body was wrapped in white. I could see everything quite clearly through my field-glasses and I gave the order: 'At the funeral- FIRE!'

The anonymous caller was out to get revenge on a village for the mutilation of a fellow soldier who had suffered horribly at the hands of the mujahedeen. His limbs were dismembered and his head was chopped off. He also references his 'flayed skin' and falls silent for a while as is indicated by the pauses ... In *The New York Times Pulitzer Prize* award to Bill Keller his winning work *Home from*

Afghanistan: Russia's Divisive War is reproduced in his citation. In it, Keller (1989) recalls the work of fellow (Soviet) journalist Artyom Borovik who describes the act of skin-flaying. He recounted the torture of a Russian soldier by the rebels - they allegedly made an incision around the soldier's waist and pulled his skin up over his head like an undershirt. This is a particularly disturbing and horrifying image, no wonder that fellow soldiers would seek to take revenge.

The unknown caller relates how he had volunteered to go on a raid and had watched a funeral procession taking place in a village. Ordinarily, one's respect for the dead would be that such processions were to be left undisturbed, but chillingly, the unknown caller tells how he gave the order to open fire at the funeral procession to kill those who were burying their deceased. It is inconceivable how a person can become so debased of his own humanity to take revenge on a sacred ritual of this nature.

Narrator 28 1st Lieutenant, Battery Commander provides an insightful statement in which he describes how the mujahedeen worked undercover masquerading as ordinary villagers and utilised the culverts and irrigation ditches a cover from which they sprung ambushes, killing Soviet soldiers.

Narrator 28: 1st Lieutenant, Battery Commander

Suddenly, he wasn't a human being for you, because he'd killed your best friend, who was now just a lump of dead flesh lying on the ground. My friend's last words to me were: 'Don't write to my mother, I beg you, I don't want her to know anything about this ...' And to them you're just a Russky, not a human being. Our artillery wipes his village off the face of the earth so thoroughly that when he goes back he literally can't find a trace of his mother, wife or children. Modern weaponry makes our crime even greater. I can kill one man with a knife, two with a mine ... dozens with a missile. But I'm a soldier and killing's my profession. I'm like the slave of Aladdin's magic lamp, or rather the slave of the Defence Ministry. I'll shoot wherever I'm told to. When I hear the order 'Fire!' I don't think, I fire, that's my job.

In the extract provided there is again evidence of the dehumanising of the enemy, *he wasn't a human being for you*. The description he gives of his best friend as *just a lump of dead flesh lying on the ground* is particularly horrifying and demonstrates the psychological alienation incurred by this *Gewaltraum*. It is also the result of a strategy of indoctrination as Alexiev (1988:62-63) explains:

They [the Soviets] have also been able to preclude any large-scale tendency toward collaboration with the enemy, through a massive and often successful psychological campaign to instill (*sic*) hatred for the Afghans among the troops. As part of this campaign, the mujahideen have been persistently portrayed as subhuman savages that severely torture and mutilate their prisoners before they kill them.

The narrator relates how the artillery wipes the village from whence the ambush came, *off the face of the earth so thoroughly that when he goes back he literally can't find a trace of his mother, wife or children*. Such an image of a flattened village is particularly disturbing if one compares it against the idea of the Sovietisation of Afghanistan. How is it possible to make model citizens out of people if they are treated in this manner? Therefore, the savage violence unleashed on the populace by the brutal behaviour of the Soviet Army in the early years of the war drove a wedge in between the ideal of the Sovietisation of Afghanistan and the ideals of the local population (Robinson, 2010).

In a chilling reminder the narrator demonstrates that he is like a slave to the government's wishes, and will fire on their command, without thinking. He states *I am a soldier, and killing is my profession*. Such unquestioning loyalty or moral blindness is reminiscent of the whole-scale buy-in of armed forces who subscribe to the ideology of their government. It is much the same question that was asked of the German nation who were persuaded to pander to the wishes of the Nazis during the Second World War.

In giving credence to the torture and mutilation inflicted on Soviet troops, narrator 05 Nurse recounts:

Narrator 05: Nurse

That first March a pile grew up behind the hospital - a pile of amputated arms, legs and other bits of our men. Dead bodies with gouged-out eyes, and stars carved into the skin of their backs and stomachs by the mujahedin.

This image is above all gruesome, the thought that dead bodies and dismembered limbs would just be discarded into a pile as described by the narrator. Chillingly, the reference to *gouged-out eyes, and stars carved into the skin of their backs and stomachs by the mujahedin* provides credibility to the claims that they were tortured, as is also substantiated by Alexievich's Leading Character earlier in this discussion.

The situation described in this theme relating to the moral blindness that resulted from indoctrinating the Soviet troops is reminiscent of Milgram's theory of Obedience to Authority (OtA). The theory, which is discussed in Chapter Four, proposes that the value of his research lies in the idea that OtA proposes that agents do not have as much free will as they think they have, and our decisions are not so much personal decisions as they are results of our social situation (cf Giddens' concept of structuration). Milgram directly argues that agents enter into an "agentic state" (1974:151) which means that they are without personal effective desire as postulated by Frankfurt (1971), but are implementing the biddings of others. The extract below is indicative of this state.

Narrator 03 Private Grenadier Battalion recalls:

Narrator 03: Private Grenadier Battalion

We pointed our guns where we were told, and then fired them, exactly as we'd been trained, and I didn't care, not even if I killed a child. Everyone was part of it over there: men and women, young and old, kids.

Here the depth and extent of the training that the troops underwent is evident. There is obedience to authority in that commands, when issued, are followed unquestionably. Soldiers were not critical about the ethics of commands and instructions as they are conditioned to follow orders unthinkingly. It is yet another example of blind obedience to authority.

The sense of ethical blunting is clearly evident in several narratives in *Zinky Boys*, a few of which are referenced below to illustrate. I begin with narrator 20 Private Grenadier Regiment as an example:

Narrator 20: Private Grenadier Regiment

Sometimes I want to write down everything I saw. Like, in hospital, the lad who'd lost his arms, his legs and his mate. I remember sitting on his bed writing a letter for him to his mother. Or the little Afghan girl who pinched a sweet from a Soviet soldier and had both her hands hacked off by her own people. I'd like to write it all down exactly as it was and without any comments. If it rained I'd say it rained, just that, without a lot of talk about whether it was a good or bad thing that it was raining.

Whilst the Soviet troops were clearly capable of acts of compassion such as writing a letter to the mother of a fellow combatant who lost his arms and legs, they also have memories of violence, which they are capable of recalling. In the extract above the narrator attempts to distance himself psychologically and ethically from the events that he had witnessed. He prefers to remember the events unburdened by any value judgements on the ethical acceptability of the deeds that he witnessed.

As an example, he states, *[i]f it rained I'd say it rained, just that, without a lot of talk about whether it was a good or bad thing that it was raining*. Similarly, he makes no other comment, than to share a memory as in the case of the little Afghan girl whose hands were chopped off by fellow-Afghans as punishment for

stealing a sweet from a Soviet soldier. The terse response that the narrator makes is simply to say *I'd like to write it all down exactly as it was and without any comments*. He makes no judgement of either character or behaviour, and blunts himself emotionally, perhaps as the psychological burden is simply too heavy to carry.

In another extract serving as an example of ethical blunting narrator 47 Private Intelligence Corps explains:

Narrator 47: Private Intelligence Corps

I was usually put in charge of our night raids. We'd crouch behind a tree, knives at the ready, watching as they went past, with a scout in front. It was our job to kill him. We took turns to do it. If it was my tum I'd let him get a little bit past me and then jump him from behind. The main thing is to grab the throat with your left hand and throttle him to keep him quiet as you stick the knife into him with your right. Right through, under his liver. I used a knife I picked up from one of them, a Japanese job with a blade over a foot long which cut like it was going through butter. There'd be a quick twitch and he'd be dead without a squeak. You soon got used to it. It was less a psychological problem than the technical challenge of actually finding the upper vertebrae, heart or liver.

Narrator 47 describes how they ambushed mujahedeen on night raids and how he would kill them with a captured knife and to do so silently. He provides clear descriptions of the method of ambush and displays his knowledge of human anatomy and what sort of a knife strike is required to do kill the victim immediately.

What is particularly gruesome in this regard is his last statement of how conditioned and accustomed they became to killing. *You soon got used to it. It was less a psychological problem than the technical challenge of actually finding the upper vertebrae, heart or liver*. Killing becomes a technical challenge and is no longer an ethical, moral or psychological problem to them anymore. They become unfeeling killing machines.

In the context that unfolds in *Zinky Boys* there is a clear sense of alienation when reference is made to the Afghan citizens and mujahedeen. All Afghans were deemed to be potential hostiles or mujahedeen in disguise as civilians. This sense of 'othering' does not discriminate clearly between combatants and non-combatants, as is demonstrated below.

The stereotypical division between 'us and them' as so often happens in war is brought to the fore by narrator 30 Private Gunlayer:

Narrator 30: Private Gunlayer

One day two of our lads went to a shop, shot the shopkeeper and his family and stole everything they could lay their hands on. There was an enquiry and of course everyone denied having anything to do with it. They examined the bullets in the bodies and eventually charged three men: an officer, an NCO and a private. But when our barracks were being searched for the stolen money, etc, I remember how humiliated and insulted we felt - why all this fuss about a few dead Afghans? There was a court martial and the NCO and the private were sentenced to the firing squad. We were all on their side - the general opinion was that they were being executed for their stupidity rather than for what they'd done. The shopkeeper's dead family didn't exist for us. We were only doing our international duty. It was all quite cut and dried. It's only now, as the stereotypes begin to collapse, that I see things differently.

In the extract above the gruesome incident is related about two soldiers (an NCO and a private) shooting a shopkeeper and his family and looting the shop. This incident reflects some of the darker realities that the Afghan population had to suffer at the hands of the Soviet troops. Whilst looting was not an uncommon practice as demonstrated in *Zinky Boys*, it was often regarded as acceptable practice especially during raids, but at "times, punished severely, if pursued in an unauthorized, 'freelance' manner" (Alexiev, 1988:57). The extract above refers to such an incident.

The narrator does not condemn the soldiers for killing, raiding and looting, as these activities are mostly sanctioned, but for their stupidity, to undertake a non-sanctioned raid in a freelance manner. Two of the three soldiers were executed which is an example of the severe punishment referred to above by Alexiev (1988). It is not uncommon to find officers or non-commissioned officers involved in such crimes as they are often those who initiate it by instructing troops to “steal something for them” (Alexiev, 1988:56).

Then narrator laments *why all this fuss about a few dead Afghans?* In the context of the war it is best understood by the indoctrination strategies that the Soviet troops were subjected to. Alexiev, (1988:57) explains:

Most of the former servicemen who had participated in operations were told not to differentiate between mujahideen and civilians and to assume that all Afghans without exception are hostile and should be treated accordingly in operational zones.

The result of such indoctrination is seen in the summary by the narrator. He states [w]e were only doing our international duty. *It was all quite cut and dried. It's only now, as the stereotypes begin to collapse, that I see things differently.* This is the unfortunate reality of the conflict – many soldiers were inculcated to believe that the Afghans were not ‘human’ like themselves, and deserved to be treated in this manner.

From the extracts provided above and the discussion thereof it becomes clear that for a Soviet combatant or support staff member to be deployed in Afghanistan meant that they were immersed in a *Gewaltraum* in which conventional notions of ethics and morals were abandoned. In its place, conditioning strongly reinforced by their sense of survival took over and subjugated their moral behaviour to a baser, savage conduct. In combination, these narratives provide such overwhelming elements of fidelity and probability

that the reader cannot, but accept that there are compelling good reasons to accept these narratives as offered.

Sub Theme 6.2.3 The horror of war

This subtheme attempts to demonstrate the horror of the Soviet-Afghan War specifically with reference to the casualties incurred and their concomitant effects. The extracts selected for inclusion have been included on the basis of the coding and theming of the data which demonstrate that the phenomenological experiences of the Soviets in Afghanistan include an experience of horror at the violence inherent in the war and associated with Afghanistan. I begin with a view provided by medical personnel.

A medical nurse narrator 05 Nurse expresses her horror and shock at the nature of the injuries sustained by the casualties of war.

Narrator 05: Nurse

I was so shocked by the injuries, by the bullets, by the realisation that such weapons had actually been invented. The entry wound would be small but the intestines, liver and spleen a terrible twisted mess. Apparently it wasn't enough to kill or wound, there had to be torture, too. 'Mum!' they screamed, 'Mum!' when they were frightened and in pain. Always, always for their mothers.

It is often not in the existence of weapons of war that people are shocked, but rather when they experience the trauma and destruction that these weapons deliver that they are shocked. The narrator describes her experience of witnessing the extent of the damage caused by bullets, which when they do not kill, have a devastating effect on the human body. She compares the effect to torture, and describes the suffering of the wounded who cry out for their mothers when they are in pain and frightened.

Often the greatest challenge for these medical personnel was to provide proper treatment and care under conditions where the patients are severely traumatised. In some instances, it is too much for them to bear, as illustrated below.

Narrator 15 Army Doctor explains:

Narrator 15: Army Doctor

I had ten years' experience as a surgeon in a big city hospital, but the first time a transport vehicle arrived with wounded men I almost went crazy. Arms and legs missing, just breathing torsos. It was far worse than anything you could see in the most brutal film. We did operations you could only dream about back home. The young nurses couldn't take it. Some of them just laughed or else cried hysterically. One simply stood there and did nothing except smile. They often had to be sent home.

Despite the ten years of experience that the Army Doctor had as a surgeon, he was still shocked by the severity of their injuries, he describes them as *just breathing torsos*. He had not even seen the likes of such wounds imagined in brutal films. These wounds required surgery and the type of surgery that would be practiced on the frontier during war times often necessitated the use of unsanctioned approaches to operating in conditions where the patient did not have the optimal chance of survival.

The doctor describes the effect that these casualties had on some of the nursing staff who could not cope with the reality of the situation. Often they became incapacitated due to their state of hysteria or the shock was of such a nature that they had to be sent home. As stated in *Zinky Boys* these operations often had to be performed with a lack of sufficient personnel or equipment. Often the personnel were not in a proper mental or physical state to perform operations. As indicated by **05 Nurse** *the wounded were often brought in too late because the field medics were badly trained soldiers who could just about put bandages on; the surgeon was often drunk.*

Narrator 11 Sergeant Major, Medical Instructor in a Reconnaissance Unit explains the severity of the nature of injuries incurred in the field:

Narrator 11: Sergeant Major, Medical Instructor Reconnaissance Unit

Dum-dum wounds from exploding bullets were the worst. My first casualty had one leg blown off at the knee (with the bone left sticking out), his other ankle ripped away, his penis gone, his eyes blown out and one ear torn off. I started shaking and retching uncontrollably. 'If you don't do it now you'll never make it as a medic,' I told myself. I applied tourniquets, staunched the blood, gave him a pain-killer and something to make him sleep. Next was a soldier with a dum-dum in the stomach. His guts were hanging out. I bandaged him, staunched the blood, and gave him a pain-killer, something to make him sleep. I held him for four hours, then he died.

The horror of the nature of the wounds inflicted defies belief. Bullets that are designed to inflict maximum suffering upon their victims were used. I was surprised to encounter these reports in *Zinky Boys* as the Hague Convention of 1899 in its rule 77 prohibits the use of hollow-point ammunition or bullets, which expand or flatten easily. The use of such ammunition was declared inhumane and clearly the western countries that supplied arms and ammunition did not abide by this rule. There are frequent references in *Zinky Boys* to the use of Chinese weapons and supplies of arms and ammunition from the United States.

The narrator in this instance provides a very detailed and graphic description of the types of injuries inflicted by these bullets and reacts in a very natural way to the nature of his injuries. The type of medical assistance that is provided is rudimentary as first-line aid and he describes how he held his patient for four hours until he died. This must be a severely traumatising experience for any medical person who can do no more than provide first-line treatment on the battlefield.

In a memory shared by narrator 35 A Nurse she recalls that in some instances there were self-mutilators who did their best to get out of the situation by inflicting harm upon themselves that would render them unable to participate in the war.

Narrator 35: A Nurse

Sometimes we were operating for 24 or even 48 hours at a stretch. If it wasn't the war-wounded, it was the self-mutilators, soldiers who shot themselves in the knee or fingers. A sea of blood and a shortage of cotton-wool...Such men were generally despised, even by us medics. 'There are lads getting killed out there, and you want to go home to Mummy? You think you'll be sent back home? Why didn't you shoot yourself in the head? I would, if I were you!' That was the sort of thing I used to say, I promise you. At the time they seemed the most contemptible of cowards; now I'm beginning to realise that perhaps it was a protest as well, and an unwillingness to kill other people.

The men who inflicted harm on themselves were regarded with disdain as they were not doing their patriotic duty for the motherland, and were perhaps seen to be cowardly in their behaviour. The narrator took a very principled stance against those who were guilty of this practice and would suggest to them that they should have done the job properly by shooting themselves in the head. However, after returning home, the narrator considers that these acts may have been intended to get them out of active duty so that they did not have to kill others. These may be soldiers who were not as well indoctrinated as the others to accept the narrative that all Afghans are sub-human and may be killed wantonly.

In addition, the narrator draws our attention to the shortage of not only medical staff, resulting in operations having to be performed in stretches of 24 or even 48 hours, but also equipment. Basic elements such as cotton wool, and surgical clamps and surgical thread were in short supply. The narrator recounts how the surgical thread *hadn't been replaced since the end of the last war in 1945*, which leads to another thematic aspect discussed earlier in this section on the

conditions and lack of equipment. First-hand eyewitness accounts are compelling reasons to accept these narratives as accurate and aligned to one another to provide a picture of the social reality experienced, especially by the medical staff in Afghanistan.

In war it is not only human lives that are taken, also those of the animals pressed into service or humans and animals who were killed at the same time as recalled by narrator 21 Artillery Captain:

Narrator 21: Artillery Captain:

In the morgue I saw body-bags with human limbs hacked off. Yes, that was a nasty shock. You should never be the first to spill blood-it's a process that's hard to stop. Once I saw some soldiers sitting around while an old man and a little donkey passed by on the street below. Suddenly they lobbed a mortar and killed the old man and his donkey. 'Hey, lads! Have you gone mad? It was just an old man and a donkey. What did they do to you?' 'An old man and a donkey came by here yesterday, too. By the time they'd gone past our mate was lying here dead.' 'But it might have been a different old man and a different donkey?' Never be the first to spill blood, or you'll forever be shooting yesterday's old man and yesterday's donkey. We fought the war, stayed alive and got home. Now's the time to try and make sense of it all.

The Artillery Captain recalls the gruesome killing of soldiers by the mujahedeen who had hacked off their limbs, and how these bodies were in body-bags in the morgue. He uses this reference to ground his narrative in the context of revenge-killing, a concept that is explained earlier in this section. His message is that it is hard to stop the process of killing if you are the one who had started it. He tells of soldiers who had lobbed a mortar at an old man and a donkey, and killing them. The Captain berated them, but their reply was that the previous day an old man and a donkey had come by the same route, and when he had passed, their mate was lying there dead. Therefore, they took revenge.

The soldiers did not first establish the identity of the old man, it could have been any other old man. Additionally, it may not have been the old man who had killed the soldier, but somebody else. Therefore, without any court case or being held as is customary in the military, the old man was found guilty and summarily killed without any evidence to establish his participation in the events that had transpired. It is a shocking violation of a person's rights, such as the right to a fair trial, before he is found guilty. This is often the case as is recounted in the enactment of revenge as narrated by the participants whose stories are told in *Zinky Boys*. In many instances, the whole population of a village would be doomed because some mujahedeen may have been using the village as cover whilst committing an ambush upon Soviet soldiers. There is no mention of having established fact, or producing evidence, it is simply an act of revenge as it is depicted here.

At times caravans were raided or ambushed, such as the weapons caravan referred to by narrator 10 Civilian Employee:

Narrator 10: Civilian Employee

The government's busy with politics while here you see blood all around you and you go crazy. You see burnt skin roll up like a laddered nylon stocking. It's especially horrible when they kill the animals. Once they ambushed a weapons caravan. The humans and mules were shot separately. Both lots kept quiet and waited for death - except one wounded mule, which screeched like metal scratching metal ...

A similar reference is made by narrator 28 1st Lieutenant Battery Commander:

Narrator 28: 1st Lieutenant Battery Commander:

Once we surrounded a caravan, which resisted and tried to fight us off with machine-guns, so we were ordered to destroy it, which we did. Wounded camels were lying on the ground, howling . . . Is this what we were awarded medals from 'the grateful Afghan people' for?

The extracts provided above relate to incidents that are very similar to one another. The caravans were used either to transport weapons as is indicated in the first extract of the two, mostly in the mountainous regions near Pakistan. The civilian employee narrates how, while politics is the reality for the government, the reality for the forces deployed in Afghanistan is *to see blood all around you and you go crazy. You see burnt skin roll up like a laddered nylon stocking*. There is a stark contrast between how the ambitions of politics and governments translates into war. It brings to mind the famous quote by Carl von Clausewitz (2006) who is renowned for saying “war is a mere continuation of policy by other means”.

Alternatively, caravans were used to smuggle concealed weapons or armament in a caravan that is not so obviously a weapons caravan, as is reflected in the second extract. The weapons caravan is ambushed and destroyed, with both humans and animals shot (separately) so that the mules cannot be used again in similar activities.

The caravan that is surrounded in the second extract refused to let the soldiers do a search and seize activity, hence there was a high likelihood that they were smuggling or concealing weapons. In addition, they were fighting the soldiers off with machine-guns. The soldiers were therefore ordered to destroy the caravan, and it is notable again that the caravan as a whole is destroyed, all humans and animals are killed. The narrators both recount how the wounded animals were ‘howling’ and ‘screeching’, which is sharply contrasted by the comment in the first narrative extract that *both lots kept quiet and waited for their death*. The comment *It’s especially horrible when they kill the animals*, demonstrates the callousness that the Soviet Contingent had developed towards the value of human life. The narrator in the first extract expresses more concern about the killing of animals, while the narrator in the second extract vocalises the senseless slaughtering of animals and the destruction of the caravan, and asks

the rhetorical question: *Is this what we were awarded medals from 'the grateful Afghan people' for?*

Narrator 38 Private demonstrates the indiscriminate killing of humans and animals when he tells:

Narrator 38: Private

The first body I saw was an Afghan boy aged about seven. He was lying there with his arms out as though asleep. Next to him was his horse, completely frozen and with its stomach split wide open. What had the kid done - or the animal, for that matter - to deserve that?

What is perhaps typical of battlefields or areas where military action is staged, is a field littered with corpses. However, in this instance, the narrator tells of a little Afghan boy, aged about seven who was killed and left lying where he had fallen. Next to him was his horse, *completely frozen*, which indicates that the horse had been lying there for some time already for it to freeze completely.

The harshness of war is brought home in that nobody was looking for the boy or to bury him, and that corpses would just be left where they were, to freeze in winter or to rot in the summer. The horror of war in this instance is made all the more acute by the description of innocents who are killed, as is brought home by the narrator's question: *What had the kid done - or the animal, for that matter - to deserve that?*

Several of the narrators relate in *Zinky Boys* how they had sustained injuries during the war or witnessed others being injured. The extracts discussed below mostly relate to incidents involving anti-personnel mines, which are designed to kill or maim.

Narrator 29 Civilian Employee provides a description of an encounter that she had with a soldier who sought her out to talk about a distressing event that he had witnessed.

Narrator 29: Civilian Employee

The worst kind of mine was the one we called the 'Italianka'. You have to collect a person's remains in a bucket after an Italianka. I learnt about it when one of the boys came up to me and just talked and talked about seeing his friend being turned into mincemeat. I thought he'd never stop. When he noticed me getting frightened he said, 'I'm sorry, I wanted ... ' A boy I'd never met, but he'd found a woman and needed to talk. I thought he'd never stop.

The narrator who is a civilian employee tells of the cruelty of the weapons that were used against the Soviet soldiers. She identifies the *Italianka* mine as one of the worst kinds. *You have to collect a person's remains in a bucket after an Italianka.* This is a gruesome description of how a person is blown into bits by such a forceful blast. The narrator was told this harrowing tale by a soldier who had sought her company after he had witnessed *his friend being turned into mincemeat*. The soldier was suffering from the shock of the incident and could not stop talking about it in an attempt to come to terms with what happened.

The narrator was becoming scared because of the detail of the incident that the soldier was divulging and when he realised this he apologised and broke off his narrative. Such an incident is so gruesome that in the telling of it he frightened her. This type of behaviour after a violent incident is not uncommon, as soldiers often talk about the trauma that they have endured among one another shortly after such an incident has taken place, even though they may become less willing as time progresses. In an interview with a military psychologist, Sieca-Kozlowski (2013) states that the psychologist reports “[a]bout twenty percent had evident psychological trauma. They were primarily those who were in contact with the killed; who witnessed the death of a friend”. It is therefore evident that war does inflict traumatic scars especially when one witnesses the

death of a friend, and sometimes multiple levels of scarring following repeated traumatic incidents, resulting in PTSD.

The extract provided below in which narrator 47 Private Intelligence Corps remembers how his friends were killed, is another example of witnessing the death of another.

Narrator 47: Private Intelligence Corps

We crossed a canal by a mud bridge which I was amazed could take all those tons of metal. Suddenly - BANG! The leading APC had caught a direct hit from a grenade-launcher. Pals of mine were being carried away, their heads blown off like cardboard targets, hands hanging down lifelessly. My mind couldn't take in this new and terrible world. Command: 'Deploy mortars!'- with their 120 shells a minute. We fired every one of them into the village where the attack had come from, which meant several into every single house. After it was all over we collected up our boys in bits and pieces, even scraping them from the sides of the APC. We spread out a tarpaulin, their common grave, to try and sort out which leg or fragment of skull belonged to whom. We weren't issued with identification tags because of the 'danger' of them falling into enemy hands. This was an undeclared war, you see - we were fighting a war which wasn't happening.

This is a particular gruesome memory in which the narrator describes the death of others. The description links up strongly with the accounts provided by other narrators about the gruesome details of the wounded and the dead, imagery which is not in short supply in *Zinky Boys*. The narrator first describes the incident saying that *pals of mine were being carried away*, not the bodies of pals, but pals of mine. This makes it a very personal rendering of the memory as if they were not lifeless, but still his friends.

He then narrates their indiscriminate retaliation to the enemy fire that was directed at their armoured personnel carrier (APC). Instead of hunting down and taking out the person(s) who had directed the attack, they destroy the village, several mortar rounds into every single house. The undifferentiating targeting of

the houses of the villagers translates into the wholesale slaughter of the occupants of the homes, which is totally uncalled for.

The most gruesome image is the narrator's retelling of how *we collected our boys in bits and pieces, even scraping them from the sides of APC*. Spreading the body parts on the tarpaulin so that they could be sent back to their mothers. The sorting of body parts was complicated by the fact that they did not wear identification tags lest they fall into enemy hands (or the hands of foreign press). The last line in the extract is testimony to the false propaganda that the Soviet Union was spreading about 'building bridges of friendship'. In this line the narrator states *[t]his was an undeclared war, you see - we were fighting a war which wasn't happening*. This is indicative of the fact that they were aware that the Soviet Union was altering their reports under the Brezhnev campaign of Sovietisation, to say that they were building bridges, hospitals and planting trees. The reality of what is testified to here, is very far from the news that was promulgated in the public sphere.

In one more memory of witnessing a traumatic event, narrator 30 Private Gunlayer recalls:

Narrator 30: Private Gunlayer

We were driving in the APC when the shelling started. The APCs came to a halt. 'Take defensive positions!' someone shouted. We started jumping off. I stood up, ready to jump, but another lad took my place and was killed by a direct hit from a grenade. I felt I was falling, slowly, horizon-tally, like in a cartoon. .. with bits of someone else's body raining down on me. It's fixed in my memory for ever, that's what's so terrible. I guess that's how you experience your own death, from a distance. Strange.

The narrator recounts how he was about to disembark from his APC when another soldier pushed into line in front of him and got hit directly by a grenade. He describes how he fell because of the effect of the blast and he was lightly

wounded as well. The image that he describes of *falling, slowly, horizontally, like in a cartoon...with bits of someone else's body raining down on me* is particularly gruesome in that he is now living with that traumatic scarring and is still able to recall it in great detail. However, it is also very unreal at the same time, as if the mind refuses to grasp it, therefore he compares it to experiencing one's own death, as if from a distance, and strangely so. It is notable that the memory of this incident is engraved upon his mind for ever, as he states *[i]t's fixed in my mind for ever.*

Narrator 30 Private Gunlayer is one of the interviewees who has been injured in a landmine explosion:

Narrator 30: Private Gunlayer

Both my legs were amputated above the knee. If only they'd been taken off below the knee- that would've been fine! I'd be a happy man! I envy men who kept their knees. In hospital, after my dressings were changed I used to have a fit of shaking for a good hour and a half. I felt so tiny without my prostheses. I'd lie there in my underpants and para T-shirt, which was as long as I was. At first I refused to see anybody, or even speak. Both legs gone. If only I could have kept one ... The hardest thing of all is to forget that I once had two legs. I gave my mother an ultimatum: 'Don't come if you're going to cry.' That was what I was most afraid of over there -that I'd be killed, brought home in a coffin, and my mother would cry. After a battle we'd be sorry for the wounded - but not for the dead, only for their mothers.

In this extract, the narrator expresses his disappointment. Not at being wounded, or having been maimed, but he is, instead, lamenting the loss of his legs above the knee. This would severely impede his ability to move around on prosthetics as the prosthetics that were supplied to the injured soldiers were very crude. In the introduction to *Zinky Boys*, Larry Heinemann (1983:xxxxx) writes about the quality of the prosthetic devices that were supplied to the amputees.

There are no special facilities for wheelchairs for the blind, and the engineering for artificial limbs prosthetics - is abysmal, not to say medieval; though this has changed for the better in recent years. If you've had your leg blown off and are fitted with a lousy artificial leg, then by the time you're forty you'll probably need the stump trimmed a couple of times, and at the very least might well wind up with a bad back in a wheelchair.

Hienemann's use of the words *medieval* and *abysmal* are adequate to describe the poor quality of the prosthetic devices that were made available to the injured. In her notes from her diary, Alexievich (1986:xxxx) writes: "Some officers are sitting by me, talking about the poor quality of our Soviet-made artificial limbs". It is no wonder, then, that those who had lost a limb below the knee would be more mobile than those who were equipped with wooden legs, which are of a poor quality and which would further aggravate the amputated limb, require further operations in one's lifetime.

In his narrative, the amputee appears to struggle to accept the reality of having lost both legs above the knee. He wishes that he could have kept at least one leg, then he would be better off. He describes himself as 'short', the length of his parabat T-shirt, and refuses at first to see other people, even to speak. It appears that he had a severe psychological problem to adapt to the reality that he no longer had legs. In fact, he comes back to the topic again to state *[t]he hardest thing of all is to forget that I once had two legs*. His struggle to accept himself dominates his identity at present.

In the second paragraph in the extract the narrator remembers how he told his mother not to cry, implying that tears were reserved for mourning the dead. It was his greatest fear to die in Afghanistan and to be brought back home in a coffin, causing his mother to cry. An important thread that runs throughout the book is the suffering of the mothers, which will be addressed in the last theme in more detail. The statement *[a]fter a battle we'd be sorry for the wounded - but not for the dead, only for their mothers* typifies this emotional link that the

soldiers had with their mothers, note how in other extracts when they are wounded and dying, they are crying out for their mothers.

Narrator 24 1st Lieutenant Mortar Platoon recalls how his life changed after he had triggered a mine. He had jumped into a trench and both his legs were blown off at the knees. In addition, his face was seared by the blast and he had lost his eyesight. The detail with which he remembers the events of the blast and the steps that were taken on the road to recovery are well detailed, but I would rather focus in this extract on the change that the incident had wrought in his personal life.

Narrator 24: 1st Lieutenant Mortar Platoon

I'd like to write a book about the way an officer can be reduced to a housebound wreck, earning his bread assembling lamp-sockets and wall-plugs, about a hundred a day, or putting the metal bits on the ends of shoelaces. What colour shoelaces? Red, black, or white, he never knows, because he can't see; he's been officially declared totally blind. He ties string-bags, and glues little boxes - the sort of work he used to think only lunatics did.

The narrator has so many instances during which he reflects on what he says has changed his life as an officer to that of a housebound wreck. He expresses the wish that he wants to write a book about it. The implication here is that there are so many things that he can talk about, enough to fill a book.

He now has to do menial tasks in a factory or facility where he assembles lamp sockets, wall plugs, and putting metal bits on the end of shoelaces. His handicap as an amputee, but specifically being declared officially blind, allows him to do repetitive tasks with his hands in a controlled environment. Of note is that he refers to himself in the third person, using 'he' and not 'I', when he refers to the type of work that he does, showing that he has difficulty in accepting his fate and adjusting to his new life as a war veteran. The very last line of the

extract provides a clue as to how he sees himself in this capacity, *[h]e ties string-bags, and glues little boxes - the sort of work he used to think only lunatics did*. While he still has a functioning brain, his injury has now reduced him to the level and low worth of a lunatic in his own eyes.

In the extracts analysed in this sub theme thus far there is compelling good reason to accept the violent nature and horror experienced by the narrators in the incidents that they narrate. The graphic detail of these memories are convincing and compelling, and compare consistently well in the context of the experience of violence offered in the text of *Zinky Boys*. In the next few paragraphs, I wish to focus especially on violence against prisoners of war and children. Though there is sufficient evidence to warrant their discussion under this sub theme, there is not enough to develop these incidents into themes of their own.

Wars are characterised by violence, and the Soviet-Afghan War in particular is known for its violence (Kalinovsky, 2011; Ackerman and Galbas, 2015) causing massive displacement of fleeing Afghanis into neighbouring countries. These civilians who were fleeing the violence were mostly from the rural areas in Afghanistan while those who were living in Kabul, for example, were still able to maintain a sense of normalcy in their daily lives.

Violence enacted against prisoners of war is a subtheme that is particularly noticeable in the text, especially given the high regard and respect that citizens of the Soviet Union have for those veterans and soldiers who had served in the Second World War, or the Great Patriotic War, as it is referred to by several narrators in *Zinky Boys*. The Second World War is characterised by the disregard for the humanity and rights of prisoners of war practised by both the Nazi as well as the Allied Forces, in some instances disregarding the Geneva Convention of 1929. Although both Afghanistan and Russia (Soviet Union) had signed the updated agreement of the Geneva Convention of 1949, respectively

in 1959 and 1960, prisoners of war were not always afforded the luxury of being recipients of this type of treatment, as is shown below.

Narrator 08 A Military Adviser remembers:

Narrator 08: A Military Adviser

*Helicopters hovering over a village, a wounded man being laid on a stretcher, with his leg next to him, still in its trainer, POWs sentenced to death gazing innocently into the camera lens - they were dead ten minutes later ... Allah Akbar - Allah is great!
I remember once seeing a mujahedin leader in prison. He was lying on his metal bed reading a book with a familiar cover. Lenin's *The State and Revolution*. 'What a pity I shan't have time to finish this,' he said, 'but perhaps my children will.'*

Supplemented by the memories of **Narrator 03 Private Grenadier Battalion:**

How the prisoners we took somehow never got as far as regimental HQ! I saw them literally stamped and ground into the earth. In a year and a half I didn't see a single live dukh in captivity, only dead ones.

In the extracts provided above the graphic image of the wounded man on a stretcher with his leg beside him is a bloody image of the reality of war that leaves individuals maimed, and often results in their death before they can be helped medically. The sentiment expressed by some of the narrators in the anthology is that the fortunate ones are perhaps those who do not survive as they do not have to cope with the difficulties of living a maimed life thereafter. Prisoners of war are no better off than the mortally wounded, as they would often not be spared a gruesome death at the hands of their captors. The expectation is, in alignment with the terms decreed by the Geneva Convention that prisoners of war would be taken care of in a humane manner. However, the brutality of the act of killing these prisoners is juxtaposed by the seemingly normal act of taking a photograph of the group (perhaps to use as propaganda or to use as evidence to barter for their later release). It is more effective for the

manner in which it is stated that these prisoners are gazing innocently into the camera lens and dead ten minutes later.

Whilst the Soviet contingent was known for its acts of revenge against prisoners of war, the same was found with the mujahedeen. Guest (2010:886), points to the conflict in Islamic beliefs and the traditional notions of *badal* or revenge, where the Islamic rules of war extended protection to prisoners, but honouring the tradition of *badal* would entail the taking of revenge, as in the Biblical context of 'an eye for an eye'. Prisoners of war were killed as acts of revenge, which in the context of the practices of mutilation and dismemberment of Soviet soldiers by the mujahedeen (also discussed in this theme) provoked such retaliation. There is very little evidence in the text that relates to examples of living prisoners of war and their treatment, but there is clear evidence that they were killed, sometimes in the most inhumane fashion, *I saw them literally stamped and ground into the earth*. Such examples of excessive force and brutality in killing on both sides in the war abound in the text.

Whilst there were Islam communists among those sent to Afghanistan, they were not used as their motivation to fight against followers of the Islam faith was typically low and they often deserted (Harley, 1980). The statement here ... *Allah Akbar - Allah is great!* could be used ironically by the narrator or to undermine those of the Islam faith.

Prisoners of war are often an encumbrance placing strain on logistical provisioning which, in this context, were already stretched thin, as discussed in more detail elsewhere in this theme. The situation described in *Zinky Boys* is that the limited contingent of Soviet soldiers were already hard-pressed to get enough rations for its own personnel in Afghanistan. Medical supplies and daily necessities were in short supply and if they were to be shared with prisoners of war it would mean that there would be less to cater for own forces.

Regrettably, it was not only prisoners of war who suffered this fate, but in some instances children were also victims of callous and barbaric behaviour from both sides of the war. In the following sub theme this aspect of violence against children is illustrated.

Violence involving children

Continuing in the following paragraphs, I reflect on some of the acts of violence perpetrated against and by children in Afghanistan. These acts of violence are particularly noticeable as I have the strong view that children should be protected in all instances and have the right to a safe environment. Additionally, that the behaviour of children be monitored by adults who should be raising them to be responsible citizens. The reality of war, though, is that many children are orphaned, and are left to fend for themselves without any special rights or privileges afforded them. Often they are the victims of violence, especially during situations where conflict abounds.

In one instance, such violence is described by **narrator 09 Private Artillery Regiment**, who remembers that when they had arrived hungry at a village they had claimed the right from some of the women there to be provided a meal. This right is in accordance with the local custom, that when a visitor arrives hungry, he has the right to be provided with a meal, but when they left, *the other villagers beat them and their children to death with sticks and stones. They knew they'd be killed but they didn't send us away.* Here it is the death of women and children by the hand of their villagers which is particularly shocking. The reason for this type of behaviour may be that the women were deemed to be assisting (in obedience to their own laws and customs) Soviet soldiers, who were regarded as the enemy of especially the rural population of Afghanistan who were themselves very traditional and not in favour of a Sovietised Afghanistan. It is particularly tragic that the children who are deemed to be

minors and who had no party to the decision or any veto rights, were killed on account of the behaviour of their mothers and the elder women in attendance.

In yet another example of violence against children, **narrator 03 Private Grenadier Battalion** tells of how, when their truck broke down, the driver of their truck was stabbed in the back with a knife by a ten-year-old boy while the driver was peering into the engine bay to see what the problem was. The response of the soldiers who were with the driver was to shoot the boy ...*we turned that boy into a sieve. If we'd been ordered to, we'd have turned the whole village to dust.* Their conditioning as soldiers was unconditional obedience to following instructions, even if it meant razing villages and killing civilians, as the narrator says “[e]veryone was part of it over there: men and women, young and old, kids”. This lack of discernment between hard and soft targets is reiterated by **Narrator 05 Nurse** who states:

Narrator 05: Nurse

Sometimes we massacred a whole village in revenge for one of our boys. Over there it seemed right, here it horrifies me. I remember one little girl lying in the dust like a broken doll with no arms or legs...

In the context of the *Gewaltraum* of Afghanistan, what would not seem right in the Soviet Union, is deemed as acceptable behaviour, or as grounds for an act of revenge, as Narrator 5 states, *there it seemed right, here [in the Soviet Union] it horrifies me.* The act of a massacre of the village as a whole would also include the killing of children, which is particularly shocking, as is the reference to the little girl lying there *like a broken doll with no arms and legs.* The problem in this instance, other than that children are killed, is also that the punishment is not proportionate to the crime as is contained in the Latin expression *maxim culpa poena par esto.* The Soviet reaction is extreme in nature and beyond reason and requirement, in that they massacred a whole village for one soldier that was killed, which further strengthens the public perception of them as unheroic aggressors who were merely killing and

murdering while in Afghanistan. Perhaps the reasonable thing would have been to track and eliminate or capture those responsible, and not raze the whole village.

In the following extract of the narrative provided by narrator 47 Private Intelligence Corps a particularly horrifying example of violence against children is found:

Narrator 47: Private Intelligence Corps

Only once something snapped inside me and I was struck by the horror of what we were doing. We were combing through a village. You fling open the door and throw in a grenade in case there's a machine-gun waiting for you. Why take a risk if a grenade can sort it out for you? I threw the grenade, went in and saw women, two little boys and a baby in some kind of box making do for a cot.

The tragic reality that emerges from this example is that the guerrilla tactics practiced by the mujahedeen as revealed in the text of *Zinky Boys* is to hide behind soft targets, or civilians, and to strike from there against an armed force. This brought about a hardened retaliatory approach by the Soviet soldiers, who in turn, would revert to indiscriminate killing. In ordinary conflict situations, for example, one would not go into a room or hut with maximum force, such as throwing in a grenade that does not differentiate whom it kills. One would first allow civilians to flee the building before throwing a grenade in. This shows how hardened the armed forces had become in their tactics that they no longer valued the life of women and children. The private in this instance has some qualities of redemption in that he was *struck by the horror of what we were doing*. He now has to live with that on his conscience until his own death, and it is these ghosts of the past that often bring about difficulties for these combatants to adapt successfully to ordinary civilian life.

The author of *Zinky Boys*, Svetlana Alexievich, provides some reflective thoughts on the text in the **49 Postscript Notes from my Diary** in the book:

49 Postscript Notes from my Diary

The machine-gunned and abandoned villages and ruined land are not on their consciences but on ours. We are the real murderers, not they, and we murdered our own children as well as others.

Alexievich's comment is an indictment on the conscience of the Soviet Union as a whole, who in its following of the Brezhnev Doctrine tried to Sovietise Afghanistan, which it viewed as a Soviet ally since Mohammed Daoud Kahn became President of Afghanistan following a successful coup in overthrowing the last monarch of Afghanistan, Mohammed Zahir Shah. With such a violent birth from the 1973 coup, followed by the vicious 1978 coup after which Taraki had implemented his Marxist policies and established the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, the legitimacy of the Soviet nature of the country had always been a bone of contention, especially by the more traditionalists who clung to the Islam faith. The accusation that the Soviets are *the real murderers...and we murdered our own children as well as others* is a claim that shook the Soviet ideal to its core.

Sub Theme 6.2.4 Emotional strain suffered by forces and their families

The *Gewaltraum* of Afghanistan is not only tangible in the life experiences of individuals or the expressions of violence in their behaviour, the horror of war, and the violence against POWs and children, but also in the emotional impact that the violence had on individuals. In the following extracts, the emotional strain and coping mechanisms of individuals can be seen.

Narrator 05 Nurse tells of how men committed suicide due to their inability to handle the stress associated with the conditions in Afghanistan.

Narrator 05: Nurse

Once an officer came to visit us from Kandahar, where he was stationed. That evening, when it was time to say goodbye and leave, he locked himself into an empty room and shot himself. They said he was drunk, but I'm not so sure. It was very hard living like that, day in, day out. One young soldier shot himself at his guard-post after standing in the sun for three hours. He'd never been away from home before and he just couldn't take it. Lots of them went crazy. To begin with they were on the general wards but later they were put in secure wards. Many ran away; they just couldn't bear the bars. They preferred to be with all the rest. I remember one young chap. 'Sit down,' he said to me, 'I'll sing you a demob song.' He just sang and sang until he fell asleep, then woke up: 'I want to go home, I want to go home to Mum. I'm so hot here . . . ' He never stopped asking to go home.

Whilst it is not the purpose of this theme to discuss Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), *per se*, as the discussion is on the emotional impact of the war on its participants and proxies. Therefore, it is appropriate to refer to an article that appeared recently in *The Moscow Times*. In the article, Saradzhyan (2020) reports:

[a]ccording to a book by KGB officer Vladimir Garkavy, who completed multiple tours of duty in Afghanistan, “despondency, apathy and despair have become the companions of many veterans.” Garkavy wrote that some 500 veterans of the Soviet war in Afghanistan committed suicide in 2007 alone.

In broadening the interpretation of the extract before burrowing into selected focal points, it is necessary to say that the emotional impact of such a war is not always immediately apparent. Often it can only be seen in the onset of PTSD in the participants of the war, both armed forces and inhabitants of the country. In the article published in *The Moscow Times* the occurrence of suicides of veterans appears to be a common reaction to their incapability to deal with the emotional burdens that the war has left with them. This may partially be the result of institutional violence in a government that does not allow veterans their full benefit, such as those in the early years who had no entitlement as the Soviet Government was in denial about there being a war in Afghanistan. It is

also because of the shame associated with the war and the public enmity that the veterans had to endure upon their return once the nature of the war became public knowledge. As identified in Chapter 3 of this thesis, Astapenia (2013) points out that the soldiers of Belarus could not identify with the need for the war in Afghanistan and were of the opinion that the Soviet involvement was “a point of shame and disgrace”. This made the participants very unwelcome in society.

The narrator expresses her understanding when the officer from Kandahar commits suicide whilst on a visit to their base, by shooting himself. She says *[i]t was very hard living like that, day in, day out*. This is an acknowledgement of the hardship endured and an inability to channel the emotional impact appropriately. She further mentions the soldier who shot himself while on guard duty. Instead of expressing anger at him she rationalises his suicide by stating *[h]e'd never been away from home before and he just couldn't take it. Lots of them went crazy*. The *Gewaltraum* of Afghanistan was too much to bear for some of the soldiers who were looking for a way out of it, trying to escape. There were those discussed earlier in this chapter who practiced self-mutilation in an attempt to be sent home.

This is not an uncommon feature of war, as there are documented reports about soldiers in World War One, who were sent back home after being wounded, often in the hand. It transpired that those wounded in such a way would deliberately show their hands above the trenches and would then be ‘wounded’ and sent back from the front. The narrator remembers that there were several soldiers who had ‘gone crazy’ and were receiving treatment in hospital. In particular, she recalls one young soldier who sang her a song about demobilising out of the army *'Sit down,' he said to me, 'I'll sing you a demob song.'* *He just sang and sang until he fell asleep, then woke up: 'I want to go home, I want to go home to Mum. I'm so hot here . . .'* *He never stopped asking to go home*. The relevance here is that he did not merely choose any song, but

he chose to sing her one about him demobilising, going back home after his service. This is indicative of his desire to be done with his military duty. When he woke up he kept expressing his desire to go home, and saying *I'm so hot here*, which is another indication that the heat was unbearable for some of the soldiers, especially those who came from colder areas of the Soviet Union. Soldiers such as the one she is citing as an example are not worth much in the front lines or under conditions of battle as they have become disconnected with the task at hand and are incapable of functioning in such a way that they would protect themselves and their fellow combatants in hostile engagements.

Narrator 15 An Army Doctor recalls the difficult conditions in theatre that led to emotional strain for the nurses.

Narrator 15: An Army Doctor

We did operations you could only dream about back home. The young nurses couldn't take it. Some of them just laughed or else cried hysterically. One simply stood there and did nothing except smile. They often had to be sent home.

Some of the inexperienced young nurses who did not have much experience in hospitals or in dealing with trauma were adversely affected by the site of some of the severely wounded soldiers. The narrator states *young nurses*, which means they are lacking in experience. Often younger nurses would not yet be married, or have children and families to tend to back in the Soviet Union, making them more appropriate candidates for service in Afghanistan. However, they would be lacking in experience, as pointed out by the narrator doctor.

Because of this lack of experience they had no coping measures in place to deal with the sight of severe trauma. The narrator describes them as either crying hysterically or laughing. They would be shocked into inaction and could therefore not participate by assisting in the operation, and most often had to be sent home, as they could not cope with the severe conditions in Afghanistan.

The war in Afghanistan impacted emotionally both on soldiers and their support services in Afghanistan, as well as on people at home in the Soviet Union. Narrator 39 NCO in the Security Service is a female narrator who remembers grown men crying.

Narrator 39: NCO in the Security Service

Once I saw six coffins laid side by side: Major Yashenko, his lieutenant and soldiers. The coffins were open, and they lay there with sheets over them; you couldn't see their faces. I never thought to hear men cry, even howl, the way they did there.

The interpretation of emotion in the broader context is accommodated in Fisher's description of the features of the narrative paradigm. In Chapter 4, I write about the four features of the narrative paradigm, counting among them, the dichotomies of modernism, which accommodates the notion of reason-emotion, and narratives as moral constructs. In making their arguments there is rational-emotional appeal, and direct use of emotion as an expression of meaning, as in the extract provided above to show the emotional impact of events on the participants in the war. The narrator in her interview uses the expression *Damn you Afghanistan!* four times to curse Afghanistan and the life she had there. In the context of her narration, she is no longer emotionally at peace with herself and repeatedly questions herself about her involvement in Afghanistan.

The narrator describes the scene where six coffins were laid out containing the remains of a major, his lieutenant and men who were killed in action. Even though they were covered, the soldiers who were there showed their emotions and cried. The statement by the narrator that brings the emotional impact of the scene home is her amazement at hearing men cry, and even howling. Men are stereotyped as being emotionally strong when there are occasions for tears, and this is what the narrator is implying here. She is in disbelief about men

crying, and even howling with grief; it is something that she has not experienced before.

In yet another example of emotion the same narrator relates the incident of a young female who was in tears in the clearing centre in Afghanistan. When she was asked by the narrator about her condition she said *'I've got everything I could possibly want at home - a four-room flat, a fiancé and loving parents.'* *'Why are you here, then?'* *'I was told things were going badly here, that it was my duty.'* This is a clear case of the patriotic indoctrination that your Soviets were saturated with, the notion that one has a duty towards and owed a debt to the motherland. The young woman who had everything she could ever desire was overcome by her feelings of patriotism and felt she had to fulfil her duty to help in Afghanistan because things were going badly.

In the text of *Zinky Boys* a recurring feature is the emotional connection that is made with maternal figures. **Narrator 05 Nurse** describes the suffering endured by the wounded soldiers in hospital. *'Mum!' they screamed, 'Mum!' when they were frightened and in pain. Always, always for their mothers.* She returns to this point later in her interview, stating *'Mum! Mum!' they'd shout, and I'd lie to them, 'I'm here.'* *We became their mothers and sisters, and we wanted to be worthy of their trust.* The narrator uses the words *frightened and in pain* to describe the emotional state of the wounded. When there are emotions of fear when they are going through an ordeal that they have not experienced before, they call out to their mothers and also when they are experiencing pain. In the lines extracted from the narrator's transcription, she tells how she and her fellow nurses would lie to the soldiers in an attempt to comfort them, by soothing them with their words of assurance. She says *we became their mothers and sisters*, providing emotional support to the soldiers who were half-crazy with fear and pain, often in the process of dying. As the narrator states, there was no intent to deceive as she says...*we wanted to be worthy of their trust.* The point that is

made here is that the emotional support to a soul in despair is what was needed and that is what the nursing staff provided to the critically injured soldiers.

It is perhaps most succinctly summarised by narrator 23 Major Propaganda Section Artillery who provides the following viewpoint.

Narrator 23: Major Propaganda Section Artillery

You look at a dead soldier and think of his mother. I know her son's dead, you think, and she doesn't- yet. Could she sense it? It was even worse if someone fell into the river or a ravine and the body wasn't found. The mother would be told he was 'missing'.

This was the mothers' war, they were the ones who did the fighting. The Soviet people in general didn't suffer much. They were told we were fighting 'bandits'. But why couldn't a regular army, 100,000 strong, with all the latest equipment, defeat a few disorganised bandits after nine long years?

In this extract, the narrator speaks of the dead soldiers and the thoughts of the survivors who wonder whether the mother could sense the death of her son. In these cases where soldiers are killed in action, their mortal remains are sent back home for interment. However, in some instances their bodies could not be found or retrieved. Not enough of them was found, or they would be missing having fallen off a cliff-side into a ravine or they were washed away in a fast-flowing river. These mothers had nothing to bury and that was, in the context of *Zinky Boys*, a terrible fate to befall the mothers.

In my interpretation, it is the next statement by the narrator that is crucial as it summarises what the emotional experience of the war was like for the people back home. While he says the Soviet people did not suffer much back home, he contrasts it with the mothers of the soldiers sent to Afghanistan: *[t]his was the mothers' war, they were the ones who did the fighting*. In many respects, the frequent references to the mother figure in the text of *Zinky Boys* is indicative of the close relationships forged between mothers and sons. The narrator does not portray it as a war for soldiers, and neither is it a war for the people back

home, but it is *a mother's war, they were the ones who did the fighting*. This is indeed the case as the literature discussed in Chapter 3 supports the case made for the *Committee of Soldiers' Mothers* that fought to bring the truth about the war into the public sphere. They were the ones exposing the practice of *Dedovschina* in the press (Elkner, 2004). They were the ones exposing the cost of the war in Soviet lives (Ackerman and Galbas, 2015). They were the ones appealing to the Soviet Government questioning the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan and the emotional impact it had on their psyche (Chernyaev, 1985). They were the ones as mothers of war victims seeking justice for their dead sons by accentuating the grief of mothers to the public (Kalinovsky, 2011). In short, the mothers were questioning the *jus ad bellum* principle, whether the war in Afghanistan was justified or not. In Chapter 3, I refer to the fact that there was a collective opposition against the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, which should be considered in this context.

The narrator asks a rhetorical question in the extract cited *[b]ut why couldn't a regular army, 100,000 strong, with all the latest equipment, defeat a few disorganised bandits after nine long years?* It is a difficult question to answer having to do with the levels of motivation of the invader versus the defender of a homeland. Even deeper yet, at the ideological level, it is a war for the Afghan people fighting to protect their faith and way of being against the ideology of Communism which is destroying a way of life that has perpetuated for centuries in Afghanistan. The defense of Afghanistan by the mujahedeen thus has a deeply rooted cultural and religious foundation that is not easily sacrificed to the attempts at Sovietisation by the Soviet Union.

In the next extract provided by narrator 16 A Mother, I present the mother's anguish about the war and her son's death. I have selected this extract as a representation of the general sense of the emotions of the mothers who share their narratives in *Zinky Boys* as I see it as representative of their collective argument, instead of discussing each one individually.

Narrator 16: A Mother

That was three years ago, and we still can't bring ourselves to open the suitcase full of his things that they brought with the coffin. They seem to have his smell about them, even now. He died almost immediately from fifty shrapnel wounds. His last words were, 'It hurts, Mama.'
What did he die for? Why him? He was so affectionate, so kind.
These thoughts are slowly killing me. I know that I'm dying - there's no sense in going on. I force myself to be with people, I take Sasha with me, I talk about him. Once I gave a talk at the Polytechnic and afterwards a student came up to me. 'If you'd stuffed less patriotism into him he'd be alive today,' she told me. When I heard that I felt ill and fainted.
I gave that talk for Sasha's sake. He can't be allowed to just disappear like that...
Now they say it was all a dreadful mistake - for us and for the Afghan people. I used to hate Sasha's killers . . . now I hate the State which sent him there. Don't mention my son's name. He belongs to us now. I won't give him, even his name, to anyone.

The narrator-mother recalls the repatriation of her son's remains some three years earlier to the time of the interview. She is still unable to face the reality of what happened as she avoids handling his belongings that are packed in the suitcase lest they bring back memories of her son. She can still smell her son's presence in his belongings; therefore, she does not want to handle his personal effects, as the memories that are evoked by her senses are too strong and painful to bear. The emotional impact of the memory of her son is difficult to bear for the mother and evokes a sense of empathy with the reader for the loss of her son.

She divulges what little information she has about her son's death, that *[h]e died almost immediately from fifty shrapnel wounds. His last words were, 'It hurts, Mama.'* The emotional bond with the maternal figure is shown to be consistent with the earlier analysis in this chapter, in that the mortally wounded soldiers who are capable of communication, turn their thoughts and emotions to their mothers. This brings about an emotion of pity for the mothers and their sons

with the reader. In the words of Chernayev (1985) whom I quote from his diary in Chapter 3:

The main message: why do we need this, and when will it end?! (sic) Women are writing, pitying the young men who are dying and suffering mentally there. They are writing that if “this is so necessary,” then send volunteers, at least the commissioned, but not the recruits; because being there and doing what they must do mutilates their souls.

The narrator-mother asks the same question *What did he die for? Why him?* She questions the justification of his death, and what was to be gained by his death in Afghanistan. She has no answer to the question why he had to sacrifice his life and not having returned alive. These issues are now mutilating the soul of his mother. She says *[t]hese thoughts are slowly killing me. I know that I'm dying – there is no sense in going on.* The mother is morbidly depressed and declares she has no reason to keep on living. She forces herself to be in the presence of others, to interact with them, and to keep the memory of her son alive by talking about him. She even gave a talk at a Polytechnic about young men doing their international duty, just to keep his memory alive and in the present with others, to prevent him (her memory of him) from disappearing.

The narrator-mother bemoans the fact that the justification of the war is questioned when she says *[n]ow they say it was all a dreadful mistake – for us and for the Afghan people.* The lack of justification now makes the death of her son meaningless. If he had died for a cause, it would be meaningful to the mother, but since there is no justification for his death, in answer to her earlier question *[w]hat did he die for?*, she now experiences hatred. Where she at first hated her son's killers, she now hates *the State which sent him there.* She directs her anger at the Soviet Government, which is the agent who sent her son to war, and whose policies of Sovietisation and International Duty, are indirectly the cause of her son's death.

The most difficult truth that the mother has to deal with comes from another female, a student at the Polytechnic, who accosted her with the claim that *If you'd stuffed less patriotism into him he'd be alive today*. It may be a fair accusation against those individuals who felt the need to volunteer out of patriotic duty, but in the context of *Zinky Boys* these mothers who grieve for their deceased sons are those whose sons were drafted as recruits. However, in the time-frame of the 1980s the Brezhnev Doctrine was still firmly entrenched and not widely questioned (Ackermann and Galbas, 2015). The narrator-mother, now confronted with the issue of patriotism and the Soviet Union's stance that the war in Afghanistan had been a mistake, is angry and wishes to keep and protect the memory of her son to herself. Therefore, she concludes *[h]e belongs to us now. I won't give him, even his name, to anyone*. In sharing her memories and making her opinion known, the mother confronts the reality of her situation, and speaks the truth of what happened and what she thinks about it. In this instance, she acts as a speaker of the truth, and her narrative, being similar to those of the other mothers in *Zinky Boys*, lends fidelity to her claims and is stylistically coherent as it compares well with other narratives offered by mothers.

In Chapter 4 of this dissertation, I ask the question "...what motivated the mothers of soldiers to speak out, to act as *parrheisiastes*? Was it motherly love for their child or grief, or perhaps a desire to expose the propaganda of government of the day?" I refer there to the mothers speaking out as *parrheisiastes* or 'truth speaker', which means that one is candidly speaking the truth when facing authority. In *Zinky Boys*, as is also evidenced in the extract provided, I find that the mothers fulfil this function of *parrheisiastes*, or truth speakers. The function of these narrator-mothers is to lend compelling good reasons to their case through establishing fidelity in their arguments as well as probability, arguing against the Soviet Union's attempts of Sovietisation in Afghanistan at the cost of the lives of their sons.

The war in Afghanistan had a calculated emotional impact devised by the actions of the mujahedeen as reported in *Zinky Boys* through the mutilation of captured Soviet troops. In narrating a phone call interview with one veteran of the war, Alexievich reports him in her entry *The First Day* as follows:

0.25 The First Day

'Just leave it alone! My best friend, he was like a brother to me ... I brought him back from a raid in a plastic bag. His head cut off, and his arms, and his legs, and all flayed - yes, skinned. He used to play the violin and write poetry. He should be writing now, not you ... His mother went mad two days after the funeral. She ran to the cemetery at night and tried to lie down with him. Just leave it alone! We were soldiers. We were sent there to obey orders and honour our military oath. I kissed the flag ... '

The narrator-caller is begging the author to leave the reporting of the war alone. The statements that she was bringing into the public sphere were illuminating the actions of the Soviets in Afghanistan and the events that transpired there. These reports contrasted starkly with the romanticised view that the Soviet population had about war, which they gained during the Great Patriotic War. On Alexievich's website *Voices from Utopia* an opinion about the impact of the book appears as follows: "The book was a bombshell and many people could not forgive the author for de-mythologizing the war." Therefore, she was attacked on numerous fronts, including this caller who lambasted her for publishing these facts.

The soldier was brought back from a raid by the narrator; however they were too late to save his life as he had already been mutilated and killed in the most gruesome manner. He was dismembered, decapitated and also had been flayed. The narrator puts the events into stark contrast and makes the report even more emotional by stating the deceased *used to play the violin and write poetry*. The impression that is created is that this was a gentle person, an artist, who did not deserve such a cruel and violent death.

The image of an undeserved death is loaded emotionally by him adding that the deceased's *mother went mad two days after the funeral*. The mother could not bear the thought that her son was dead and did not have any way to deal with that emotion. The narrator-caller tries to frame the agency of the armed forces in Afghanistan against the ideological framework that they *were soldiers*. *We were sent there to obey orders and honour our military oath. I kissed the flag...* The implication here is that he tried to counter Alexievich's publication by restoring honour to what they were doing, that they were patriotic, they were obeying orders, or were obedient to authority. I have discussed this in Chapter 4 (Cf. Section 4.5) in reference to Milgram's Theory of Obedience to Authority. The implication here is that he was trying to win back justification for their actions and to recover a sense of honour and respect for the veterans of engagement in Afghanistan.

In another brief extract that I wish to refer to, **Narrator 05 Nurse** recalls *[d]ead bodies with gouged-out eyes, and stars carved into the skin of their backs and stomachs by the mujahedin*. The acts of mutilation are intended to inspire fear and desperation under the Soviet forces and create a sense of despair even to me as a reader of the text. It is no wonder then, that some soldiers would shoot themselves rather than fall into enemy hands, as reported by **Narrator 15 Army Doctor** who recalls *[y]esterday I read in the paper about some soldier who'd fought until his last bullet and then shot himself*. Shooting oneself is preferable to being captured and mutilated as described above.

6.3 A THEMATIC INTERTEXT – RESTORYING THE GEWALTRAUM OF AFGHANISTAN AS PORTRAYED IN ZINKY BOYS

In this section of the chapter, I present a thematic intertext derived from the foregoing analysis of the theme, *Gewaltraum Afghanistan*. This section of the chapter in particular aligns to and contributes to the achievement of research objective three, which aims to interpret the intertextual narrative of the text. As explained in Chapter 4 of this thesis and as a reminder to the reader, I followed a production-oriented intertextual reading of *Zinky Boys* based on the description of the *intentio operis* as provided by Alkier (2005). This entailed an intertextual reading of the text inclusive of “political, geographical, and social knowledge” (Alkier, 2005). The text was read in the context of its “time and culture of the production of the text” (Alkier, 2005). I have therefore endeavoured to find and reproduce the common story on a thematised basis, as extrapolated from the fragmentised contributions of the whole, or in other words, from the individual narratives that each contribute to telling the story of *Zinky Boys* as whole.

The intertext lays the groundwork from which the public moral argument derives, therefore it forms an important part of the analysis. Each intertext that was yielded by a thematic textual analysis in this manner was used in combination with the other themes as a final source from which the public moral argument results.

6.3.1 Preparation

The narratives presented in the text of *Zinky Boys* are indicative that recruits underwent a process of forced psychological change to adapt to life in the army, which fits in the context of Goffman’s description and his definition of a total institution, as portrayed in his work *Asylums* (1968). This description is inclusive of the breakdown of the barriers that separate the individual and public spheres

of life. Life in the Limited Contingent of Armed Forces and in Afghanistan was controlled by the same authority (ranking officers) representing the Soviet Government, leading troops to live lives filled with repetitious routines geared towards achieving the aim of the Soviet Union, namely the ideological Sovietisation of Afghanistan. In the last instance, it is portrayed in the data as Soviet citizens being obedient to their motherland.

The data additionally suggest that the military training that the recruits received was not adequate in all instances. In addition, factors that undermined their level of preparedness include that there was no clarity and honesty provided by the Soviet Union about the involvement of the Soviet Army in Afghanistan in the public sphere. As presented by the data sets, however, there is clarity that they were engaged in a full-scale guerrilla war with the mujahedeen for which the Soviets were underprepared. Further, the selection of Soviet recruits for deployment in Afghanistan was based on a drafting system, and other than those recruits or professionals who volunteered for duty in Afghanistan, the recruits had no say in their being sent there by the motherland.

The troops were not well-prepared for Afghanistan's terrain which provided severe challenges to the Soviets. Chief among those were the climatic conditions of heat and thirst that the troops had to endure in the semi-arid terrain, as they were accustomed to the more moderate temperatures experienced in the Soviet Union.

6.3.2 Ideological positioning

In the early years of the war the textual analysis shows that the Soviet Union did not honestly acknowledge their involvement in Afghanistan, and tried to portray it as support to the Afghan government which was fighting off rebels who were not aligned to its policy of Sovietisation. The evidence from the text is that there was strong international support for the cause of the mujahedeen as is shown

by arms and supplies originating from several western countries that were captured by the Soviet forces.

The patriotic viewpoints that were held by many Soviets have come under the spotlight in the text and appear to be questioned in some instances, especially since it became known that the Soviet government later publically admitted that the invasion into Afghanistan was not justified. In the Soviet Union, the war in Afghanistan and the veterans of that war are not as highly revered as those who participated in the Great Patriotic War (WWII). At the same time, the ideological and cultural conviction of the Afghan people proved too deeply rooted for the Soviet attempts to reform them to a Sovietised lifestyle.

From the analysis of the textual data of *Zinky Boys*, it is clear that maternal relationships are of importance to the soldiers and mothers alike. Mothers whose interviews are included in *Zinky Boys* fulfil the role of *parrheisiastes* or 'truth speakers'. In that role they lament the unnecessary deaths of their sons and question the justification of the involvement of the Soviet Army in Afghanistan. These mothers exert pressure on the Soviet Government in contesting voices to cease military intervention in Afghanistan. The war is not supported by the mothers at home.

6.3.3 Ontological considerations

In extracting ontological considerations, I first refer the reader back to Chapter 4 (Cf. Section 4.2), in which I discuss Heidegger's concept of 'Being', the *Dasein*. In this view, our sense of existence of ourselves and the realities that we experience, constitute who and what we are. These remembered experiences in the narratives of individuals make up the phenomenological consciousness of the veterans and individuals who were interviewed. The text of *Zinky Boys* provides windows of opportunity to interpret the 'hermeneutic phenomenology', which means the ontological meanings of the human condition in the *durée* of

the social space of *Gewaltraum* Afghanistan can be considered in the intertext as they apply to this particular theme. Under this heading, I discuss the psychological state of being of the armed forces, their suffering, and limited references to retributive acts, which I deem part of their *Dasein* in this context.

In the analysis of the narratives it is clear that life in Afghanistan had a pattern of routine and blurred the lines of individual's private and public spheres. These soldiers functioned in a *Gewaltraum* that offered beautiful landscapes, which were symbiotically hiding lurking death in the form of mines, ambushes, and conflicts with the mujahedeen. The data suggest that Soviet soldiers underwent severe and traumatic psychological change in which the ethical sets with which they were raised were discarded. In its place, they became ethically and morally blunted as the reality that they were experiencing was irreconcilable with the Sovietisation propaganda they had been exposed to. An ontological state of existence of practicing violence and armed force being the only means with which to achieve objectives was perceived to be justified.

In this ontological state and the *durée* of the social space of *Gewaltraum* Afghanistan, they took on a different attitude to death and so they were transformed into effective killing machines – to take a life was no longer a psychological problem to most Soviet combatants. Their psychological change and attitude to death permeated through to a disregard for human life and the lives of the civilian population. The scale of violence practiced by the Soviets at times far exceeded the minimum force required and became an addictive state of being.

Whilst there was a strong tendency to perceive themselves as being loyal to the motherland, the Soviets dehumanised the Afghan local population and the mujahedeen. This sense of 'othering' opened the door to perceptions that their violent and abusive behaviour was justified, resulting in them harassing citizens and trading caravans. The razing of villages and the massacre of civilians are

not unusual features in the textual data, as are acts of indiscriminate killing of animals. This indiscriminate killing permeated through into taking the lives even of children during their raids on villages. The war in Afghanistan was particularly violent and often prisoners of war were not treated in accordance with established principles of warfare, such as the stipulations of the Geneva Convention of 1929. These prisoners were often killed in acts of revenge and from the Afghan side; captured Soviets were often mutilated in very cruel and violent fashion. In exacting revenge, sacred rituals such as funerals were at times not spared the violence. In a particularly horrifying example of revenge killing present in the data, members of the Afghan society exacted revenge upon those who assisted Soviet soldiers, at times even killing their people for having assisted the Soviets.

Whilst the physical conditions experienced in Afghanistan posed their own problems, associated health-related issues, such as tropical illnesses presented, as did scurvy due to poorly constituted meals offered to the Soviet soldiers in the early years of the war. Deviant behaviour by soldiers and officers alike was not in all instances appropriately punished, instead, there was a general sense of condonation as officers too, took part in deviant behaviour. Specific examples were repeatedly found in the data set that indicated that Soviet soldiers sold off equipment to the local population to get money to buy food, drugs, alcohol, or to access items available in the markets that were not available in the Soviet Union. These items were either smuggled back into the Soviet Union or confiscated by corrupt customs officials who kept the confiscated goods for personal enrichment.

Contributing factors that helped make *Gewaltraum* Afghanistan a difficult place to survive in, included the poor levels of support endured by the members of the Soviet contingent who were deployed in the conflict zones. Especially during the early part of the war, there were inadequate supplies available to the Soviets, contributing to the deviant behaviour of selling off equipment. In particular, the

shortage of medical equipment and medicine contributed to the unnecessary loss of Soviet lives. To overcome these shortages of medical equipment the Soviets used captured supplies in their place. In instances where supplies were available it was not unusual to find that these were obsolete or had exceeded their shelf life. An argument is made that the Soviet Union did not successfully support the war effort logistically in Afghanistan.

In describing the suffering that the Soviets had to endure in Afghanistan the data analysis supports the view that the soldiers suffered horribly, both psychologically and physically. Events associated with the war inflicted traumatic scars on their being and sense of self, at times resulting in raw exhibitions of emotion by soldiers such as crying. In some instances the emotional strain and fear of death prompted some soldiers to engage in acts of self-mutilation so that they would be withdrawn from active duty, and in other instances, others committed suicide. In some instances, soldiers were incapable of handling the stress inflicted by the *Gewaltraum* that was Afghanistan, and committed suicide. Some did so years after having returned 'safely' back as veterans to the Soviet Union. Suicide was an option that was sometimes exercised by soldiers about to be captured by the mujahedeen, rather than to be subjected to brutal mutilation at the hands of the mujahedeen. Soviet soldiers who were captured were mutilated and killed, a practice that spurred revenge-killing by the Soviets, who at times did not spare livestock and civilians, inclusive of women and children.

The witnessing of violent acts and the death of their comrades inflicted traumatic scars within soldiers, often triggering wholesale revenge killing of innocents. The use of landmines and mines placed in ambush was commonplace, inflicting excessive damage upon victims. Evidence from the text supports the accusation that the mujahedeen at times used ammunition, such as hollow-nosed bullets, which would inflict maximum injury. The Hague Convention of [1868] (Article 23 (e) of the Hague Regulations on land warfare of

1899 and 1907) prohibited the use of this type of ammunition. Adding to the trauma, the bodies of combatants were sometimes so mutilated and torn apart by explosions that it was difficult to reassemble corpses, and to position body parts with the appropriate corpses. The medical personnel who had to treat the wounded were at times emotionally incapacitated due to excessive emotions of shock and horror, or physical exhaustion. This was much like some soldiers who developed mental conditions due to too much stress, necessitating their withdrawal from active service; these medical personnel too, had to be sent back home.

Analysis shows that many amputees who were involved in landmine explosions found it difficult to adjust to civilian life, and often lost their purpose in life and some suffered broken marriages as a result of the psychological trauma that they could not channel appropriately. In addition, support for amputees with prosthetic devices was often very rudimentary and crude.

A strong emotional connection with maternal figures is prevalent in the text, with frequent examples of soldiers who were mortally wounded, crying out to their mothers. The mothers of soldiers in Afghanistan endured a lot of anxiety for the safety of their sons, and are portrayed as being incapable of processing the death of their children in the Afghan war.

6.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter contains a thematic analysis and interpretation of the first theme that was derived during the coding and theming process of reading *Zinky Boys*. The polyphonic voices that make up the total collection of the narratives contained in *Zinky Boys* were codified following an *a priori* approach in which the narrative texts were analysed in *NVivo 12*. Each of the narratives was classified as a case and read again. During this process, paragraphs or extracts were coded into meaning-making significant units and labelled. Following this, a

code book was generated to establish which of the coded units could be grouped into sense-making themes, allowing the nodes that were used to suggest logical themes. Whilst there was no overt attempt at duplicating the themes found in the survey conducted in Chapter 3, there were several opportunities to allow my interpretation of the themes to be guided by the findings of that thematic presentation.

The textual analysis of the first theme, *Gewaltraum Afghanistan*, resonates with references to violence in the text of *Zinky Boys* as well as aspects of violence discussed in Chapter 3. In mind mapping the theme for its thematic presentation it became clear that four sub themes were needed to present the violence of this period in an appropriate structure. To ensure that sufficient background is established in the context of the text, I chose to first discuss the sub theme *Life in Afghanistan*. This sub theme highlights the conditions under which the Soviet forces were expected to work and presents the view that they underwent a process of total institutionalisation (as presented by Goffman in his *Asylums*), not only to life in the army, but also life in Afghanistan. The findings are that though the landscape of mountains, poppy fields and rivers held beauty, death was lurking ever near in potential ambushes, mines and conflict with mujahedeen forces. The armed forces learned to subscribe to new behavioural trends with a changed frame of reference that usurped the ethical framework that they were raised with as individuals. Conditions were physically challenging, especially the heat to which the Soviet troops were unaccustomed, as well as a lack of medical and essential supplies which meant that the soldiers often improvised to improve their position and life conditions as they were poorly supported by the motherland. This included illegal transactions by stealing and selling off equipment in order to secure food or drugs. Alcohol, smoking and drug addiction became a serious problem for these forces.

The second sub theme *Expressions of violence during the conflict* portrays the violent behaviour of the Soviet forces who suffered not only in the context of the

war, but underwent psychological behavioural change to become addicted to violence. The findings are that the soldiers no longer found the use of violence or killing problematic. They dehumanised the Afghan population and the mujahedeen, essentially regarding all Afghan people as bandits, and therefore legitimate targets for killing. The soldiers perceived themselves to be loyal to the motherland, but became ethically and morally desensitised and blunted to the value of a human life. Their sense of survival ensured a conditioning that subjugated them to a baser, savage conduct whilst in Afghanistan. One such example that features prominently is the razing of villages that occurred either as indiscriminate killing or in retribution.

The third sub theme *The horror of war* deals with the violent nature of the war in Afghanistan and the casualties that this inflicted on both on the soldiers and civilians. The narrators express horror and shock at the scale of violence and the deeds that were committed. It is also the trauma inflicted on the psyche of the soldiers and support personnel that draw attention. A clear viewpoint from the medical personnel deployed in support of the Soviet soldiers depicts the suffering of the wounded and the frustration experienced due to the lack of proper facilities, equipment and supplies. The frequent use of mines in the war and the resulting injuries and victims who now live as amputees is showcased, as is the poor aftercare offered to these victims. The analysis further points to the ill-treatment and killing of prisoners of war as well as children.

The fourth and final sub theme of this thematic discussion is entitled *Emotional strain suffered by forces and their families*, and portrays the emotional, human suffering of not only the soldiers, but in particular, their mothers back home in the Soviet Union. Often the violence that the soldiers had to endure created such a deep sense of conflict, that some of them committed suicide. The strong longing by the soldiers to be at home is another aspect that features strongly in the analysis. The emotional impact is not only evident in the lives of the soldiers, but particularly so in the lives of their mothers in the Soviet Union. One

of the most significant findings of the analysis is derived from a statement made by narrator 23 Major Propaganda Section Artillery who states *[t]his was the mothers' war, they were the ones who did the fighting*. This sub theme portrays the close emotional relationship between the soldiers and their mothers, as well as the suffering endured by them.

The analysis culminates in the construction of a thematic intertext in which I re-story the *Gewaltraum* of Afghanistan as portrayed in *Zinky Boys*. This was made possible by revisiting the four sub themes and interpreting what the analysis of the extracts said. These interpretations were written down and imported into *NVivo 12* for coding and theming, resulting in the three intertextual headings that summarise the theme as a whole and present the text from which the public moral argument was extracted. The intertext narrates the lack of preparation for their deployment in Afghanistan, and their ideological positioning which shows them to be patriots, but deceived by their government. The ontological considerations form the largest component of the resulting intertext that suggests that the Soviet contingent underwent severe changes in their sense of being and identity. Here their psychological state of being in the armed forces feature strongly, including the emotional and physical suffering, and severe and traumatic change that they underwent to their being. The difficulties in adjusting to civilian life for those maimed and psychologically scarred by the war feature in the restorying of the narratives, as does the challenges offered to mothers who had lost their sons in the war.

The value of the intertext that was derived through a restorying of the narratives and their analyses in this chapter is that it was read and analysed together with the thematic intertexts that derived from the remaining four themes. The sum of the intertexts provided the basis from which the public moral argument was derived that is discussed as a conclusion to the analyses presented in the data chapters.

CHAPTER 7: THEMATIC ANALYSIS: AGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN AND THE SOVIET UNION

We vets are called Afgantsi. I hate the name. It's like being branded - it marks us out as different from everyone else. But different in what way? Am I a hero, or some kind of an idiot to be stared at? Or even a criminal?

Interview: Private, Grenadier Battalion in *Zinky Boys*

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The second major theme is about agency in Afghanistan. Here, I describe and interpret the agency of Soviet personnel which manifested in acts of corruption and bribery, a greediness to obtain western manufactured goods which were not available in the Soviet Union at the time, as well as government acts of abuse committed against their own troops and women. I am indebted to Elliott (2013) who has advanced the notion of *suffering agency*, which provides a suitable nomenclature for the suffering endured by those Soviets who were involved in the war in Afghanistan and had to make tough decisions. Elliott describes it as "... forms of suffering that unfold at this intersection of interest, choice, and agential action—a mode of political experience that I term suffering agency" (2013:84). Elliot (2013:89) elaborates on *suffering agency* as follows:

When life is reduced to minimal elements and self-preservation is at stake, the operations and consequences of agency become magnified. Not only is the import of human actions intensified in such situations, but the subject's interest in preserving his or her life leads to limit-case decisions and deeds that would be otherwise unthinkable; the actions that result are both the result of legitimate individual choice and utterly undesired. Rather than being deflected or disguised within a field of ideological forces, such actions are accompanied by a searing perception of the consequences of individual action and the seemingly inescapable links between cause and effect, interest and choice, agency and responsibility.

This description provides a useful canvas that serves as a backdrop and understanding of human behaviour in the discussion of this particular theme. As will be seen below, the agentic state in which the narrators found themselves

was brought on by their devotion to the Soviet Union and their obedience to authority. An agentic state is defined by the APA Dictionary of Psychology (2020) as “a psychological condition that occurs when individuals, as subordinates to a higher authority in an organized status hierarchy, feel compelled to obey the orders issued by that authority”. This explanation is taken into consideration together with Bourdieu’s (1985:725) notion of relational and intrinsic properties (Cf. Section 4.3.1), which describe the power relations within social spaces.

However, driven by their self-preservation needs in a situation that did not have an abundant supply of ethically and morally sound options, they fell into a baser state of self-preservation, kill-or-be-killed. The moral consequences of the actions that flowed from their decisions that they took during this time haunted them upon their return to the Soviet Union and their struggle to reintegrate into society, especially with the Soviet State reneging on its responsibility as causal agent for the war. The analysis in this chapter reflects this state of being of suffering agency.

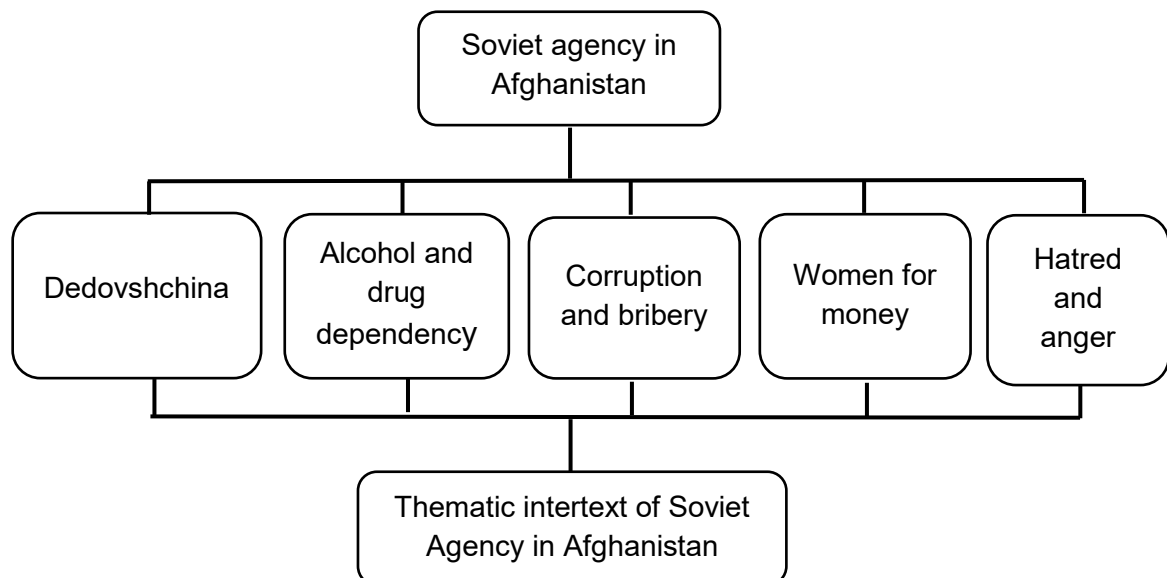


Figure 7.1 Mind map of the theme Soviet Agency in Afghanistan

7.2 THEME 2: SOVIET AGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN

The concept of agency is discussed in Chapter 4 (Cf. Section 4.5). In it, I make the point that agency implies human action in given social contexts, as it is assumed that humans act in response to the co-presence of other human beings. Indeed, as Giddens (2010:2) postulates, that aligned to the theory of structuration in social sciences, there are “social practices ordered across space and time” which are recursive in nature. It resonates strongly with the thought that, not only am I a product of culture, but I am also a contributor to generating culture through cultural interaction. *Dedovschina* is such a cultural practice of the Soviet Army as presented in *Zinky Boys* as I demonstrate below. In its tradition, this is how recruits achieve emancipation from their dehumanised existence as recruits.

Sub Theme 7.2.1 Dedovshchina

Violations of service relationships is a theme that emerged in six of the narratives during the codification process. An analysis of this sub theme is important as it links up with the subaltern counter narrative of voices that spoke up through civic movements such as the *Committee of Soldiers’ Mothers*, which did much to expose the abuse that young recruits were facing in the military (Elkner, 2004). Whilst *Dedovschina* was initially kept out of the public sphere, it did find prominence in the public agenda later in the 1980s (Maklak, 2015; Van Bladel, 2004). The abusive behaviour did not only occur during training, but continued when these troops were sent to Afghanistan. The following extracts illustrate this point, beginning with the narrative of narrator 11 Sergeant Major medical instructor in a reconnaissance unit.

Narrator 11 Sergeant Major Medical Instructor Reconnaissance Unit

There was this slogan: 'Afghanistan makes brothers of us all.' Crap! There are three classes of soldier in the Soviet army: new recruits, 'grandads' or veterans, and dembels, conscripts nearing the end of their two-year service.

When I got to Afghanistan my uniform was smartly pressed and neatly tailored to my own measurements. Everything fitted perfectly, buttons glistening, tapered jacket, the lot. The problem was, new recruits aren't allowed to have tailored uniforms. Anyway, one of these dembels came up to me. 'How long've you been here?' he asked me.

'Just arrived'. 'New recruit? Why're you dressed up like that?' 'Don't let's fight about it.' 'Listen, boy, don't get me angry. You've been warned!' He was used to people being frightened of him.

That evening the recruits were washing the barracks floor while the dembels sat around smoking. 'Move the bed!' ordered the dembel. 'It's not my bed!' I said. 'You still haven't cottoned on, have you?' That night they beat me up, eight of them, and gave me a good kicking with their army boots. My kidneys were crushed and I pissed blood for two days. They didn't touch me during the day. I tried not to antagonise them but they still beat me up. I changed tactics: when they came for me at night I was ready for them and hit out first. Then they beat me very carefully, so as not to leave a mark, with towel-covered fists in the stomach every night for a week.

After my first tour of active duty they never touched me again. They found some fresh recruits and the order went out: 'Leave the medic alone!' After six months recruits graduated to veteran status.

In Chapter 3, I argue that *Dedovschina* is a violent practice perpetrated by Soviet soldiers within the *Gewaltraum* of Afghanistan, where “violence was the dominant resource”, as made clear by Behrends (2015a:173). The important point here is that the practice of *Dedovschina* is violence by own forces against younger recruits within the Soviet Army. Whilst the agency involved negative, harmful and dehumanising actions against fellow soldiers, it also involved a positive aspect, namely that it served as a “rite of passage” (Maklak, 2015:694).

The narrator remembers how he was abused by fellow soldiers when he arrived in Afghanistan the first time as a medic in the armed forces. He makes the case that *[t]here are three classes of soldier in the Soviet army: new recruits, 'grandads' or veterans, and dembels, conscripts nearing the end of their two-*

year service. He makes it clear in his narrative that a soldier retains the status of a recruit for six months, before ‘graduating’ to the status of veteran, or ‘grandad’. *Dembels* are conscripts who are nearing the end of their two-year compulsory service in the military.

The value of the extract represented above lies in the establishment of the status of veterans and *dembels*, and the descriptions of the violent agency that was waged against new recruits. The narrator was physically beaten and injured, sustaining damage to his kidneys. Though he tried to defend himself, he was unsuccessful as they beat him up under cover of darkness, later they did it in such a way that it would be difficult for him to prove assault on his person. Covering their fists in towels, they beat him up every night for a week long.

The narrative establishes the factual occurrence of attacks on the person of younger recruits who were still within their first six months of deployment. The practice was used to establish the ranking of different classes of soldiers according to the time that they may have spent in the military forces. It serves as a social organising system as Maklak (2015:682) explains that *Dedovschina* was viewed by troops as a “functional tool of self-organization within the otherwise dysfunctional military institution and stressed the values of endurance and maturation central to male identity”. As stated by narrator 30 Private Gunlayer in the extract below, *The 'rule of the grandads' doesn't depend on individuals -it's a product of the herd instinct. First you get beaten up, then you beat up others*. The statement shows how deeply ingrained the practice of *Dedovschina* was, that it became an ‘unwritten rule’ among the soldiers in the Soviet Army. The extract provided below provides credibility to this aspect of *Dedovschina*.

Narrator 30: Private Gunlayer

That was typical of camp life. It took just one year to turn me from a normal, healthy lad into a dystrophic who couldn't walk through the ward without the help of a nurse. I eventually went back to my unit and got

beaten up again, until one day my leg was broken and I had to have an operation. The battalion commander came to see me in hospital.

'Who did this?' he asked.

It had happened at night but I knew perfectly well who'd done it. But I wasn't going to grass. You just didn't grass - that was the iron law of camp life.

'Why keep quiet? Give me his name and I'll have the bastard court-martialled.'

I kept quiet. The authorities were powerless against the unwritten rules of army life, which were literally life and death to us. If you tried to fight against them you always lost in the end. Near the end of my two years I even tried to beat up someone myself. I didn't manage it, though. The 'rule of the grandads' doesn't depend on individuals -it's a product of the herd instinct. First you get beaten up, then you beat up others. I had to hide the fact that I couldn't do it from my fellow dembels. I would have been despised by them as well as by the victims.

The narrator remembers the pain and difficult time that he had to endure in the army while he was in Afghanistan. He had become weakened by the sustained abuse and was eventually hospitalised. He describes his condition as *dystrophic* which is a metaphor to indicate the weakness in his muscles as he needed the aid of a nurse to enable him to walk. The fact that he says he was a *normal healthy lad* belies the description that he uses of himself as *dystrophic*, which is a disease that manifests in childhood, therefore the intention is that he compares himself to those persons who have a weakened muscular ability.

Upon returning to his unit, the beating resumed until he was again hospitalised, this time with a broken leg. It requires a lot of force to break a leg bone and the seriousness of the injury that he had sustained is underscored by the visit of the battalion commander to his hospital bed. His request that the narrator should identify the guilty parties through naming them demonstrates that the practice of *Dedovschina* was not a secret, even the command structures and persons of higher rank were aware of what was happening. His response to this situation was - *I kept quiet. The authorities were powerless against the unwritten rules of army life, which were literally life and death to us. If you tried to fight against them you always lost in the end.* These unwritten rules were so deeply

ingrained through the recurring agency of individuals and groups that it had become a deeply ingrained feature of the system that could not be easily altered. As he states, the army authorities were powerless, and to recruits who complained, it could mean further abuse and even their death. It is not too far-fetched to suggest this, as the literature supports the fact that the practice of *Dedovschina* did result in deaths at times, as can be seen below.

Narrator 35: A Nurse

'What happened to you?'
'I gave him his tea and it had a fly in it.'
'Who's "him"?'
'I took a "grandad" his tea, and a fly flew out of it. They beat me up and didn't let me eat for a fortnight.'
Christ! So much blood being spilt, and they do this to a young soldier far from home.
In Kunduz two 'grandads' forced a new recruit to dig a hole one night and stand in it. They buried him up to his neck, with only his head sticking out of the ground, and urinated over him all night long. When they dug him out in the morning he shot them both dead. The case was the subject of a special Order of the Day, which was published throughout the army.
Christ! So much blood, and they do this.

The narrator-nurse recalls two instances that dealt with *Dedovschina*. The first of these involved a recruit being beaten up and not being allowed any food for two weeks by the veterans and *dembels* who were abusing him. When he had given a veteran his tea, there had been a fly in it. In the discussion of the previous theme the abundance of flies has already been established, and it is highly probable that a fly could have fallen into the grandad's tea. The punishment and revenge that they had exacted upon the recruit, however, is inhuman and excessive. This thought is echoed by the narrator-nurse who exclaims *So much blood being spilt, and they do this to a young soldier far from home*. In conditions where the young soldiers are estranged from the familiar, there is enough blood being spilt without them turning on one another and spilling more blood.

A second, and even more horrifying account is narrated in the extract. In it, the death of two veterans who had forced a young recruit to dig a hole in which they buried him upright, with only his head sticking out, is mentioned. Throughout the night, they abused him horribly by repeatedly urinating on his head. In the morning when he was dug out of the hole, he fetched his rifle and killed the two veterans who had been abusing him. This case became widely publicised in the Soviet Union, but it was not until the early 1990s that knowledge of peacetime deaths of soldiers in the Soviet Army became widely publicised. Elkner (2004) reports the staging of mass protests by soldiers' mothers, who demonstrated publicly, claiming that 15000 soldiers had lost their lives in 'peacetime conditions' during the past four years, which would situate those deaths in the late 1980s, meaning they were not killed by enemy action.

It is not only instances of physical abuse that contributed to the sustained practice of *Dedovshchina*, but the forceful taking of equipment as well. Typically, veterans or *dembels* would accost new recruits and forcefully take items of clothing or food that they had for themselves. Narrator 30, Private Gunlayer remembers:

Narrator 30: Private Gunlayer

It really started at the Gardez clearing-centre, when the dembels took everything of any value off us, including our boots, paratroop vests and berets. And we had to pay: an old beret cost us 10 foreign currency vouchers, a set of badges 25. A para's meant to have a set of five - one to show you're a member of a guards' regiment, the others are the insignia for the airborne forces and your para battalion, your class-number and your army-sportsman badge. They also stole our parade shirts, which they traded with Afghans for drugs. A gang of dembels came up to me. 'Where's your kit-bag?' They poked around in it, took what they wanted and there was nothing I could do about it. All of us in our company had our uniforms taken and had to buy old ones in return. The Quartermaster's department said simply, 'You won't be needing your new togs - they will, they're going home.'

In this instance, it involves seizing the equipment of new recruits, which would still be in a relatively new condition. The narrator describes how items of clothing, including their boots and parade shirts were taken. The *dembels* would open the clothing bags of the new arrivals in Afghanistan and take what items they wanted for themselves. The troops then had to buy replacement equipment, often in a second-hand condition and not of an appropriate size.

A disturbing comment by the narrator demonstrates that everybody in his company had items taken from them in this way, showing that the practice was universally accepted at the time. He reports *[t]hey also stole our parade shirts, which they traded with Afghans for drugs*. Here is another example of troops selling-off serviceable equipment or trading for drugs. These incidents were well-orchestrated as the narrator says *a gang of dembels came up to me*, which indicates that this was group-orchestrated agency by the more established soldiers.

Narrator 14 Private Gunner remembers how, when he arrived in Afghanistan a *dembel* who was returning home demanded his belt from him ... *a dembel going home on the same plane gave me a shove. 'Give me your belt!' 'Why should I?' It was my own belt, foreign-made. 'You idiot, they'll take it anyhow.'* Such was the fate of these young recruits arriving in Afghanistan, their lives were made miserable and they suffered abuse at the hands of fellow soldier who had been there for some time already.

Not only were the soldiers beaten up and robbed of their equipment, but they had to engage in tasks to the amusement of the grandads and *dembels*, even doing abusive household chores, as remembered by narrator 30 Private Gunlayer.

Narrator 30: Private Gunlayer

I was the only 'new boy' in our unit, the other ten, nearing the end of their tour of duty, were known as 'grandads'. I was forced to do all their washing, chop all the wood, and clean the whole camp - I never got more than three hours' sleep a night. One of the things I had to do was fetch water from the stream. One morning I had a strong instinct not to go - I had a strong feeling the mujahedin had been about that night, planting mines, but I was so scared I'd be beaten again, and there was no water for washing. So off I went, and duly stepped on a mine. It was only a signal mine, thank God, so a rocket went up and illuminated the whole area. I fell, crawled on . . . 'must get at least a bucket of water, for them to clean their teeth with. They won't care what's happened, they'll just beat me up again . . . '

In the narrator's memory that he shared, he describes the tasks that they had to engage in, such as doing the washing, chopping wood, and cleaning the camp, which in this instance led to him suffering from sleep deprivation. This means that the new arrivals were often hard-used by the grandads and *dembels*, even treated like slaves.

The narrator remembers an incident where he had to fetch water from a stream for the *dembels* to do their ablutions. Despite a fear that he had about the mujahedeen possibly laying an ambush at the stream he feared being beaten up again by the *dembels* more than a possible enemy ambush. He summarises the sentiment held by the *dembels* and their agency in the following sentence: *They won't care what's happened, they'll just beat me up again...* It is this attitude and behaviour which characterised the behaviour of the grandads and *dembels* towards the recruits.

In the extract provided below a mother remembers how she felt about her son being called up to Afghanistan.

Narrator 12: A Mother

Then they took him off to the army. I prayed he wouldn't be killed. I prayed he wouldn't be beaten up and humiliated by the bigger, senior ones- he was so small. He told us how they could force you to clean out the toilets with a toothbrush and wash out other people's underpants. That's what I was afraid of. He wrote and told us he was being posted and to send him photos of his mum and dad and sister...

The narrator-mother explains that her son was called up for military training, suggesting he did not go voluntarily, with the words *[t]hey then took him off to the army*. Her first concern is for the safety of her son, that he would not be killed, but in the very next sentence she expresses another fear, that he would not *be beaten up and humiliated by the bigger senior ones...* With this statement she shows her awareness of the practice of *Dedovshchina* in the military.

She supports that statement by repeating what her son had told her about how they could be treated. They *could force you to clean out the toilets with a toothbrush and wash out other people's underpants*. This suggests what she was she was afraid of and what she saw as humiliating.

In applying Fisher's fidelity and probability tests, the finding is that the various narratives about these incidents help to establish the credibility and factual accuracy of the practice of *Dedovshchina*, confirming that this was indeed repetitive behaviour in the military. The agency of the more established troops included abusive behaviour towards the newer recruits. This practice was not limited to the troops only, as is indicated in the memory shared by a civilian who was a medical doctor and bacteriologist.

Narrator 25: Doctor Bacteriologist

Well, I felt as though I were flying into outer space. Back home everyone at least has their own home they can make into their little fortress, but we slept four to a room. The girl who worked as a hospital cook used to bring meat she'd stolen from the canteen and hide it under the bed.

*'Wash the floor!' she orders me.
'I washed it yesterday, it's your turn today.'
'I'll give you a hundred roubles to wash that floor.' I say nothing.
'I'll give you some meat.'
I say nothing. Then she takes a bucket of water and empties it over my bed. They all burst into laughter.*

The narrator describes the feeling of alienation that she experienced while in Afghanistan by likening it to flying into outer space. She claims she had no safe space or her own home that she could make into a little fortress. She had to share her living space with three other women and had a lack of privacy.

The other women were ordering her around and were trying to get her to behave in a subservient manner, similar to the way that the older troops were abusing the younger ones. Though she was not physically beaten up, she was subjected to intimidatory behaviour by the other occupants of the room who all laughed at her when the one emptied a bucket of water onto the narrator's bed. This meant she did not have a dry bed to sleep in. It was a way of taking revenge on her and punishing her because she would not wash the floor.

In the social context of the *Gewaltraum* of Afghanistan it is clear that not even the barracks were regarded to be safe spaces for recruits and support staff, as abusive behaviour by longer-serving persons was tolerated. These social practices, or the agency of these individuals were of a recursive nature (Cf. Giddens, 2010 discussed in Section 4.5), because that is the same behaviour that they had experienced when they were younger recruits. In practicing this agency they are reinforcing and giving shape to the future behaviour of those who are on the receiving end, thus perpetuating and confirming the recursive nature of their agency.

Sub Theme 7.2.2 Alcohol and drug dependency

The occurrence of drug addiction was already discussed in Chapter 3 in the context of the survey of literature on the Soviet-Afghan war. In the text of *Zinky Boys* there is support for the theme of drug dependency and alcohol abuse. Narrator 03 Private Grenadier Battalion provides context:

Narrator 03: Private Grenadier Battalion

I don't know anyone who's come back from Afghanistan who doesn't smoke and drink. Weak cigarettes don't help either - I buy the Okhotnichy brand we smoked over there if I can find them. We called them 'Death in the Swamp'.

The narrator makes the statement that he does not know of any of his comrades who returned from Afghanistan, who does not smoke and drink. In the context of the extract, he is referring to strong cigarettes, the stronger the better. This statement demonstrates their need for stimulants that would help them to cope with the psychological stress in the given social context of the situation that they had to endure in *Gewaltraum* in Afghanistan. As I have explained in Chapter 4, the actions performed by agents are not acts committed in isolation, but in context. Therefore, the *durée* of ontological awareness in the *Gewaltraum* of Afghanistan formed the context within which individuals required stimulants to pass the boredom and deaden the pain and impact of continued exposure to violence.

In one of the narratives in the text, narrator 25 Doctor Bacteriologist states *[v]odka flowed like water at the centre*. She refers to one of her roommates who *drank only pure alcohol*, saying *'[v]odka's just too weak love! It doesn't do a thing for me.'* The implication here is that vodka is not strong enough to numb her senses sufficiently. Other narrators refer to soldiers getting drunk and losing themselves in drink. Narrator 21 Artillery Captain remembers how vodka was smuggled into Afghanistan.

Narrator 21: Artillery Captain

Once a week we had bath and drinks night. A bottle of vodka cost 30 cheki, so we brought it with us from home. Customs regulations permitted two bottles of vodka, four of wine but unlimited beer, so we'd pour out the beer and fill the bottles with vodka. Or else you might open a bottle of mineral water and find it was 40° proof! People drank used aeroplane kerosene and antifreeze. We'd warn new recruits not to touch antifreeze, whatever else they drank, but within a few days they'd be in hospital with their insides corroded.

The narrator explains that vodka was very expensive in Afghanistan, therefore they would bring it in from the Soviet Union. At the customs checkpoint they were allowed to bring in two bottles of vodka and unlimited beer, therefore they would buy beer bottles, but fill them with vodka, which was then smuggled into Afghanistan. The new recruits were warned against drinking substitute liquids, such as used aeroplane kerosene and antifreeze, as those chemicals affected one's health. The narrator indicates that the new recruits would often end up in hospital because they would ingest antifreeze and used aeroplane kerosene. The information provided by the narrator attests to the desperate need experienced by the soldiers in Afghanistan to escape their situation, that they would utilise any opportunity that would improve their experience or sense of ontological being. Where alcohol would not be effective in deadening the senses, some soldiers would use marijuana or opium to achieve an effect of improved well-being.

Narrator 05 Nurse describes the use of drugs by the Soviet contingent in Afghanistan and the effects that it had on them.

Narrator 05: Nurse

There was a lot of opium and marijuana smoked, and whatever else they could get hold of. It made you feel strong and free of everything, especially of your own body, as if you were walking on tip-toe. Every cell

in your body felt light, and you could sense each individual muscle. You wanted to fly and you were irrepressibly happy. You liked everything and would giggle at any old nonsense. You discovered new sights and sounds and smells. For a moment you could believe that the nation loves its heroes! In that kind of mood it was easy to kill - you were anaesthetised and had no pity. And it was easy to die, too. Fear disappeared and you felt you had a magical flak-jacket that would protect you...So they'd smoke themselves into a stupor and go into action. I tried it a couple of times myself, when I was at the end of my tether but I just had to carry on.

The narrator provides an important baseline with her statement *[t]here was a lot of opium and marijuana smoked, and whatever else they could get hold of*. The importance here in the context of the text, is that it is not only cigarette smoking, but any form of opioid classically derived from the poppy plant, perhaps more commonly known as opiates, or other drugs such as marijuana, which is a depressant which counteracts anxiety and sleep problems. She remembers in her interview how the soldiers *sold their blankets and bought opium*. In the extract the effects of taking drugs and depressants are described as an excessive sense of well-being and happiness. Some of the receptors or senses of the body were enhanced causing one to discover *new sights and sounds and smells*.

The second part of the extract is very revealing in the statement she makes *[f]or a moment you could believe that the nation loves its heroes!* The sense of well-being is such that it suppresses the ideological conflict that the soldiers had about their involvement in the war, and made them feel like heroes who were appreciated by their home country. However, the intertext of *Zinky Boys* provides a counterargument that these soldiers were not appreciated back in their home countries, and were not regarded heroically.

The change that these opioids and drugs have on the body is to suppress one's ethical and moral constraints. As the narrator states, *[i]n that kind of mood it was easy to kill – you were anaesthetised and had no pity*. Given the earlier

description of obedience to authority, which was already ingrained into the behaviour of these soldiers, the added effect of such drugs would make them obey orders that are classified as forms of institutional violence, which typically include obeying aberrant orders. The accompanying euphoria made the soldiers feel invincible and reckless, causing unnecessary deaths. The narrator-nurse states *[s]o they'd smoke themselves into a stupor and go into action*. The effect of this was that it would suppress the natural feeling of fear that one would normally experience in such situations of armed conflict. Another effect that the narrator mentions, is that it gives one endurance to carry on when you no longer have energy. She states that she had tried it herself when she *was at the end of my tether but I just had to carry on*. There is a corroborative view expressed by **narrator 11 Sergeant Major Medical Instructor** who remembers *[w]e spent most of our time running away from a guerrilla gang and only survived on dope*. As opioids not only provide a sense of euphoria, but also additionally suppress the pain receptors, this is a highly feasible scenario, which I know to be true from witnessing similar incidents as a conscript in the military.

Narrator 21: Artillery Captain recalls:

We smoked hash. One friend of mine got so high in battle he was sure every bullet had his name on it, wherever it was really headed. Another smoked at night and hallucinated that his family was with him, started kissing his wife. Some had all-colour visions such as in a film. At first the traders in the bazaar sold us the stuff but later they gave it us for free. 'Go on, Russky, have a smoke!' they would say. The kids would run after us, pushing it into our hands.

In this extract the narrator confirms the use of drugs during battle and the hallucinate properties that these had, from imagining certain death to having your family with you. There is confirmation in the literature surveyed in Chapter 3 and also in the extract that hashish, or *hash* as abbreviated in the text, could be obtained from traders in the bazaar. These encounters and the drug dependency of the Soviet troops were soon exploited by the Afghans who understood that the use of these drugs would diminish one's combat

performance. Therefore they started pushing drugs into their hands, encouraging them to use them. The problem here is that these troops would become addicted to using these drugs. As Astapenia (2013) points out, it resulted in drug addiction in the Soviet Union – “Soviet soldiers en masse became drug addicts -- and they brought this habit back home with them”. Kamienski (2017:225) describes the use of drugs by soldiers as a “collective ritual, which strengthened community bonds and increased communal trust”.

The inexperience of the Soviet soldiers in the context of drug usage is underscored by the comment made by **narrator 23 Major Propaganda Section Artillery Regiment**, who recalls the recruits *were keen to try anything. They wanted to know what it felt like to kill, to be scared, to take hashish*. The use of these drugs did not have positive effects. Instead of heightening performance, it provided a false sense of security and made what was familiar to appear strange, making *the world even more frightening for them*. Almost half of the soldiers who demobbed from Afghanistan were in need of psychiatric treatment for post-war conflict and complications from drug usage (Kamienski, 2017:226).

Drugs were not only used in Afghanistan, but some of them were exported back home to the Soviet Union, at times in the most unscrupulous manner. **Narrator 28 1st Lieutenant Battery Commander** reveals how drugs were smuggled out of Afghanistan. *Did you know that drugs and fur coats were smuggled in in coffins? Yes, right in there with the bodies!... You can't believe such things of our glorious Soviet boys? Well, they could and did happen...* This is yet another instance showing disregard for the dead soldiers whose bodies were sent home in zinc coffins, which were then used as hiding places in which to smuggle contraband goods.

In revealing these facts about the agency of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, the narrators provide a subaltern text to the popularised and romanticised

picture of heroism and patriotic duty that is often associated with wars in films and books. The text de-romanticises the appeal of victory during war and reveals that in their agency these troops showed themselves to be weak human beings who were easily swayed by the hardship that they had to endure and the escapism offered by alcohol and drugs. In filtering these narratives for Fisher's fidelity and probability tests, there is overwhelming evidence emanating from the various narratives that consistently portray the image of soldiers grasping at opioids and alcohol as coping mechanisms in their difficult existence.

Sub Theme 7.2.3 Corruption and Bribery

In the introduction and translator's preface to *Zinky Boys* the translators write:

An additional cause of resentment was the rumoured ability of certain privileged members and sections of society to buy their sons out of danger. Finally, readers without first-hand experience of the Soviet Union may be struck by the almost obsessive interest in imported goods and clothes revealed by a few of the speakers. This simply reflects the fact that in an economy where almost any item used in daily life may be impossible to find, or appallingly shoddy, or just plain drab, such scarce articles can command enormously high prices and confer prestige on their owners.

In the extracts that follow, I focus mostly on acts of corruption and bribery as examples of the agency of not only those within Afghanistan, but also of the wealthy families who ensure their sons are not deployed to Afghanistan. I include a brief discussion on their fascination with imported goods from western markets because this craving that they had to gain access to those goods stimulated deeds of corruption and bribery by those agents wanting those goods.

Getting home was difficult for many of the soldiers who were deployed in Afghanistan. Narrator 21 Artillery Captain tells of this struggle:

Narrator 21: Artillery Captain

'Back from Afghan? Want a girl? I've got one for you as soft as a peach, dear... ' 'No thanks, I'm trying to get home on leave. To my wife. I need a ticket.'

'Tickets cost money... D'you want to sell your Italian sunglasses?' 'It's a deal.'

To get on the plane to Sverdlovsk cost me 100 roubles, those Italian sunglasses, a Japanese lurex scarf and a French make-up set. In the ticket-queue I learnt the way things worked: 'Why stand here for days? Forty vouchers slipped into your service passport and you'll be home next day.' I get to the ticket-window. 'Ticket for Sverdlovsk.' 'No tickets. Open your eyes and look at the board!' I slip the forty vouchers in and try again. 'Ticket to Sverdlovsk please, miss.' 'I'll just go and check. Oh, lucky you came by, we've just had a cancellation.'

The narrator-captain provides information on the harrowing ordeal that the conscripts suffered at the hands of the personnel manning the ticketing stalls in Tashkent. Tashkent is the capital city of Uzbekistan, and was used as a training base by the Soviet Union from which point aid was deployed into Afghanistan. Uzbekistan is the northernmost neighbour of Afghanistan. When troops demobilised they flew home or took a train or any form of conveyance they could afford, back to their home countries in the Soviet Union. Many services were offered at this centre, including comfort women as indicated by the narrator.

Troops who tried to obtain transport back home were exploited, and often had to pay more than the normal price for tickets and often had to part with the non-regulatory issue items that they had obtained in Afghanistan. In the extract provided, the narrator indicates he had to pay a steep price. *To get on the plane to Sverdlovsk cost me 100 roubles, those Italian sun-glasses, a Japanese lurex scarf and a French make-up set.* In addition, he had to bribe the ticketing officer with forty foreign currency vouchers. The basic pay for a soldier was 270 foreign currency vouchers. This is yet another example of institutional violence which dishonoured the involvement of the young troops in the Soviet-Afghan war, by

forcing them to pay for their transport back home, at the very least one would expect that they would be issued with a free travel voucher to get to their destination.

The exemplar provided above establishes the factual accuracy that corruption was deeply embedded in the Soviet system of governance, as is indicated in Chapter 4. In an incident of a similar nature, **narrator 32 Private Tank Crew** indicates that he and three other soldiers were trying to buy tickets in Tashkent. The standard practice for ticketing officials was to say the train or plane was already fully booked. In the case of the narrator-private, they bribed the conductor, who found them seats on the train. *That evening four of us slipped 50 roubles each to two conductors, who - lo and behold - found us seats in their train. They got 100 roubles each, nice work if you can get it, but we didn't care. We were laughing like madmen and thinking, 'We're alive, we're alive!!'*

From the data extracted it is clear that the desire to get home was strongly rooted in returning troops and the officials took advantage of this fact. It is further established that bribing officials was not an uncommon feature in the Soviet landscape at this time, as other examples of bribery and corruption are also evident in the text, such as those provided which indicate that parents who could afford it, bribed their sons out of doing duty in Afghanistan.

Narrator 31, A Mother, recounts the following incident:

Narrator 31: A Mother

My neighbour kept getting at me - and perhaps she was right. 'Couldn't you scrape a couple of thousand roubles together and bribe someone?' We knew a woman who did exactly that, and kept her son out. And my son had to go instead. I didn't realise that I could save my son with money. I'd thought the best gift I could give him was a decent upbringing.

The narrator states that she was being harassed by her neighbour who indicated that she should have bribed an official to prevent her son from going to Afghanistan. In such instances the official would merely select another individual to replace the one that was now assigned to service elsewhere in the Soviet Union. In the case of the narrator-mother cited above, her son was frail of build and a registered patient of the state until he was 18 years old.

In the extract the mother's patriotism is clear in that she states the best she could do for her son, was to *give him a decent upbringing*. This would be in the Soviet tradition of being loyal to the Soviet Union and its communist ideals, which is why the son ultimately went to do his patriotic duty in Afghanistan, where he was killed. **Narrator 27 A Mother**, shares an encounter that she had with another mother at the time when new conscripts were being selected to go to Afghanistan. *She told me she'd come with a large amount of money, ready to pay off someone who'd make sure her son wasn't among them. She went home a happy woman, and her last words to me were: 'Don't be a naive idiot!'*

It is clear that some parents could afford the money and participated in the practice of paying off an official to ensure that their son would receive another assignment. The preparedness of the mother in coming to Ashkhabad at the opportune time with money to bribe an official shows that in some circles this was public knowledge and acceptable practice. However, not all parents could afford to 'buy-out' their children from being deployed to Afghanistan, as it was mostly children from ordinary working class families who were sent to the war. In the introduction to the text of *Zinky Boys* the translators state:

In the USSR it was the children and grandchildren of ordinary working stiffs and outright peasants who served - not the sons of intellectuals, high-ranking executives, or Party officials.

Every Soviet citizen who had to do their patriotic duty and who refused to do so, was severely punished. The punishment was excessively harsh in the case of

professional soldiers, as is the example provided by narrator 23 Major Propaganda Section Artillery Regiment in the following extract:

Narrator 23: Major Propaganda Section Artillery Regiment

Only one of our group of professional army officers, Major Bondarenko, a battery commander, refused. The first thing that happened was, he had to face a 'court of honour', which convicted him of cowardice. Can you imagine what that does to a man's self-esteem? Suicide might be the easiest way out. Then he was demoted to captain and posted to a building battalion as punishment. Then he was expelled from the party and eventually discharged with dishonour. How many men could go through all that? And he was a military man to the bone- he'd spent thirty years in the army.

The extract provided above is self-explanatory and is included to demonstrate that once selected for duty in Afghanistan it was difficult to extricate oneself from that position. While professional soldiers at times volunteered, others who were selected to go, had no choice but to obey, or face the penalty of losing their career, benefits, and party membership. Without party membership in the Soviet Union at the time, it would be difficult to access normal government services, as party members would receive preferential treatment.

In other instances, those who were selected for service often experienced severe psychological anxiety and were desperate not to go to Afghanistan.

Narrator 22 A Mother, tells how the recruits had to move everywhere in groups because *when the lads realised they were going to Afghanistan, some had hanged themselves in the toilets or slashed their wrists*. In yet another example, Narrator 06 Private Driver explains the behaviour of individuals who had learned they were going to Afghanistan:

Narrator 06: Private Driver

It was incredible! Fear and panic turned men into animals -some of us went very quiet, others got into an absolute frenzy, or wept with anger or fell into a kind of trance, numb from this unbelievably filthy trick that had been played on us. That was what the vodka was for, of course, to calm

us down. After we'd drunk it and it had gone to our heads some of us tried to escape and others started to fight with our officers, but the compound was surrounded by troops from other units and they shoved us into the plane. We were just thrown into that great metal belly like so many crates being loaded...

I was in shock from the whole thing - I suppose it took me several months to get back on an even keel. When my wife enquired why I was in Afghanistan she was told that I'd volunteered. All our mothers and wives were told the same. If I'd been asked to give my life for something worthwhile I'd have volunteered, but I was deceived in two ways: first, they lied to us; second, it took me eight years to find out the truth about the war itself.

In this instance, the recruits were told they were going to an alternative deployment, only to learn a few hours ahead of time that they were to do their *duty as soldiers in accordance with our military oath*. The emotional response that is described with the words *fear and panic* describes the depth of emotion that followed upon this announcement. Some *got into an absolute frenzy*, others *wept with anger* and others *fell into a kind of a trance, numb from this unbelievable filthy trick*. This state of affairs shows a measure of desperateness that was felt by the Soviet Union that it had to deceive its troops about their deployment, and was anticipating rebellion.

The narrator explains that they were given crates of vodka to drink to calm them down. However, some had gotten drunk and began to fight with the officers and tried to escape, but were prevented by other troops who made sure they boarded the plane. This is a form of rebellion and a refusal to obey orders; it may even be interpreted to be a form of desertion. At a personal level, the narrator was in shock about the whole thing and states it took him *several months to get back on an even keel*, implying that he suffered psychologically from the events that transpired surrounding his selection to be deployed in Afghanistan.

The treachery of the Soviet government that is revealed in the next few lines is beyond belief. The wives and mothers were deceived with the lie that they had

volunteered for duty in Afghanistan, which is far removed from the truth. The narrator feels deceived in two ways, in the first instance about the lie and secondly, it took him eight years to learn that the war was not justified. His closing statement in his interview is heavy with irony - *Many of my friends are dead and sometimes I envy them because they'll never know they were lied to about this disgusting war - and because no one can ever lie to them again.* The importance of this statement lies not only in the fact that even though some tried to avoid being called-up to Afghanistan, which is unethical in terms of their patriotic upbringing and soldiers' oath, but also in his view that the war is disgusting, and they were lied to about the war itself.

The examples cited here from the data demonstrate that there was insufficient clarity about the Soviet Union's justification for their involvement in Afghanistan, despite the calls by the so-called Communist government in Afghanistan, which requested military aid. There was insufficient buy-in from the general Soviet public and an underlying desperate desire not to be deployed to Afghanistan, so much so that some parents spent large sums of money to have their sons' deployment orders changed, others inflicted bodily harm upon themselves, or even committed suicide. At issue here is the argument that some military officers and party members were so corrupt that they collaborated and provided assistance to some to enable them not to be deployed to Afghanistan. In addition, the acts of bribery that are evident in the data support the view that acts of corruption and bribery formed part of the agency of stakeholders who were directly involved in the non-deployment of troops in Afghanistan.

It is not only the agency of corruption, bribery and avoiding call-up to Afghanistan that draws the attention, it is also the bartering activities that endangered the well-being of those deployed there. Narrator 03 Private Grenadier Battalion explains:

Narrator 03: Private Grenadier Battalion

Or else they bartered. For example, the magazine of a Kalashnikov bought you a make-up set for your girlfriend, including mascara, eye-shadow and powder. Of course the cartridges were 'cooked', because a cooked bullet can't fly, it just kind of spits out of the barrel and can't kill. We'd fill a bucket or a bowl with water, throw in the cartridges, boil them for a couple of hours and sell them the same evening. Everyone traded, officers as well as the rest of us, heroes as well as cowards. Knives, bowls, spoons, forks, mugs, stools, hammers, they all got nicked from the canteen and the barracks. Bayonets disappeared from their automatics, mirrors from cars, spare parts, medals . . . You could sell anything.

The extract forms part of the narrator's focus on the importance of money as a topic that was frequently discussed by the Soviet contingent in Afghanistan. He began by saying that many soldiers picked up items of value when they looted villages or they bought items to take home with them. Another way to obtain valuable items was to trade for them.

The explanation provided by the narrator is that they would trade a rifle's magazine for a cosmetic make-up set. The tradability of the rifle's magazine is understood in the context that he is referring to the Kalashnikov semi-automatic rifle, universally known as the AK-47, which has become the revolutionary's weapon of choice world-wide. The AK-47 is almost ubiquitous on all of the continents where there is armed conflict. They would protect themselves to a limited degree by sabotaging the rifle's ammunition by boiling the cartridges in hot water for a few hours, which would make the propellant wet, rendering the cartridge unusable in conflict. It is not only the ordinary soldiers who were guilty of this agency, but also officers.

Anything that had value could be traded, as is indicated in the extract, and this gave rise to a lot of theft by own forces occurring inside the camp perimeter. In the context of the text of *Zinky Boys*, the data studied points to these activities as a way to get hold of drugs or other items of value that were not readily

available in the Soviet Union. Tape recorders and jeans are frequently mentioned in the text as items that were either bought or traded for. **Narrator 33 A Soldier**, cites an example of a soldier who had stolen a sub-machinegun of one of the deceased soldiers, and then sold it to the Afghans: *He sold it for 80,000 afoshki, and showed off what he'd bought with the money: two cassette-recorders and some denims.*

Narrator 29 Civilian Employee shows the depth of these activities by citing prices that could be obtained in transactions with the Afghans:

Narrator 29: Civilian Employee

You fulfil your international duty and make money on the side. Everyone does it. You buy sweets, biscuits or canned food at the army store and sell it to the local shops. There's a tariff: a tin of dried milk goes for so afoshki, a service cap 400; a car-mirror fetches 1,000, a wheel from a KamaZ truck 20,000. You can get up to 18,000-20,000 for a Makarov pistol; 100,000 for a Kalashnikov; and the going rate for a truck-load of rubbish from the garrison is 70,000-200,000 (depending on the number of cans). The women who do best here are those who sleep with the quartermasters, who live it up while the boys up at the front go down with scurvy and have to eat rotten cabbage.

The narrator makes a point of it that they were fulfilling their international duty, but were busy enriching themselves and it was a universal practise, signalled by the words *[e]veryone does it*. Other than buying canned food and sweets at the army store and re-selling those to the Afghan shops, they would steal car parts and sell those, such as mirrors, wheels, or pistols, semi-automatic rifles, and even the rubbish from the camp had value and could be sold. He uses the example of women who sleep with the quartermasters as those who do best for themselves, while the troops *go down with scurvy and have to eat rotten cabbage*.

Given repetitive narratives about the presence of corruption and bribery from eyewitness accounts, it is both factual and probable that the agents who

partook in these activities would engage in these activities to obtain a better quality of life for themselves. The narratives succeed in portraying a social reality that provides compelling good reasons for the reader to accept these narratives about the behaviour of some Soviet troops as characterologically coherent. The occurrence of scurvy and inadequate food rations has already been discussed in the previous theme, but in this instance, it is worth mentioning that this situation prompted agency of a dishonest nature just to survive the difficult conditions that the soldiers had to endure. These narratives about corruption and acts of bribery and dishonesty provide compelling good reason to accept that this was a social reality that confronted the stakeholders in the Soviet-Afghan war.

Sub Theme 7.2.4 Women for money

One of the recurring codes that emerged from the data provided in the text, involves the position of Soviet women in the military deployment in Afghanistan as is remembered by narrator 10 Civilian Employee.

Narrator 10: Civilian Employee

Why are women so desperate to get here? The short answer's money. You can buy cassette-recorders, things like that, and sell them when you get home. You can earn more here in two years than in half a lifetime at home.

Look, we're talking honestly, woman to woman, right? They sell themselves to the local traders right in those little shops of theirs, in the small store-rooms at the back, and they are small, I can tell you! You go to the shops and the kids follow you, shouting 'Khanum [woman], jig-jig .. . ' and point you to the store-room.

Our officers pay for women with foreign currency cheques, in fact they're called chekists.'

The narrator, herself a woman, ponders the question why women were not honoured for their service in Afghanistan. At the time they were deployed as support personnel to the fighting troops, and were not often recipients of

medals. Many women either inspired by their sense of patriotic duty, volunteered, or as is made clear in the extract, did so for the financial gain to be had. Not being deployed on the front lines did not guarantee them safety from harm, but they were mostly kept out of harm's way. Therefore, many women volunteered for service in Afghanistan.

In the extract provided above, the narrator makes it clear that *[y]ou can earn more here in two years than in half a lifetime at home*. She clarifies that some women who went to Afghanistan did so for the financial gain that was to be had in the situation. Others engaged in acts of prostitution *[t]hey sell themselves to the local traders right in those little shops of theirs, in the small store-rooms at the back*. Even the children were wise to what was happening and would tease them when they would go to the shops. Even the officers were party to this practice and would pay the women in foreign currency cheques. It is not unknown for armies to have 'comfort women' as this is a well-known historical fact that the Japanese Imperial Army had comfort women in their service during the Second World War, although those were often slaves, and did not have freedom over themselves.

In her interview, our narrator tells how she had to fight off the attentions of the Battalion Commander who wanted her to live with him during her stay there. She had to go to extreme lengths to keep him at bay, stating *I had to fight him off for two months. Once I almost threw a grenade at him: another time I grabbed a knife and threatened him with it*. **Narrator 19 Civilian Employee** remembers that she too, had to fight off the Commanding Officer as she was summoned to go to his room at night, but she refused, even though she was threatened that she would be posted to Kandahar, which is known as the most difficult place to be posted to in Afghanistan. However, it is not all women who were threatened by officers, some gave themselves willingly in exchange for money.

Narrator 11 Sergeant Major Medical Instructor remembers one Soviet woman who arrived in Afghanistan - *I've just remembered a girl called Svetka Afoshka. We never knew her real surname, but apparently when she arrived in Kabul she'd sleep with a soldier for 100 Afghanis- or afoshki as we called them- until she realised she was selling herself cheap. Within a couple of weeks she'd upped her price to 3,000 afoshki, which an ordinary soldier couldn't afford.* The surname given to her is *Afoshka*, which was the Afghan currency at the time. Similarly, narrator 35 A Nurse, tells of her memory of women who were engaging in the entertainment of soldiers.

Narrator 35: A Nurse

There was the eternal question, for example, of why so many women were drafted into Afghanistan for the duration? To begin with we were just a bit puzzled when dozens of 'cleaners', 'librarians' and 'hotel workers' started arriving, often one cleaner for two or three prefabs, or one librarian for a few shelves of shabby old books? Well, why do you think? We professionals kept away from such women, although they didn't bother us personally.

The narrator-nurse tells about the high number of women who were drafted into Afghanistan during the ten years that the war lasted. It is not the fact that women fulfilled the roles of cleaner, librarian or hotel worker, but that there was such a high number of them, and then the unanswered question, *[w]ell, why do you think?* The unspoken answer is that they were there to ensure that the physiological needs of the soldiers were satisfied. She and her colleagues who were professional career women, stayed away from those women, and they were not bothered by them either.

In the context of the text of *Zinky Boys* the repeated occurrence of narratives telling of officers demanding that the Soviet women who were deployed to Afghanistan should comfort them, and others demanding money for the same service, provides factual accuracy to these narratives. These narratives compare consistently well with one another, thereby providing evidence of

probability, and taken together, provide compelling good reasons that this was a social reality that was facing women on deployment in Afghanistan.

Sub Theme 7.2.5 Hatred and anger

The data studied provided recurring references to the word 'hatred' in at least nine of the cases. I begin with an analysis of Narrator 05 Nurse's argument that she hates the war.

Narrator 05:Nurse

We went to save lives, to help, to show our love, but after a while I realised that it was hatred I was feeling. Hate for that soft, light sand which burnt like fire, hate for the village huts from which we might be fired on at any moment. I hated the locals, walking with their baskets of melons or just standing by their doors. What had they been doing the night before? They killed one young officer I knew from hospital, carved up two tents full of soldiers and poisoned the water supply...These were our boys they were killing, do you realise, our own boys...We probably survived by hating, but I felt full of guilt when I got back home and looked back on it all. Sometimes we massacred a whole village in revenge for one of our boys. Over there it seemed right, here it horrifies me...Nowadays I don't just hate war. I can't even stand seeing a couple of boys having a scrap in the park. And please, don't tell me the war's over now. In summer, when I breathe in the hot dusty air, or see a pool of stagnant water, or smell the dry flowers in the fields, it's like a punch in the head. I'll be haunted by Afghanistan for the rest of my life ...

In the extract the narrator explains that they had gone to Afghanistan *to save lives, to help, to show our love, but after a while I realised it was hatred I was feeling*. Whilst their intentions were admirable, or even patriotic towards the motherland, those who were deployed to Afghanistan soon came to hate the conditions under which they had to operate, the terrain in which they had to work, and eventually, the war itself. In this instance, the narrator explains her hatred for the villages of the Afghans because of the threat of possible enemy action, which it may at present conceal. It became so bad that she even started hating the Afghans, because whilst they may seem to be innocent or going

about their everyday business, they may have been up to mischief under cover of darkness.

The narrator refers to incidents where Soviet troops were killed and she was angered by this fact. She states that they all *probably survived by hating*, although when she returned to the Soviet Union she felt guilty about her hatred of Afghanistan and its population. With her feeling of guilt came the ability to transfer her anger and hatred from the specific to the generic, as she now hates war, and any associated form of violence. Although the war is over for her, she is still reminded of it when summer conditions prevail. She uses a simile to describe it, *it's like a punch in the head. I'll be haunted by Afghanistan for the rest of my life...* The reminders of the violence that she had been exposed to have become part of her very sense of being, and identity. There is an implied psychological impact as well, as the mundane and normal conflicts that occur in the *durée* of life in social contexts, now stand out as occurrences that make her feel uncomfortable.

Narrator 10 Civilian Employee is a woman who believed in the Soviet cause of doing her international duty to advance the greatness of the Soviet Union. She recalls some of the memories that she had, but as narrator positions herself as a typical Soviet combatant, although she was not herself deployed as a soldier.

Narrator 10: Civilian Employee

*I wanted to be in a war, but not like this one. Heroic World War II, that's what I wanted.
Where did all the hatred come from? There's a simple answer to that. They killed your mate. You'd shared a bowl of chow, and there he was, lying next to you, burnt to a cinder. So you shot back like crazy. We stopped thinking about the big questions, like who started it all and who was to blame?*

In the extract the narrator expresses her desire to be in a war, and echoes the popular Soviet sentiment that those who participated in World War II had done

something laudable. However, she is quick to say *but not like this one*, distinguishing the Soviet-Afghan war as one that is not of the same stature in terms of esteem. This opinion is interpreted in the context of her opening statement in her interview in which she says *[t]here was a time when young people were really capable of achieving something and sacrificing themselves for a great cause*. With the questioning of the justifiability of the war by the Soviet public in general this disparaging view of the Soviet-Afghan war is what grounds her opinion and behaviour.

The narrator identifies the presence of hatred and explains its origin. It was an act of revenge for the losses suffered and estrangement that the troops had to suffer while doing duty in Afghanistan. Her view is overly simplistic *[t]hey killed your mate. You'd shared a bowl of chow, and there he was, lying next to you, burnt to a cinder. So you shot back like crazy*. It is an application of the will to survive, to keep on living and to channel one's anger at the enemy.

One of the important viewpoints that is raised repeatedly in the text of *Zinky Boys* is the acceptance of institutional violence brought on by physical violence in the war. Following instructions without questioning the morality thereof is a feature that emerges strongly from the text. *We stopped thinking about the big questions, like who started it all and who was to blame?...The government is busy with politics while here you see blood all around you and you go crazy*. Without the burden of having to think about the moral implications of their agency, the Soviets could surrender to their baser instincts in reverting to violence as a channel for the anger and hatred at the situation that was confronting them.

Not all of those serving in the military were keen to get involved in Afghanistan, as is stated by **narrator 08 A Military Adviser** who recalls *I remember a kind of anger. Resentment. Why should I have to go? Why is this happening to me?* These questions clearly articulate the unwillingness that he was feeling, at first

there was anger and resentment, which in themselves are strong negative emotions and contrast with those who volunteered out of strong feelings of patriotism towards the Soviet Union. These negative emotions that he experienced are directed not at any individuals, but at the political system of 'doing your international duty' because that is what the motherland demands of you.

Narrator 33 A Soldier, is another soldier who is trying to cope with the intensity of the emotional scarring brought on by his participation in the war, as he remembers:

Narrator 33: A Soldier

We believed we were there to defend something, namely the Motherland and our way of life... If there weren't so many of us, 100,000 in fact, they'd have shut us up, like they did after Vietnam and Egypt . . . Out there we all hated the enemy together. But I need someone to hate now, so that I can find some friends again. But who?

The narrator-soldier admits to believing that he was being a good Soviet citizen who was doing his duty by defending the motherland and the Soviet way of life. The statement shows his awareness of politics in the Middle-East and the encroachment of a way of life represented by the western countries that were establishing links with Afghanistan. He wanted to protect the Soviet way of life, which I understand in its bi-polar geo-political context of East vs West. Additionally, in the context of the extract, the narrator is explaining the difficulties that they are experiencing in the Soviet Union as veterans of the war.

The high number of participants in the war, exceeding 100,000 according to the narrator, allowed them some leverage to fight for their recognition as veterans and standing in society, as well as privileges and rights that accrue to veterans of war in the Soviet society. He refers to Vietnam and Egypt, demonstrating his knowledge of the struggles of veterans of other wars who were not recognised

by their governments. However, for this thematic discussion his admission of the hatred that they had for the enemy is important. Now that he is no longer in Afghanistan, he is still left with the emotional burden of hatred and wishes to channel it somewhere.

Taken in the context of the Russian Public Sphere discussed in Chapter 4 (Cf. Section 4.2.2), this soldier is careful of what he is saying in public, and asks a rhetorical question by saying *[b]ut I need someone to hate now, so that I can find some friends again. But who?* The implication is that having volunteered to go to Afghanistan, he was disappointed because the government disavowed their war efforts and portrayed it differently in the media. The narrator states *[w]hen we read articles in the Soviet press about our 'achievements' we laughed, got angry and used them as toilet paper...* Their happiness of being young people was lost because of the hatred and anger which they had to contend with during the war because of the overwhelming experience of hatred.

The un-channelled hatred that these returning soldier felt is well summarised by **narrator 38 Private** who claims *[s]ome days I just hate everyone I meet in the street or see through the window. I can hardly stop myself... well, let's say it's just as well those customs officers confiscated our guns and grenades.* The hatred that he has been exposed to has changed his sense of balance in life, and his sense of being to the extent that he likens himself to one who was insane for a while as he asks *[w]ho was it described the insane as 'those whom life has taken by surprise'?* However, he has since found an objective way to view himself and was making a new life for himself and his family. The impact of his narrative is summarised by his last sentence, *[b]ut I'd do anything to find happiness again*, which I understand to mean the loss of innocence and happiness that so many young people experience when they are rudely confronted with the hatred fuelled by wars.

In gaining understanding of the behavioural agency of the Soviet troops who were deployed to Afghanistan, the data suggests that the individuals mostly perceived themselves as being in a situation in which they had little control over their destiny, other than to place their hope on surviving, responding to the will to live, and doing what is necessary to survive. Damen, Müller, van Baaren, and Dijksterhuis (2015) describe such conditions in which there is little control by the agent over the situation, as situations of low agency. My argument is that in experiencing the *Gewaltraum* of Afghanistan, and being obedient to the Party, doing one's patriotic internationalist duty, one contributes to positioning oneself in a state of low agency, where there are limited options available to exercise to change one's position. Personal experiences of exercising control are low, absent, or weakened in such conditions, bringing about a shift in agency, therefore, as indicated by Damen *et al.*, individuals are more vulnerable and disposed to answer to any persuasive influence they may perceive as coming from a source of authority over them. Whether it is complying with the abhorrent instructions of the grandads and *dembels*, or in compliance with their upbringing to do their patriotic duty. In my opinion, in such conditions, the agentic behaviour of individuals and groups of individuals who exceed the required force, or use subterfuge or any unsanctioned nature, taking drugs or alcohol, provide the illusion of control for a limited time in which they may ironically be experiencing less conflict with the sense of low agency induced upon them by the situation they find themselves in.

The agentic behaviour of individuals described by their eyewitness memories provide a gruelling factual and believable account of the profound suffering into which they had been immersed, as well as the strong desire to escape and survive their destiny. The strong will to survive and to emerge alive and whole from the *Gewaltraum* provided the stimulus for much of the agency that the data under study suggest.

7.3 A THEMATIC INTERTEXT – RESTORYING SOVIET AGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN

A thematic intertext resulting from the textual analysis of the theme *Soviet Agency in Afghanistan* is presented here. Consistent with the observation made in Chapter 6, the interpretation of the findings in this theme contributes to establishing the intertext that results from the analysis of *Zinky Boys* and aligned to research objective three.

In order not to present the interpretation of the data in such a way that may be misconstrued to be thematically preselected, I represent the intertext as one unit of writing without using sub thematic headings. The presentation of the intertext flows linearly from the data analysis and interpretation presented above.

The analysis of the narratives in *Zinky Boys* indicate that those individuals who have shared their remembered experiences in the text were severely constrained in the options that they could exercise as deployed personnel of the Soviet limited contingent in Afghanistan. Driven by their self-preservation instinct they often had to choose among limit-case decisions and deeds, which they would otherwise have avoided. As troops and support personnel deployed by the State they were bound by their patriotism and sense of doing their internationalist duty.

In the *durée* of their time spent in Afghanistan they experienced an 'agentic state' in which they were compelled to obey the orders of the motherland. Often the range of choices were all unacceptable under normal conditions, but in a state of war inside *Gewaltraum* Afghanistan, decisions holding dire consequences were the only available option. Refusal to do so was met with heavy-handed action at the hand of the State. These individuals were relegated to a political existence of being forced to experience *suffering agency* in the

context of attempts at the Sovietisation of Afghanistan, which would have a lifelong impact on their lives. This impact is understood to mean that they have to live with the consequences of their action in the absence of the culpability of a government, which disavowed not only the war, but also the limited contingent members that it had sent into war.

Upon arrival in Afghanistan, new recruits were abused and intimidated by fellow soldiers (veteran/granddads and *dembels*) in a rite of passage called *Dedovschina*. The agency of violence by own troops included physical beatings and domination by others. In some instances, this led to the hospitalisation of the victims, and in other instances to the death either of those practicing *Dedovschina*, or those victimised in this process because of violent reaction from one of the parties involved. In practicing *Dedovshchina*, deployed soldiers often engaged in the theft by force of equipment from those who newly arrived in Afghanistan, or forcing new arrivals to do chores for others, and causing sleep deprivation.

The practice of *Dedovshchina* was known among the troops as a normal part of experiencing life in the barracks in the Soviet Union during training. It was also known their parents and extended to include even those who saw service in the support services. Victims of *Dedovshchina* would eventually become perpetrators of *Dedovshchina* thereby prolonging the recursive nature of it in the social space as described by Giddens (2010) (Cf. Section 3.1).

The majority of the returning veterans took up smoking and drinking alcohol to help them cope with the stressful situations and at other times, boredom, endured in Afghanistan. Some soldiers smuggled in vodka in beer bottles to get a stronger drink. The narratives support the opinion that a large volumes of opium and marijuana were smoked during the tour of duty of Soviets. Soldiers would even sell off equipment such as blankets, clothing or military hardware to obtain opium.

The use of these opioids and drugs contributed to suppressing healthy ethical and moral constraints – it was easy to kill while under the influence of drugs and troops felt no pity, and showed no resistance to aberrant orders. The use of these drugs also provided enhanced endurance as it numbed the experience of physical pain. The Afghan shop owners would later make hashish freely available to the troops to make them less effective in their duty, thereby becoming easier targets for the mujahedeen.

Mass addiction to drugs is problematic in that the returning troops brought the habit back with them and became a risk and liability to the Soviet State. In some instances, drugs were even exported to the Soviet Union in the coffins of those who had died in action.

Corruption and bribery are common actions in the agency of not only those deployed in Afghanistan, but also those involved in the repatriation of returning troops, or those in position of authority to select troops to be sent to Afghanistan. Many parents bribed their sons out of doing service by paying officials involved in the selection process of troops to be sent to Afghanistan. Mothers would pay officials sums of money to ensure their sons were not sent there.

A lack of support in repatriating troops is evidenced by the data, as is the practice of bribery in order to obtain transport to their home destination. Often troops had to pay the regular fare as well as trade some of the items that they obtained from the western markets to secure a seat on a transport back home.

The agency of avoiding deployment in Afghanistan is evidenced by the data studied. Soviet male citizens who refused to do their patriotic duty were harshly dealt with, and in the case of rank-bearing officers, they were dishonourably discharged. Often, methods of subterfuge, including lying or plying the troops

with alcohol, were used to keep troops from knowing in advance that they were being sent to Afghanistan, and force and preventative measures had to be used to ensure they did not fail to board the transport to Afghanistan. Incidents of troops who were not constantly in the company of others or under the watchful eye of their guards committed suicide by hanging or cutting their wrists, were also reported. There was a lack of conviction about the justification of the war among the ordinary citizenry in the Soviet Union.

Some troops engaged in bartering activities, trading weapons, ammunition and equipment in exchange for western goods that are not ordinarily accessible in the Soviet Union. Troops would even steal from one another and the government in order to access items of value that could be bartered or sold. The enrichment of troops while doing their internationalist duty was universal as there is evidence from the data studied that *everyone does it*. The Soviet soldiers were poorly provisioned with food, stole, or bartered to get better food, and some women even engaged in prostitution to make money, or improve their position.

The text contains evidence that some women are depicted as being desperate to go to Afghanistan because of the perceived financial gain to be had. Soviet women would even sell themselves to the shop owners for sexual pleasure. Soviet officers would use their positions of authority in an attempt to bed Soviet women deployed in Afghanistan. As a result of this sexual agency a disparaging view of all women who served in Afghanistan was taken back in the Soviet Union, even those who were doing honest work such as the nurse. The Soviet Union seemed to strengthen this behaviour by sending an abundance of female librarians, cleaners, and hotel workers to Afghanistan to support the troops.

Much of the Soviet agency in Afghanistan was fuelled by hatred and anger. These are psychological motivators relating to the agentic state of the Soviets in Afghanistan, who had no way to escape a difficult situation. In other instances

hatred and anger manifested as revenge brought on by the death of a comrade. In other instances, anger and hatred was brought about by resentment for being sent to Afghanistan; hence some individuals resented the political ideology and system, or the Soviet State itself.

Returning veterans struggled to channel their hatred after the war and had to grapple with a government which disavowed their involvement in the Soviet-Afghan war. Some are still seeking to regain their 'happiness' or former sense of innocence and to cope with their feelings of guilt. Those serving in Afghanistan suffered in a situation of 'low agency' by not having many options available to improve their situation, and were often in moral and ethical conflict because of this. Therefore, their behaviour is seen as agentic agency subservient to the Soviet State and both the official ranks and unofficial ranks of veteran/granddad and *dembels* over them.

Overall, the desire to live, to survive Afghanistan proved to be a strong fuel for the various forms of agency enactment practiced by troops and support units. The overall impression generated by the text in this regard projects a clear picture that if there had been a choice, the individuals tainted by their involvement in the war would not have chosen to go to Afghanistan had the full truth about the war been known prior to their deployment there. Therefore, there is a strong subtext that suggests that the veterans who returned from Afghanistan were the victims of an overzealous communist government that tried to Sovietise an unwilling proxy.

7.4 THEME 3: SOVIET VICTIMS OF AFGHANISTAN

This was the mothers' war, they were the ones who did the fighting.

The Soviet people in general didn't suffer much. They were told we were fighting 'bandits'. But why couldn't a regular army, 100,000 strong, with all the latest equipment, defeat a few disorganised bandits after nine long years?

Interview: Major propaganda section artillery regiment in *Zinky Boys*

In discussing the theme of Soviet victims of Afghanistan, I am attending to the data yielded in the process of labelling and theming the textual content, specifically keeping in mind the plight of the veterans and the mothers of those who sacrificed their lives in the war. The discussion below suggests that both the veterans as well as the mothers are suffering a socioemotional process, which renders a positive outcome for some, but not all of them.

In the interpretation of the data, I recognise that I am influenced by the writing of Carl Goldberg and Virginia Crespo (2003) who conducted an investigation into suffering and personal agency. The authors (2003:85) state:

An investigation of those who suffer yields readily to the observation that many sufferers undergo and remain in a disabled and anguished state in regard to their suffering; while others find personal meaning in their plight that allows them to transcends (sic) their anguish. My (sic) contention here is that the capacity to find meaning in one's suffering is not singular endeavour—entirely the product of a personal assessment of one's state of being. As importantly, the meaning attributed to suffering is a socioemotional process that involves the sufferer's willingness to define himself to self and others in ways that respects his personal agency.

It is particularly the phrase *that many sufferers undergo and remain in a disabled and anguished state in regard to their suffering; while others find personal meaning in their plight that allows them to transcends (sic) their anguish* which epitomises the struggles that both veterans and mothers have to

confront. The narratives that are contained in *Zinky Boys* and studied here are representative of both states of existence. There are winning life scripts of those who are coming to terms with their new state of being, and who are soldiering onward. There are also those who remain tormented, grief-stricken and immobilised by their position in society, and are seemingly not capable to undergo the necessary socioemotional processes required to accept responsibility for their personal agency.

Although the thematic label that I use positions the discussion of veterans and mothers as victims of Afghanistan, I additionally interpret their positions as agentic. The reason for this is that I believe they have to exercise responsibility with regard to their station in life by future agency, either by accepting their state of existence or altering their state of existence through deliberate choices.

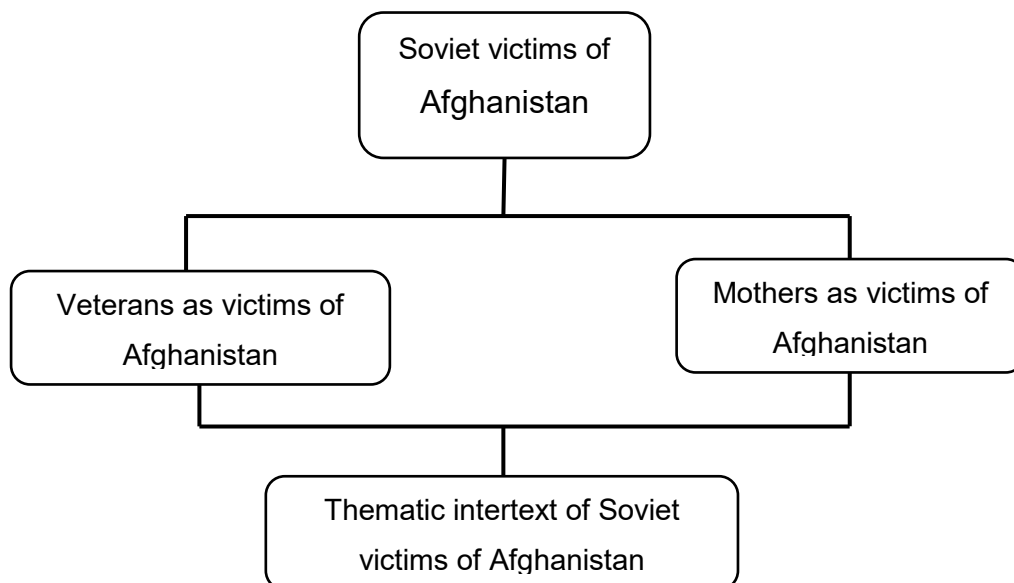


Figure 7.2 Mind map of the theme Soviet Victims of Afghanistan

Sub Theme 7.4.1 Veterans as victims of Afghanistan

In this sub theme, I analyse and discuss the positioning of veterans in *Zinky Boys* as victims of the State. The analysis of the data is interpreted in the context of agency and institutional violence against individuals, where they are victimised either intentionally or unintentionally. In Chapter 3 (Cf. Section 3.7) of this thesis, I highlight this victimisation from the survey of the literature.

In much of the literature that I surveyed (Astapenia, (2013); Behrends, 2015a; Seica-Kozlowski, 2011 and 2013), veterans are portrayed as victims of the ravages of war and orphaned by the motherland. Danilova (2007) makes a poignant observation that “every war creates a new ‘lost generation’, veterans of wars and military operations”. In addition, she adds that since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the problems experienced by veterans has been widely discussed in the media and by the public.

Narrator 03 Private Grenadier Battalion contextualises the problem that the veterans in the Soviet Union are grappling with:

Narrator 03: Private Grenadier Battalion

Whatever you do, don't write about the so-called spirit of brotherhood among us Afgantsi. I never saw it and I don't believe in it. The only thing we had in common was fear. We were all lied to in the same way, we all wanted to survive and we all wanted to get home. And what we've got in common now that we're back home is that we haven't got a thing to call our own. We all have the same problems - lousy pensions, the difficulty of getting a flat and a bit of furniture together, no decent medicines or prostheses . . . If ever all that gets sorted out our veterans' clubs will fall apart. Once I get what I need, and perhaps a fridge and washing machine and a Japanese video - however much I have to push and scratch and claw to get it - that'll be it! I won't need the club any more. The young people ignore us. There's absolutely no mutual understanding. Officially we have the same status as the World War II vets. The only difference is, they were defenders of the Fatherland, whereas we're seen as the Germans - one young lad actually said that to me! We hate the younger generation.

The narrator-private is disillusioned about the Afghan war and debunks the myth of their solidarity for purposes other than survival and reintegration into society in the Soviet Union. He deplores the idea of *the spirit of brotherhood* as he questions the romantic notion of soldiers' agency in defending one another with the statement, *[t]he only thing we had in common was fear. We were all lied to in the same way, all we wanted to do was to survive and we all wanted to get home*. This statement relates to the popularised idea that the Soviets provided assistance to the Afghan government by building hospitals, schools and infrastructure to improve the country as a Soviet interest in Asia. In Chapter 3, I quote Behrends (2015b:722), who states that the Soviet press kept on pushing the agenda of an "internationalist mission to build socialism", which effectively is nothing more than "politics of misinformation [that] were initially successful, but eventually contributed to discrediting the war effort".

The only commonality that the narrator finds with fellow veterans is that he too is in the unenviable situation of having to struggle on an inadequate veteran's pension and finding decent accommodation while the medical treatment that they receive leaves much to be desired. His ironic statement is that once these logistics relating to veteran's benefits are resolved, there will be no reason for the veterans' associations to continue with their agency and remain existing as an association, and this is his stated intent, to resign from the association once he gets his problems resolved.

The narrator reports a disconnect with society at large, and in particular with younger people with whom he does not find common understanding as their frame of reference had not been tainted by a political ideology that proved to be false, nor had they spent time in the Afghan *Gewaltraum*. He finds that those who have not the benefit of the lived experience of Afghanistan are not of any consequence to him, and he does not have the desire to relate to them in any way. There is little reason to trust them at all. He has a hatred of them as they

take a disparaging view of the *Afghantsi*, who are likened to the Germans of World War II who were much despised by the Russian population for their invasion into Russia. He adopts a typical victim life script implying that if you have not experienced what he had experienced, you cannot begin to understand him.

Narrator 43 Major Battalion Commander describes his difficulty in adjusting to civilian life in the Soviet Union:

Narrator 43: Major Battalion Commander

I can't adjust to this world. I tried, but it didn't work. My blood pressure shot up - I need the stress, the edge, that contempt for life which sends the adrenalin racing round my veins. I need that fast pace, the excitement of going into attack . . . The doctors diagnosed clogged-up arteries.

I'd like to go back there, but I don't know how I'd feel about it all now. The broken-down and burnt-out old tanks and APCs - is that really all that's left of us there now? I went to the cemetery, to walk round the Afgantsi graves. I met one of the mothers there. Go away, major! You're old and grey. You're alive. My son's lying here, he died too young to shave.'

The data studied indicates that the involvement in the war in Afghanistan was such a transformative experience to numerous individuals, that they had difficulty adjusting again to normal civilian life in the Soviet Union. The narrator makes a succinct statement loaded with meaning; *I can't adjust to this world. I tried, but it didn't work*. This is the testimony of the psycho-social difficulty that many soldiers have experienced when they return from a state of total institutionalisation and then have to adjust to 'normal life' as lived by the average civilian. It is also evidence of a failed agentic script of using violence as currency to assert oneself. Where there was a highly routinised pattern to their lives and the constant surge of adrenalin, brought on by the dangers existing in the *Gewaltraum* and enhanced by the use of opioids, alcohol and suppressants, they are left without structure and guidance in their personal lives.

The narrator indicates two important events that are of interest in this context. Firstly, he says, *I need that fast pace, the excitement of going into the attack...* The conditioning that he has become accustomed to has resulted in physiological conditioning and now his body is craving the adrenaline rush which it is no longer experiencing. Secondly, he says *[t]he doctors diagnosed clogged-up arteries*. In the context of existing public knowledge about war veterans, the condition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is perhaps a more likely diagnosis than what he was presented with. In Chapter 3 (Cf. Section 3.7), I make the following observation:

Kamienski (2017:226) reports that up to 44% of returning Afghantsi required “specialized psychological assistance, although in fact no such support was available”. He reports that “those who needed it were drawn to alcohol, toxic substance abuse, substance addiction and even suicide” (*op cit*).

In this instance, the narrator’s agency depends on the stimulation of adrenaline and excitement is counter-productive to settling into a routinised lifestyle that offers little stimulation by way of violence. In an attempt to satisfy his need for what is familiar to him, the narrator contemplates returning to Afghanistan, but fears that *[t]he broken-down and burnt-out old tanks and APCs* would provide a grim reminder of what the Soviet Union contributed during this time. He asks the question – *is that really all that is left of us there now?* Perhaps in an unintended manner the image that he conjures is thought-provoking in that I view the veterans of the Soviet-Afghan war through the lens of *Zinky Boys* in much the same manner; burnt-out relics and shells of their former selves strewn like carrion on the battlefield.

In another attempt at finding closure and to reminisce about his former involvement in Afghanistan, the narrator visits the cemetery to *walk around the Afghantsi graves*, but he was reprimanded by a mother of one of the dead soldiers. Her resentment is tangible in that she laments that her son was not old enough yet to shave and had to participate in this gruesome war, and was killed

for doing his patriotic duty, while the major is now *old and grey*, meaning he has had a fulfilling life, has achieved maturity and has been spared by the war. He is proof of the failed campaign in Afghanistan and as such an abomination in the eyes of the mother who does not appreciate his sympathetic agency.

It is not only the soldiers who experienced difficulty to adjust, but also the support staff as explained by narrator 05 Nurse.

Narrator 05: Nurse

The boys sold their own weapons and ammunition knowing they'd be used to kill them. After all that - well, I saw my own country with different eyes. Coming home was terribly difficult and very strange. I felt I'd had my skin ripped off. I couldn't stop crying, I could bear to be only with people who'd been there themselves. I spent my days- and nights- with them. Talking to anybody else seemed a futile waste of time. That phase lasted six months. Now I have rows in the meat queue like everybody else.

You try and live a normal life, the way you lived before. But you can't. I didn't give a damn about myself or life in general. I just felt my life was over. And this whole process was much worse for the men. A woman can forget herself in her child - the men had nothing to lose themselves in. They came home, fell in love, had kids - but none of it really helped, Afghanistan was more important than anything else.

In the preceding part of her interview, the narrator-nurse is relating the hardship that they had to endure regarding the lack of equipment and a healthy diet, and how much of an attraction the shops were in the towns that offered access to western goods that were not available in the Soviet Union. The concomitant dishonest agency in the selling off of equipment and the addiction to drugs among the troops were worsening the situation. It is this point that the narrator marks as a turning point in her life – *[a]fter all that – well, I saw my country with different eyes*. When she experienced first-hand how poorly provisioned the troops were for the task at hand, it shook her to her the very core of her being.

The narrator-nurse found her return to the Soviet Union to be problematic. She uses a striking image by saying *I felt I'd had my skin ripped off*. This is an image, which reminds me of the act of flaying that the mujahedeen practiced as a cruel form of torture. At another level, one could say that your skin as the biggest tactile sensory organ, contains the essence of who you are; your being, your identity and your ability to establish physical contact with others. Having your skin ripped off is comparable to losing your identity and not being able to relate to people, which is most likely what the narrator intends to convey. Like the narrator-major above, she could only find meaning in seeing people who had been to Afghanistan and were involved in the war. As I indicated in Chapter 4, our behaviour and responses to entities are described by Heidegger as how we 'comport' to things that confirm our 'being', "what we are is 'Being', and so is how we are" (Heidegger; 1927:7). Linking up at the social level, even spending nights and days with her former brothers in arms, agrees with her own sense of identity, and *talking to anybody else seemed a futile waste of time*.

In explaining her difficult agency in adjusting, the narrator indicates that it took her six months to find her feet in order to conform to normal behaviour. During that time of adjustment normal life as lived in the past was no longer possible. She recognises that the adjustment was so much more difficult for the men, because a woman could find new meaning in life if she marries and has a child, who will then become the focus and meaning in her life. She states *[t]he men had nothing to lose themselves in*. Even though they led normal lives outwardly, she says *...but none of it really helped. Afghanistan was more important than anything else*.

In Chapter 3, I show that the survey of the literature undertaken, especially the work of Astapenia (2013), presents the view that drug addiction became a serious issue to contend with for returning veterans. In the context of this extract, and in particular the statement that *[t]he men had nothing to lose themselves in*, gains significance. As Astepenia (2013) points out:

The war in Afghanistan brought not only numerous deaths and disabilities to Belarusians, but after the beginning of the war in Afghanistan in 1979 drug addiction in the Soviet Union grew enormously. Soviet soldiers *en masse* became drug addicts -- and they brought this habit back home with them.

The agency and behaviour of the returning veterans was much in the public eye. Some of them were admitted to university to obtain a qualification and to better themselves, but many still sought out familiar faces of fellow veterans, as described by narrator 13 Private Signal Corps.

Narrator 13: Private Signals Corps

I started looking other vets up. We spoke the same language, and it was a language only we could share. The dean of the university called me in to see him. 'Look, he said, 'we gave you a place even though your grades weren't really good enough. We gave you a grant. Now don't go spending your time with that lot. Why do you keep going to the cemetery? It doesn't go down too well here, you know.'
The powers-that-be stopped us meeting. They were frightened of us, because they knew that if we organised we'd fight for our rights and they'd have to give us flats and so on. We made them give some help to the mothers of those boys in the cemetery here and we're going to insist on memorials and railings for the graves. The authorities don't give a damn. 'Now, lads,' they tried to persuade us, 'don't talk too much about what you did and saw over there.' A State Secret, with 1,000,000 soldiers in a foreign country! Even the temperature in Kabul was classified information.

The narrator-private uses the metaphor of a language used as a means to convey meaning. In finding other veterans, he found that *we spoke the same language, and it was a language only we could share*. He is not referring to the grammar or dialect of a language, but is referring to the meaning that they shared in their communication transactions. Since they had a shared frame of reference of *Gewaltraum* Afghanistan, they could share and discuss their difficulties in adjusting to life back in the Soviet Union. The veterans did not have a good reputation as they were renowned for their agency of violent

behaviour, which is why the narrator is warned by the dean of the university who tried to get him to stop meeting with other veterans. The narrator interprets this as *[t]he powers-that-be stopped us meeting. They were frightened of us, because they knew that if we organised we'd fight for our rights and they'd have to give us flats and so on.* Here he refers to the social agency that they exercised in forming a pressure group upon government to provide their social benefits as war veterans. I have indicated in Chapter 3 that Sklokina (2015:133) reports ideas of “military brotherhood” and “masculine values of courage and dignity, as well as in Soviet nostalgia and paternalism” which unify the veterans into social agency.

The narrator is reporting limited success in the ongoing battle for recognition by stating that they had achieved some success in helping the mothers of deceased soldiers. *We made them give some help to the mothers of those boys in the cemetery here and we're going to insist on memorials and railings for the graves.* This echoes strongly with the reverence shown to the maternal figure of the mother in *Zinky Boys*, which may very well be a cultural attribute of the Soviet soldiers. When soldiers were killed in action the emotion of pity that was expressed was for the mothers, and not so much the fact that a soldier had been killed.

With government applying pressure on the veterans with a ‘gagging order’, there was limited possibility to experience cathartic discharge of their pent-up frustrations. The narrator-private says *[t]he authorities don't give a damn. 'Now, lads,' they tried to persuade us, 'don't talk too much about what you did and saw over there.'* His response to this is somewhat sarcastic. *A State Secret, with 1,000,000 soldiers in a foreign country! Even the temperature in Kabul was classified information.* In citing the number of soldiers in Afghanistan he is somewhat optimistic, as the limited contingent had around a maximum of 120,000 soldiers deployed at any given time. Afridi, Yousufi, and Khan (2014:2197) put this figure at 115,000 at the height of the war by the time that

the Soviet Union had publically committed to withdrawing from Afghanistan. However, Sieca-Kozlowski, (2013) opines that a total number of 620,000 soldiers toured Afghanistan.

The agentic difficulties experienced by the *Afghantsi* veterans in the Soviet Union stems from the individual psychological transformation that they underwent, as suggested by the data, which points to a change in Being at the ontological and psychological levels. Narrator 03 Private Grenadier Battalion remembers:

Narrator 03: Private Grenadier Battalion

The fact is, in order to experience the horror you have to remember it and get used to it. Within two or three weeks there's nothing left of the old you except your name. You've become someone else. This someone else isn't frightened of a corpse, but calmly (and a bit pissed off, too) wonders how he's going to drag it down the rocks and carry it for several kilometres in that heat.

The impact on the sense of self is radical in how it affects the sense of being. By virtue of the remembered agency of these veterans, they are able to describe how they see themselves through their remembered and lived experiences. The Cartesian duality (for want of a better term) between the former self and the transcended self as two distinct versions of the same individual is a strong thematic expression that presents itself in the reading of *Zinky Boys*. The descriptions offered via the narratives are indicative of the process of the mortification of the old self as indicated by Goffman (1968) in his *Asylums*. As a philosophy of experience, the remembered acts of individuals provide an *epoché* of their phenomenological encounters in Afghanistan, and when read in the context of Fisher's probability test, there is strong argumentative coherence to these narratives that testify to the duality of persons as described in the text.

The narrator-private provides a clear description of this transformation. *The fact is, in order to experience the horror you have to remember it and get used to it.* He explains that there are two phenomenological aspects to be mindful of in this *Gewaltraum*. Firstly, you have to get to remember the horror, which, as is implied by the narrator, is part of the experience of the horror. It stays with you, it is remembered by you. Secondly, it becomes something that one must get used to. The implication here is that horror is normal in conditions of war. The curse is that one has to remember the horror, as it defines who you become, the new you. *Within two or three weeks there's nothing left of the old you except your name. You've become someone else.* As **Narrator 30 Private Gunlayer** states: *...I was turned from an immature boy into a killer, no, not even a killer, into a machine that just needed food and sleep and nothing else.* These lived experiences have a profound impact on changing the identity of individuals and their behaviour. Where there would normally be reverence for the dead, there is instead a callous behaviour, and sense of anger at having to bring back the body of a Soviet soldier in difficult terrain.

Narrator 11 Sergeant Major Medical Instructor recalls one incident when they were avoiding a guerrilla gang that had been chasing them. The Soviet soldiers were taking dope to numb their suffering and to increase their endurance. One of the soldiers committed suicide by shooting himself, but could not be left behind. *We had to drag his body along, including his flak-jacket and helmet. We weren't too sorry for him...* In a normal sense one would be experiencing emotions of pity or understanding for a person who has committed suicide, but to be so callous as not to feel sorry for the victim underscores the change in Being that these soldiers had to endure to survive the hostility of Afghanistan.

Narrator 20 Private Grenadier Regiment describes his change in Being:

Narrator 20: Private Grenadier Regiment

I went to Afghanistan thinking I'd come home with my head held high. Now I realise the person I was before this war has gone for ever...In

Afghanistan night falls like a curtain. One moment it's light, the next - night. A bit like me - I was a boy but I became a man all at one go. That's war for you.

The narrator had high ideals and romantic ideas about fighting in a war. In understating the obvious, he has not come home with his head held high, rather, hanging in shame because the war has changed him and his sense of self. *Now I realise the person I was before this war has gone for ever.* He is no longer the same person, and he compares this change as one that happens quickly. To do so, he uses the comparison of nightfall in Afghanistan, which happens quickly. The transition there is not as gradual as it happens in countries that are further north from the equator. The change in his Being was a similar experience. *I was a boy but I became a man all at one go.*

He is echoed in his narrative by **Narrator 13 Private Signals Corps** who states *War can't make a man better. Worse, yes, but not better, that's for sure. I'll never be the way I was before I went to war. How can I be better, after some of the things I've seen?* The narrator indicates that individuals are changed by war, but not or the better. In his personal capacity he admits that he has become a changed person, but the things that are now part of his lived experience, that now make up his frame of reference, have changed him. In this, he has become a victim of the government's Brezhnev Doctrine to render aid to Soviet proxy states.

It is not only the narrated first-hand experiences of the soldiers that shed light on these changes that individuals undergo, but the support staff units in Afghanistan were also aware of the change in Being of these individuals as reported by Narrator 10 Civilian Employee.

Narrator 10: Civilian Employee

Yes, people leave here morally broken, especially the ordinary soldiers, the eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds. They see how everything is for

sale here, how a woman will sell herself for a crate, no, for a couple of tins of corned beef. Then they go home, these boys, and look at their wives and sweethearts in the same way. It's not surprising they don't behave themselves too well. They're used to deciding things with the barrel of a gun.

The moral brokenness of people is highlighted in this extract. Morality is the enactment of ethical conviction or one's ethical basis. What the narrator is saying, is that it is not just a behavioural shift that is observed, but that this shift is informed by a change or ethical shift that has taken place. Individuals no longer subscribe to the ethical standards with which they had been raised, but because of their obedience to authority, expect the Soviet Union to take ethical responsibility. They see themselves in an agentic state, morally broken, but fulfilling their international duty.

It is this moral brokenness that is particularly evident in the case of the eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds who have become aware that anything could be had for a price. The currency that they are trading in is violence, as the narrator states *[t]hey're used to deciding things with the barrel of a gun*. It is when they arrive back home that they exercise their newfound behaviour and abuse their wives and girlfriends in this manner. In this instance, it is problematic, as I make the observation in Chapter 3 from my study of the literature, that family members had to take on the responsibility of psychological and financial support, as reported by Sieca-Kozlowski (2013). In these conditions when those who are recipients of help are misbehaving in this way, many marriages collapsed, as is evidenced in the text of *Zinky Boys*. Here the agency of veterans caused them to become victims of their own behaviour, although there are other aspects to the argument, such as the argument that they had undergone personality changes in their Being.

Whilst in Afghanistan it was not only death that had become a constant companion to these soldiers, but also their fear of dying, of not going home alive, as remembered by narrator 03 Private Grenadier Battalion.

Narrator 03: Private Grenadier Battalion

All any of us wanted was to survive. There was no time to think. We were eighteen or twenty years old. I got used to other people's deaths but I was frightened of dying myself. I saw how a man could become nothing, literally nothing, as though he'd never been. When that happened they put empty full-dress uniforms in the coffin, and threw in a few spadefuls of Afghan earth to make up the weight . . .

I wanted to live.

Never, before or since, have I wanted to live as much as I did there. After a battle we'd just sit and laugh. I never laughed like I did then.

In remembering his time spent in Afghanistan the narrator accepted the death of others, but became fearful of dying himself. In the *Gewaltraum* any soldier may become a casualty in conflict. In narrating his experience, he provides information about being an eyewitness to the death of men, and *how a man could become nothing, literally nothing, as though he'd never been*. This reference indicates the extreme violence that they had been exposed to, typically in the case where mines were detonated or APCs were taken out with heat-seeking missiles, there would not be enough left to reassemble the deceased's body as some parts are disintegrated by the violent impact of the explosive and incendiary devices.

The narrator provides detail about how they would prepare the coffin when a soldier had been blown to bits. *When that happened they put empty full-dress uniforms in the coffin, and threw in a few spadefuls (sic) of Afghan earth to make up the weight...* A recurring theme in the text is the phrase *I wanted to live*, which is expressed by several of the narrators. While living in the shadow of death the awareness that one is alive is a heady sensation for many of the soldiers whilst in Afghanistan. They would vent their stress after engaging the enemy in fire-fights by smoking, drinking, taking drugs, or as explained by the narrator in this instance, *[a]fter battle we'd just sit and laugh*. This agency is a cathartic release of the tension that they had to endure while in battle. However, there is unity in their suffering, as he stated at the beginning of the extract, *[a]ll*

any of us wanted was to survive. This instinct towards self-preservation manifests as *suffering agency*, as described by Elliott (2013:89) who ascribes the suffering that people have to endure based on the limited choice of decisions available to them.

In my own experience and understanding of the text, the disappointment arises when one discovers that the ideological premise, upon which encounters with horror were deemed necessary, proved to be false. This weakens the position of the Soviet authority that is over the agent, and instructing the agent. Further, the denial of the Soviet Union about its involvement in a state of war in Afghanistan is tantamount to refusing to take responsibility for the agency of its troops in Afghanistan. In the context of Milgram's Obedience to Authority Theory (1974), this leaves the Soviet veterans exposed and culpable for their agency, whereas they perceived themselves to be in an agentic state, with low agency over their involvement. In addition, the change in Being which became necessary to act out their constructed agency and so survive the hell-hole of Afghanistan, has alienated and ostracised these veterans from their society in the Soviet Union.

The data analysis supports the opinion of Kadykalo (2015) who states:

After the war, it was difficult for the soldiers to find their place in society, which resulted in the fact that they began to have a devastating impact on it. The "Afghan syndrome" was a great threat: in the families of veterans, the number of divorces and family conflicts was as high as 75%. More than two thirds of the veterans were not happy with their jobs and often changed them because of increasing conflicts; 90% of student veterans were characterized by poor performance in studying, and 60% had problems with alcoholism and drug addiction. Research conducted in the early 1990s has shown that at least 35-40% of veterans urgently needed professional help of a psychologist.

The evidence presented above in my analysis of the narratives provided by the memory of witnesses, factually supports the manifestation of a multitude of

images relating to the agency of violence experienced and perpetuated by the troops in Afghanistan. The fall-out upon their return to the Soviet Union manifested in many social ills, such as divorces, uncalled-for acts of violence on family members, 'job-hopping', high drop-out figures of those studying, addiction to drugs and psychological affliction endured by many of them, and are presented as factual and probable in Fisher's concept of the narrative paradigm.

Sub Theme 7.4.2 Mothers as victims of Afghanistan

It is not only the veterans who had difficulty adjusting to life in the Soviet Union upon their return home. It is also the Soviet mothers who had lost sons and daughters in the war in Afghanistan who had difficulty in coming to terms with reality. Often they too would become victims of institutional violence of the state and had to form pressure groups or bring pressure to bear through their agency as individuals to get results, as remembered by narrator 31 A Mother.

Narrator 31: A Mother

'We're going to give you a new flat,' I was promised by the local authority. 'You can choose any empty flat in the area.'
I found one in the city centre, built of proper brick, not prefab concrete, with a nice modern layout. I went back to the town hall with the address. 'Are you out of your mind? That block's strictly for Central Committee members.'
'Is my son's blood that much cheaper than theirs?'
The local Party secretary at the institute where I work is a good man, and honest. I don't know how he managed to get access to the Central Committee on my behalf. All he said to me was this: 'You should have heard how they spoke to me. "All right, she's grief-stricken - but what's wrong with you?" That's what they asked me. I was almost thrown out of the Party.'

The narrator-mother has to resort to agency in her capacity as an individual to ensure that she does not fall victim to the state falling short on granting her access to her compensation upon the death of her son who served in Afghanistan. When she was promised by the local authority that they were

granting her living space and that she could pick a flat in the area, she found one in a block that was more modern than the typical, drab flat with which so many people had to make do.

However, when she made her preference known she became involved in an altercation with the local authority at the town hall who indicated that the block of flats was reserved for Central Committee members. In her response, she highlights the struggle of the individual for recognition and the tiered structure that existed in the Soviet Society, which privileges Party members above other citizens, by asking the question *'Is my son's blood that much cheaper than theirs?'* (cf. Chapter 4.4.2 dealing with ethnophobia and *othering*). The narrator is privileged in that she could access the services of a high-ranking Party member who interceded on her behalf to secure the flat for her, although not at some personal risk to the Party member, who nearly lost his party membership.

In as much as the mother is a victim of the tragedy of having lost her son during the war, she is also a victim of institutional violence perpetrated by a government that fails to live up to its responsibility in taking care of veterans and their mothers. In some instances, mothers were victimised in that they did not have the freedom of agency in the selection of a grave for their deceased sons, as is illustrated in the next extract provided by narrator 22 A Mother.

Narrator 22: A Mother

The coffin was already sealed when they brought it so I couldn't kiss him goodbye, or stroke him one last time. I don't even know what he's wearing.
I told them I'd choose a place for him in the cemetery myself. They gave me a couple of injections and I went with my brother. There were already some 'Afghan' graves in the central alley.
'That's where I want my son to be- he'll be happier with his friends.'
The man who was with us, some boss or other, shook his head.
'It's forbidden for them to be buried together. They have to be spread about the rest of the cemetery.'

That was when I exploded! 'Don't get so angry, Sonya, don't get so angry,' my brother tried to calm me down. But how can I not be angry?

One of the ways in which the mothers were not allowed to respond to their suffering agency was that they could not view the bodies of their deceased sons. The bodies were sealed in the coffins and they were prevented from viewing the body. This was often for the protection of the family members as some of the bodies were already in an advanced state of decay by the time they reached the family. As remembered by **narrator 31 A Mother**, *"Is there anything in there?" I asked the soldier accompanying the coffin. 'I saw him being laid in the coffin. He is there.' I stared at him and he lowered his eyes. 'Something's in there... ' 'Did it smell? Ours did...' 'And ours. We even had little white worms dropping on to the floor... '*

The narrator-mother in the extract provided above is saddened by the fact that she cannot view the body of her son to get closure on his death. Neither is she allowed to bury him in the place of her choosing, which is where other soldiers of the Afghan war are buried. The government representative was there to ensure that the body would not be buried together with other veterans, so as to provide visual evidence of the numerous casualties that were inflicted upon Soviet troops during the war. In Chapter 2 (Cf. Section 2.2.10) of this study, the number of conflict related Soviet deaths is estimated between 15,000 and 26,000, but the exact number is difficult to determine due to the Soviet Union not being candid about actual numbers, although the majority of sources quote figures around the 15,000 mark.

The narrator-mother vents her anger at the devious agency of the government, which was disavowing the honourable deaths of the soldiers by refusing them to be buried together. In death, their story could be told when they are buried together, but when the graves are scattered about the cemetery the narrative of

those who did their Internationalist duty is weakened, and this angered the mother.

The emotional suffering that mothers have to endure is difficult to capture sufficiently in words. The narrative provided by narrator 07 A Mother describes some of the emotions that parents have to endure:

Narrator 07: A Mother

I can't carry on any longer, I just can't. I've been dying for two years now. I'm not ill, but I'm dying. My whole body is dead. I didn't burn myself on Red Square and my husband didn't tear up his party card and throw the bits in their faces. I suppose we're already dead but nobody knows. Even we don't know . . .

The narrator-mother expresses her suffering at an interpersonal level and positions herself as one who is alive, but is also dead at the same time. The emotional impact of the death of her son is too difficult for her to bear, even though her husband supports her in this suffering. She positions herself as a first-person 'I' who *can't carry on any longer, I just can't. I've been dying for two years now. I'm not ill, but I'm dying*. The repetitive use of the word I shows how she has internalised the pain of the death of her son to the point where she is now suffering a living death. She is now at the point where she has to share her suffering in order to gain meaning from her experience and to explain her state of being to those who choose to listen.

In her narrative, the narrator-mother stops short of naming and blaming the Soviet government by name, but does lay the blame of her suffering at the door of the government. She describes her behaviour as atypical of those who engage in protest action, and in doing so, describes the agency of protest that some had engaged in. The narrator implies that she is not a hero for a cause who would burn herself on Red Square in an attempt to bring shame to the Soviet government. There is little evidence in the data from the text of *Zinky*

Boys to suggest that the Soviet-Afghan war had sparked any incidents of self-immolation, other than one mother, narrator 07 A Mother, who stated '*Listen, Yurochka, life isn't the way I've always told you it is. If you tell me you're going to Afghanistan I'll go to the middle of Red Square, pour petrol over myself and set myself on fire...*' However, there are two incidents of note, which support the mother's argument, one of which applies indirectly, and the other directly.

In the history of the Soviet Union, the greatest publicised incident would probably be the Katyn massacre during World War II in which the Soviets put to death 20,000 of the defeated Polish officers who had been captured during the Soviet invasion of Poland. On 28 March 1980, Walenty Badylak had set himself alight in the Polish square in Kraków (Krakow News: n.d.) to protest the Soviet refusal to take responsibility for this massacre. Although these incidents of self-immolation are rare enough, this is the only one that is near the time-line of the Soviet-Afghan war, protesting Soviet cover-up of the death of nearly 20,000 Polish Officers during WW II. When the Soviet silence over the deaths of young Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan is taken into account, there is a degree of plausibility that this is what the narrator-mother is hinting at, that the Soviet government is guilty of the 'massacre' of Soviet troops fighting an undeclared war in Afghanistan.

In a more directly related incident, the US Directorate of Intelligence (1999) has released a sanitised 1988 CIA report titled *USSR: Domestic Fallout From the Afghan War* in which *Samizdat* reported the public self-immolation of a Ukrainian mother whose son perished in the Afghan war. The act was followed by a riot during which the Draft Board building was burnt down. The narrator mother is probably referring directly to this incident, and to her earlier threat to her son, to indicate that despite the institutional violence practiced by the State, she has done nothing to embarrass the State, and neither did her husband *tear up his party card and throw the bits in their faces* in an act of public protest.

In another narrative, narrator 31 A Mother tells of the survival technique that the mothers employ by seeking one another's company at the gravesite.

Narrator 31: A Mother

*We got to know each other at the cemetery, by the gravesides. You'll see one mother hurrying from the bus in the evening after work; another already sitting by her gravestone, crying; a third painting the railing round her son's grave. We talk about only one thing - our children, as if they were still alive. I know some of their stories off by heart...
'They didn't send back a single one of his belongings . . . If only we had something to remember him by... He smoked - if only we had his lighter...
'I'm glad they don't open the coffins, so that we don't see what has happened to our sons. I'll always remember him alive and in one piece...'
How can we survive? We won't live long with this pain and these wounds in our hearts.*

The narrator-mother shares her experience of how she meets with other mothers of deceased soldiers at the cemetery to share their memories about their children with one another. The grieving mothers attempt to reconstruct the past, and in so doing, endeavour to 'keep their sons with them' in the present. This phenomenon is not uncommon in the literature about memories as part of our psychological construct, as explained by Halbwachs (1992:47):

We preserve memories of each epoch in our lives, and these are continually reproduced; through them, as by a continual relationship, a sense of our identity is perpetuated. But precisely because these memories are repetitions, because they are successively engaged in very different systems of notions, at different periods of our lives, they have lost the form and the appearance they once had. They are not intact vertebrae of fossil animals which would in themselves permit reconstruction of the entities of which they were once a part.

I am struck by the impact of the death of their sons in the lives of the mothers; there is a clear dichotomy in their lives before and after the death of their sons in Afghanistan. Through these acts of remembering they keep the memories of their sons in the present with the result that, as Halbwachs would say, "a sense

of our identity is perpetuated” (1992:47). In line with the quoted text from Halbwachs, I see them remembering their sons as they were, perhaps even larger than life itself.

These memories are constructed outside of the period of their death, as they often do not receive any of their belongings that they may have had with them at the time of their death, as is evidenced in the text by one of the mothers saying *[t]hey didn't send back a single one of his belongings... If only we had something to remember him by...He smoked – if only we had his lighter...* This statement shows how intangible the memories of them at the time of their death are. The memories of what, who and how they were prior to their death are stronger, as the mothers often remember them as young and innocent as is evidenced by **Narrator 27 A Mother** *[H]e was killed within a month of arriving in Afghanistan. My boy, my skinny little thing. How did he die? I'll never know.*

In the extract above, narrator 31 A Mother voices the collective despair of the mothers, acting as a *parrheisiastes* for the polyphonic voices of the mothers: *How can we survive? We won't live long with this pain and these wounds in our hearts.* The mothers are all, like narrator 07 A Mother above, slowly dying an emotional death invoked by the act of remembering their sons. Kadykalo (2015) specifically points to how monuments as carriers of cultural memory are used to commemorate the Soviet-Afghan War, and singles out the figure of the weeping mother which is “a traditional theme in the Russian commemoration culture”. In the text of *Zinky Boys* the weeping and grieving mother is a very strong occurrence in ten narratives devoted to mothers and the heavy burden they share.

7.5 A THEMATIC INTERTEXT – RESTORYING SOVIET VICTIMS OF AFGHANISTAN

The evidence from the text of *Zinky Boys* suggests that veterans of the Soviet-Afghan war, or the *Afghantsi*, feel that they share a commonality in that had been lied to by their government, and wanted to survive and get home. Upon returning, they shared further common problems in inadequate pensions, finding good accommodation, and the struggle to make a success in life. This is an example of institutional violence by the Soviet Union against its veterans. Those who had been injured, struggled with ineffective medication and poorly designed prosthetic devices.

With regard to their integration back into society, they experienced a disconnect with society and with the younger generation who took a disparaging view of the veterans because of the international criticism against the Soviet Union and disavowal of the Soviet government of the war in Afghanistan.

The veteran's association provided limited additional support to veterans and mothers of the deceased, other than combining individuals in the common cause to force the Soviet Union to give them their veteran rights. In the early years of the war returning veterans were not entitled to receive a pension as there was no officially declared war in Afghanistan.

Many *Afghantsi* struggled to reintegrate back into society, craving the experience of violence again to which they had become addicted. Civilian life proved to be too unstructured for them. Some who were suffering post-traumatic stress syndrome were misdiagnosed, and not enough was done to assist those who suffered emotionally from the horror of the war that they had experienced. Much like the destroyed villages and wrecks strewn about Afghanistan, the veterans spread across the Soviet Union are remnants of a failed campaign to Sovietise Afghanistan.

The veterans of Afghanistan are in some instances falsely held accountable for their survival by the mothers of the dead who had to sacrifice their sons while others lived. Kadykalo (2015) refers to a monument in Murmansk which contains a touching epitaph: “Простите нас за то, что мы остались живы” (“Forgive us that we survived”). There are considerable emotions of guilt that haunt the survivors of the war, contributing to their failed attempts at reintegrating into the Soviet Society.

Even veterans from support units such as nurses, experienced difficulty in accepting the Soviet Union’s poor support for the troops deployed in Afghanistan, and experienced difficulty in reintegrating into Soviet society upon their return. Much like the veterans, the only meaningful relationships they could foster and endure, were with those who had themselves served in some way in Afghanistan.

Many veterans who could not find meaningful relationships or activities in which to lose themselves, became drug addicts. Veterans were much in the public eye for their disgraceful behaviour rather than being admired. However, most veterans held their mothers or the ‘mother figure’ in high regard, and did their best to ease the position of those mothers who had lost sons in the war.

The evidence provided in the text by the veterans bears testimony to the Soviet suppression of the facts of the war as the State issued a gagging order to prevent troops from talking about the war. This aspect weighs heavily on the conscience of the mothers who had lost their sons in a war, which is undermined and underplayed by the very government that had sent its troops into combat.

The veterans indicate that they had undergone changes in personality, that their former selves were lost to them as they underwent a process of mortification of

the self while in the military, and especially in Afghanistan's *Gewaltraum* (this process described by Erwin Goffman in his *Asylums* (1968)). This includes the death of the civil self, which is replaced by a new military self, and in going to Afghanistan, to again be replaced by an even more violent self. I argue that there are two mortifications of the self that had to be endured by these soldiers. The absence of any therapeutic intervention to reconnect with the old self to gain ontological wholeness, is absent in these narratives. This transformation into a second or third self is violent, and is associated with violent processes, leaving the veterans as victims who have to cope with 'broken selves'.

The evidence in the text suggests that many troops fought while under the influence of narcotics. It is not only the sense of self, but the moral brokenness that is evident in the narratives, which impacted negatively on all levels of their reintegration into society, especially the family, which were in their intimate circles.

Many *Afghantsi* were subjected to *suffering agency* whilst in Afghanistan. While being obedient to the Soviet Union they experienced a state of 'low agency' which left them with limited choices, but overall they were driven by the desire to survive. The mothers of soldiers who died in Afghanistan are portrayed as victims of institutional violence as they were not always given the grants due to them based on the deaths of their sons, and they had to fight individually, or through associations, or use political contacts to effect a result. In the allocation of veterans' grants there seem to be social status awareness and class separation as some modern apartments were reserved for party members and were not accessible to the ordinary Soviet claimant.

Mothers were not allowed to see the bodies of the dead nor to lay them out, nor to choose their gravesite, as the dead soldiers were not allowed to be buried together, thereby to minimise the visual impact of a concentration of graves in one space. Some coffins took a long while to be repatriated to the mothers, one

mother reports maggots dropping from the coffin to the floor, others report smelling decayed flesh.

These prohibitions contributed to mothers not getting closure on the death of their sons. Therefore, mothers are portrayed to suffer emotionally and do not receive psychological counselling either in dealing with their surviving veteran sons' aberrant behaviour, or to come to terms with the death of their sons, in instances where they died in Afghanistan. As a self-help measure mothers find solace and comfort by gathering together at the grave sites. These mothers share stories about their sons to keep them living in their memories, perpetuating their identity as mothers.

Mothers often did not receive any physical belongings of their deceased sons back from Afghanistan and neither were they told about the circumstance of their sons' deaths. The result of these contributing factors taken as a whole, impact negatively on the mothers themselves, who feel they are now dying an emotional death. When filtering these narratives for accuracy and probability the narratives provide support for one another thereby lending compelling good reasons to the reader to accept the compelling good reasons offered by the narrators.

7.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced two themes which dealt with the forms of agency in which the Soviet limited contingent engaged in while in Afghanistan and the portrayal of veterans and mothers as victims of the conflict in Afghanistan mainly due to institutional violence meted out by the Soviet Union which attempted to cover up the events that transpired in Afghanistan.

With regard to the forms of agency exercised by the Soviets while in Afghanistan the case is made that they found themselves to be in an agentic

state. This means they were good patriots, obedient to their government which had sent them to Afghanistan to wage war on the mujahedeen rebels who were opposing communist reform efforts. The Soviet limited contingent was poorly supported by its government and experienced many shortages, which contributed to troops engaging in unsanctioned agency to improve their situation. Chief among these were agency relating to corruption and bribery. Other acts include activities of prostitution and dependency upon drugs and alcohol, as well as the venting of their anger and hatred.

Chief among these forms of agency is the practice of *Dedovshchina*, which is a rite of passage for those new recruits on the journey to becoming veterans. This is a form of violence practiced by the Soviet forces upon its soldiers by those who have veteran status. This practice was suffered and accepted as a recursive action in the Soviet Army and was exposed in the public sphere by pressure groups such as the committee of soldiers' mothers referred to in Chapter 6.

The theme of *suffering agency* is accompanied by the third main theme in this thesis which discusses the portrayal of the veterans of the Soviet-Afghan war as well as the mothers of those soldiers who had died during the conflict as victims. The status of victims of institutional violence is arrived at in the portrayal of the Soviet Government disavowing the war as a real war, and therefore not wanting to grant the returning soldiers true veterans status and privileges.

The mothers of the deceased soldiers were hampered by many government prohibitions, which prevented them from seeing the bodies of their sons, or to ensure that they were properly laid out for their funeral. Often these coffins were to be buried in designated areas in the cemetery which would prevent communal burial areas of soldiers being established, thereby giving credibility to the claims that there was a war on.

With the lack of psychological support given to both the veterans as well as the mothers, these individuals find it difficult to come to terms with their pain and suffering in life. This is most commonly narrated by them as an inability to reintegrate back into Soviet society.

CHAPTER 8: THEMATIC ANALYSIS: THE PUBLIC SPHERE IN ZINKY BOYS

... Afghan cured me of the illusion that everything's OK here, and that the press and television tell the truth. 'What should I do?' I wondered. I wanted to do something specific - go somewhere, speak out, tell the truth, but my mother stopped me. 'We've lived like this all our lives,' she said.

Interview: Private, Motorised Infantry Unit in *Zinky Boys*

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the final theme, that of Afghanistan in the Public Sphere. The theme comprises three sub themes, which respectively focus on the media coverage of the war in Afghanistan, the shared sense of duty and patriotism which were advocated in the public sphere, and finally, statements that indicate a change in public sentiment with regard to their ideological position and expressions of futility about the war.

Through the analysis contained in this chapter, I discuss the coverage of the war in the media as it emerges from within the text of *Zinky Boys*. In the main, most of the attention focuses on the printed press, as this is what emerged from the study of the data. In addition, the socialist sense of duty, as well as the accompanying patriotic statements that are evidenced in the text, are analysed because they reflect public sentiment and opinion that are captured both through what veterans as well as members of the public advocate. Finally, the ideological disillusion and uncertainty that resulted in the public sphere are investigated as repetitive comments by the veterans indicate a change of thinking either by themselves or they reflect what other members of the public say about the war in the public sphere.

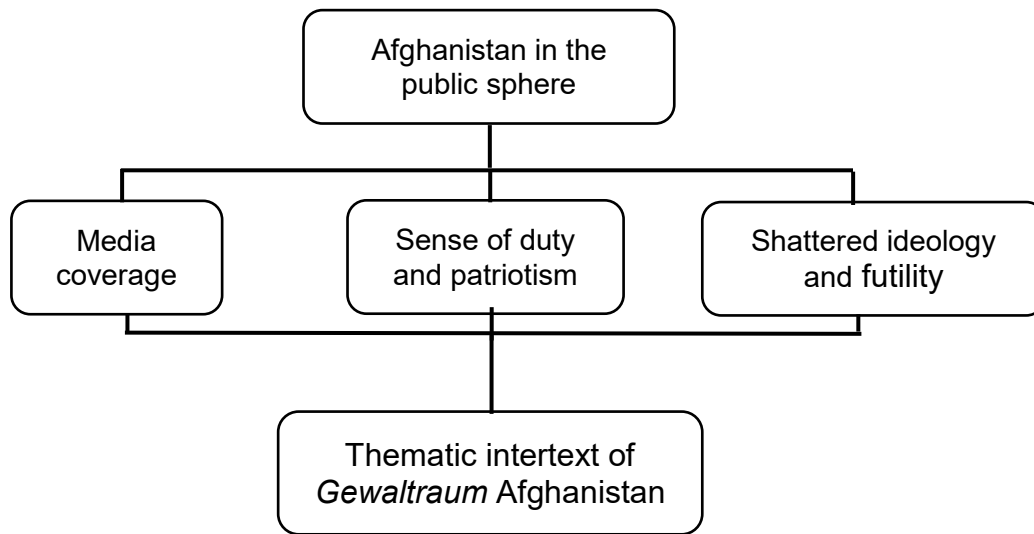


Figure 8.1 Mind map of the theme Afghanistan in the Public Sphere

8.2 THEME 4: AFGHANISTAN IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The first sub theme is about media coverage, in the main this involves the newspaper industry with limited reference to radio and television as well. The role of the media in suppressing factual information about the conditions and the losses suffered in Afghanistan is clear from the testimonies offered by the narrators. In addition, the manner in which the media spread disinformation about the involvement of the Soviet forces is notable.

Sub Theme 8.2.1 Media Coverage

Limited information was conveyed via the newspapers about the war as is evidenced in the text of *Zinky Boys*. While radio and television were also used to deliver information about Afghanistan, more frequent mention is made about what the newspapers say than other media platforms.

Narrator 03: Private Grenadier Battalion

The newspapers talked about how our soldiers were building bridges and planting trees to make 'Friendship Alleys', as they called them, and about how our doctors were looking after Afghan women and children.

In the extract provided from one of the earliest narratives in the anthology of *Zinky Boys*, mention is made about what the newspapers say about the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan. Here it is important to look at the role of the newspapers in the broader context of the *durée* in the history of the Soviet Union. To this purpose, I refer to a few lines I wrote in Chapter 4, stating:

Von Seth (2011:16) contends that the press in Russia had become part of the state to “legitimise the political system”. As such, all press in Russia were under state control and it is only in 1990 that a measure of independence became possible with the approval of new media regulation.

The extract cited from *Zinky Boys* reinforces the viewpoint that the press were instruments in the hands of the Russian government, which used the newspapers in such a way as to become an extension of the voice and opinion of government. Therefore, the sentiment expressed about *building bridges and planting trees to make 'Friendship Alleys'*, is a viewpoint deliberately advanced by the legitimate Soviet government. In addition, the impression is created that medical services were being delivered to the vulnerable segments in the Afghan society, namely the women and children.

A sense of alarm occurs with regard to the use of the media by the government to conceal, rather than to reflect, in the narrative of narrator 04, Private Motorised Infantry Unit. This narrative marks an important point in what is revealed about the role of the press, not so much by what is reported on, but what is not reported.

Narrator 04: Private Motorised Infantry Unit

The local newspapers calmly announced that our regiment had completed its training and firing practice....The newspapers went on announcing that helicopter-pilot X had completed his training etc, etc, had been awarded the Red Star etc, etc. That's what really opened my eyes. Afghan cured me of the illusion that everything's OK here, and that the press and television tell the truth.

As I indicated in the paragraph before the extract which is provided above, that the media has a universal responsibility to inform, it is noticeable here that it is not informing about an important involvement of the government. The narrator indicates that it is informing the public about the achievements of soldiers who are being trained. It is the silence about Afghanistan that is an important reveal by the narrator in his interview.

He states: *That's what really opened my eyes. Afghan cured me of the illusion that everything's OK here, and that the press and television tell the truth.* The fact that no reports about Afghanistan are made, but much is made of the progress of soldiers during training, indicates that there is a particular agenda not to publish about the events of the war itself. The narrator uses the word *illusion* to indicate that all is not well in the Soviet Union as the newspapers (press) and television are being used to create and keep the illusion in place that the Soviet Union is at peace with its neighbours. The accusation by the narrator is direct, the press and television are not telling the truth, but are establishing an illusion of calm pertaining to the situation in Afghanistan. There is a disconnect between what he had experienced in Afghanistan and what the media is reporting on *calmly* at home.

This sense of disconnect is further reinforced by the observation of a female narrator, **Narrator 10 Civilian Employee**, who remarks, *[h]ow did I end up here? I simply believed what I read in the papers.* The disinformation provided in the press strengthened the illusion that the Soviet Union was providing development aid to Afghanistan, and those unfortunate enough to rely on these

published reports in the press found themselves disillusioned upon arrival in Afghanistan. In applying Fisher's narrative tests of fidelity and probability it is clear that there is a compelling argument of the factual accuracy of the existence of the disinformation campaign of the Soviet media. The accusation compares consistently well across the narratives that speak to this matter, thereby offering compelling good reasons to accept that this was the social reality in the *durée* of the war. The reputation of the media, especially the press, is placed in sharp contrast by narrator 13 Private Signal Corps who suggests the media has a fickle nature.

Narrator 13: Private Signal Corps

What's there to fight for? And who against? We fought. Fair enough. Perhaps it was justified, after all. If the newspapers start saying it was right, it'll be right again. Now they're starting to say we're murderers. Who to believe? I don't know. I don't believe anything. Newspapers? I don't read them or buy them. They write one thing today and the opposite tomorrow. I don't know where the truth is. I have two or three friends I trust. I can rely on them. I've been home six years now, and I've seen it all.

The first lines of the extract provided above sums up the dilemma that many of the narrators have raised in the text, namely the lack of clarity of purpose of the Soviet-Afghan war as experienced by combatants. As I indicate in Chapter 3 Section 5, the literature that was surveyed mirror this sentiment. Chernyaev (1985), notes in his diary the letters that were received by *Pravda*, both from those fighting in Afghanistan and Soviet citizens in the Union, who ask the question, 'why?':

Soldiers are writing, sincerely and simply reporting that they do not understand "why we are here." Officers, and even one General, who signed his name, are writing that they are unable to explain to their soldiers, subordinates, "why they are here;" and that only from the outside it can seem that they are "fulfilling the international duty," but being there it is impossible to believe.

The narrator's statement, *[p]erhaps it was justified, after all*, raises the question about the legitimacy of the war (cf. Chapter 6 Section 2.4). Here, the perception about the legitimacy of the war is linked directly to what the press reports: *Perhaps it was justified, after all. If the newspapers start saying it was right, it'll be right again. Now they're starting to say we're murderers. Who to believe?* This narrative indicates that first, there was an agenda of the press to justify the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, but it is now being questioned, as the press is saying the soldiers are murderers. However, he argues that if the *newspapers start saying it was right, it'll be right again*, lending strength to the view that the initial view of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan was justified.

The narrator further discredits the press by questioning the objectivity of the press. *Newspapers? I don't read them or buy them. They write one thing today and the opposite tomorrow.* The discussion that I make in Chapter 4 Section 5, is indicative of the resultant change brought about in the reporting style of newspapers in the Russian public sphere. As found by von Seth (2011), Russia was gradually advancing through the period of *perestroika*, resulting in a shift in agency gradually becoming crystalized as the effect of the period of censorship that reigned during the Soviet era wore off. Where the former agenda was not to identify and confront directly, as censorship usually obfuscated responsible agents, the newer trend was to identify agency more clearly.

The effect of this shift in reporting agency and in the Russian public sphere was on the one hand, to identify and centralise issues of interest in the public sphere, and on the other, to leave individuals who had been raised on a diet of strict Soviet censorship, confused about their Being and purpose. The narrator reflects this in his thinking out loud: *Who to believe? I don't know. I don't believe anything... I don't know where the truth is. I have two or three friends I trust. I can rely on them. I've been home six years now, and I've seen it all.* To him, the two or three friends who have been through the same lived experiences share a phenomenological framework that is sense making, but he finds himself

alienated in the public sphere of a changing Soviet Union that has sent him off to war and now its citizens have him on trial for murder.

The initial lack of clarity about the war was the result of the sustained campaign of misinformation of the Soviet media, which is not only evidence in the text of *Zinky Boys*, but is also evidenced in the survey of the literature discussed in Chapter 3 of this study. Whilst there is internal validity with regard to Fisher's fidelity and probability tests, there is also support from external documents that this was indeed the case.

Narrator 34 Major Commanding a Mountain Infantry Company, voices the struggle of the returning veterans struggling to regain their identity in a changing Soviet Union which now reflects a public sphere that they are unaccustomed to.

Narrator 34: Major Commanding a Mountain Infantry Company

A lot of people now claim it was all a waste of time. I suppose they want to carve 'It Was All In Vain' on the gravestones. We did our killing over there but we're being condemned for it at home. Casualties were flown back to Soviet airports and unloaded in secret so the public wouldn't find out. You say that's all in the past now, do you? But your 'past' is very recent. I came home on leave in 1986. 'So you get a nice suntan, go fishing and earn fantastic amounts of money, do you?' people asked me. How could they be expected to know the truth, when the media kept quiet (sic).

The narrator-major indicates that the media silence on the true nature of the war in Afghanistan was still in effect in 1986 when he returned home on leave, with people under the impression that for him, life in Afghanistan was a paid holiday. As I indicate in Chapter 3 (Cf. Section 3.5.1), Kalinovsky (2011) highlights the contribution made by journalists in exposing the vicious nature of the war in Afghanistan as well as the mayhem committed by the soldiers of the Soviet Union. This happened due to the implementation of the policy of openness by Gorbachev known as *glasnost*. The literature survey conducted in chapters 3 and 4 verify the introduction of *glasnost* from the mid-1980s onward, which

heralded a more open period of political criticism and confrontation via the media about the Soviet Union involvement in Afghanistan (Cf. Doucé, 2012; Kalinovsky, 2011).

The narrator-major reflects on the public sentiment, which states that war has been in vain and that the soldiers are being condemned for the killings that happened in Afghanistan. He positions the interviewer as representative of public opinion by stating *[y]ou say that's all in the past now, do you? But your 'past' is very recent*. Here he is implying the blanketing out through state censorship of the details of the war, which are now emerging through *glasnost* and a changing public sphere in Russia. He starts this intimation by saying *[c]asualties were flown back to Soviet airports and unloaded in secret so the public wouldn't find out*. He is implying that the level of secrecy ran very deep since the inception of the war, and the war effort could not be considered a wasted effort and in vain, as lives were sacrificed during this government-initiated intervention. These sacrifices were made for at least six years until the effects of *glasnost* took hold. He makes a chilling challenge to the interviewer, and by implication the Soviet public, in his statement: *I suppose they want to carve 'It Was All In Vain' on the gravestones*.

The Soviet State agency in controlling the media is evidenced by a statement made by narrator 27 A Mother who makes the following observation:

Narrator 27: A Mother

This was in 1981. There were all sorts of rumours of wholesale slaughter going on in Afghanistan, but how could we believe that kind of thing? We knew very few people; on television we saw pictures of Soviet and Afghan troops fraternising, tanks strewn with flowers, peasants kissing the ground they'd been allotted by the Socialist government ...

The narrator-mother positions the media coverage in 1981. At this stage the war was ongoing for perhaps a year-and-a-half to two years. There were rumours of

wholesale slaughter going on in Afghanistan, but the population were in disbelief as this would not agree with their moulded image of the heroic Soviet Army as being brave and righteous, as presented from their WW II victory over the German army. The media, through its televised programmes, strengthened this view of liberating and Sovietising Afghanistan by showing images of *Soviet and Afghan troops fraternising, tanks strewn with flowers, peasants kissing the ground they'd been allotted by the Socialist government...*

The view that was presented by the media through its televised campaign deliberately undermined the facts that the conflict was bloody and desperate. It showed imagery that has a strong connotative link with that shown at the end of the Second World War where the liberators and defenders were honoured in this way. **Narrator 38 Private** provides insight on the effect of this kind of media manipulation by the state in response to the interviewer's question on why he went to Afghanistan. *I volunteered to 'go to the aid of the Afghan people'. Radio, TV and the press kept telling us about the Revolution, and that it was our duty to help.* Here there is clear evidence that the Soviet State was using its mass media to inform and shape public opinion. Here the view that is generated is that the Afghan people needed help and appealed to the Soviet conscience to aid the revolution. Although **Narrator 32 Private Tank Crew** denies having made the following statement, this is what the newspaper printed about them, that they *'went to Afghanistan dedicated to the dawn of the April revolution on Afghan soil'*. Here the reference is to the 1978 Saur Revolution, which strengthened the Soviet influence in Afghanistan.

From the data studied in the text of *Zinky Boys* and the analysis above, it is clear that there was divided opinion as to the justification of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. It is further clear that the media, at least up to 1985, prior to the inception of Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*, kept up a campaign of disinformation about the Soviet agency in Afghanistan. The denial of the war was not only evident in the media, but was an established practice for

everybody, especially those deployed to Afghanistan. Narrator 05, Nurse recalls:

Narrator 05: Nurse

There was a conspiracy of silence about our casualties; it was somehow implied that there were an awful lot of infectious diseases over there - malaria, typhus, hepatitis, etc... We weren't allowed to tell the truth in the next-of-kin letters. A boy might be blown up by a mine and there'd be nothing left except half a bucket of flesh, but we wrote that he'd died of food poisoning, or in a car accident, or he'd fallen into a ravine. It wasn't until the fatalities were in their thousands that they began to tell families the truth.

The narrator-nurse admits to the existence of a *conspiracy of silence about our casualties*. When soldiers were killed in action, these deaths would be passed off as the deceased having contracted an infectious tropical disease. In addition, the truth needed to be suppressed about their deaths in the letters that they wrote to the next-of-kin back home in the Soviet Union.

However, when the fatalities reached higher numbers it became difficult to maintain the conspiracy of silence. As evidenced in the text by the phrase *died in the execution of his international duty* became commonplace (cf. Narrator 30 Private Gunlayer). **Narrator 03 Private Grenadier Battalion** recalls when he was sent over in 1981, *[t]he war had been going on for two years, but the general public didn't know much about it and kept quiet about what they did know*. These repeated narratives that testify to the fact that there was a conspiracy of silence about the war in Afghanistan is accepted as factual due to the repeated instances of this being mentioned and comparative consistency with other narratives in the text, providing compelling good reason for the reader to accept such allegations as factual.

Additionally, there was a tradition in place as explained by Voronkov (2004) that the Soviets, when in the public sphere, would pay lip-service to official policy,

and it is only in the private sphere that they may hold their own opinion. Due to the Stalinist regime that encouraged neighbours to inform on one another, Soviet society had reached a high level of permeability in its public sphere, which did not leave ordinary citizens the leeway to speak out in opposition. In spite of the lack of freedom of speech in the public sphere, the average Soviet citizen was deeply patriotic, as is evidenced by the analysis below.

Sub Theme 8.2.2 Sense of Duty and Patriotism

'I stand ready to defend my Motherland, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, when ordered to do so by the Soviet Government, and, as a soldier of the armed forces of the USSR, I swear to defend it with courage, skill, dignity and honour, not sparing my blood and even my life for the achievement of total victory over our foes . . . '

Narrator 32: Private Tank-Crew [extract remembered from the military oath]

The taking of the military oath and kissing the flag (cf. Narrator 40 Private), bound the Soviet conscience of every individual sent to Afghanistan to be duty bound to obey the orders of the Soviet Government. As seen in the earlier analyses (cf. Chapter 6), this taking of the military oath acted like a blanket that covered much of the unsanctioned agency by the Soviet forces in Afghanistan.

As part of their cultural upbringing, many Soviet youths were members of the Pioneer Movement, which is much like the Scouts and Guides movements, although in this instance much more politically inspired. One such member is narrator 11 Sergeant Major, Medical Instructor in a Reconnaissance Unit, who volunteered to go to Afghanistan:

Narrator 11: Sergeant Major, Medical Instructor in a Reconnaissance Unit

I accepted the official line so completely that even now, after all I've read and heard, I still have a minute hope that our lives weren't entirely wasted. It's the self-preservation instinct at work...The political officer gave this lecture about the international situation: he told us that Soviet forces had forestalled the American Green Berets airborne invasion of Afghanistan by just one hour. It was so incessantly drummed into us that this was a sacred 'international duty' that eventually we believed it. I can't bear to think of the whole process now. 'Take off your rose-tinted spectacles!' I tell myself. And don't forget, I didn't go out there in 1980 or 1981, but in 1986, the year after Gorbachev came to power. They were still lying then.

The narrator admits to being completely indoctrinated by the official party line that he still believes what he had been taught despite what he has read and heard. He too, shares the hope, perhaps out of a sense of self-preservation, that his life and those of his comrades had not been wasted. As researcher in this context I am not unaffected by the impact of this statement of the narrator, as I have gone through this impact of a national shift in ideology by the government. I have heard testimonies by fellow veterans of how destructive such an event is at the ontological level to the sense of Self, and how threatening it is to their psychological well-being. The invalidation of the political basis, which served as the seat of one's agency, carries with it huge destructive potential for the individual who cannot embrace alternate realities and reimagine themselves and their future.

In preparing the troops for deployment to Afghanistan, they were told that the initial deployment of the forces of the Soviet Union happened just in time to avert the invasion of the American forces. This positions the conflict for the Soviets in the ideological stereotype of East versus West, or the socialist way of live versus the capitalist way of life. The narrator further states *[i]t was so incessantly drummed into us that this was a sacred 'international duty' that eventually we believed it.* With an American or Western presence in

Afghanistan it would mean the Soviet ideal of seeing Afghanistan as a proxy state or as a Sovietised state of the Soviet Union would no longer be a possibility. Hence, in being ordered by the Soviet Union to defend one of the candidate countries of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics is a legitimate base for agency in Afghanistan for any Soviet soldier.

In continuation, the narrator says *I can't bear to think of the whole process now. 'Take off your rose-tinted spectacles!' I tell myself.* This is a self-admission that the former ideological view upon which their agency rested is not legitimate. The narrator now recognises the socialist ideology as a false consciousness. From the data studied it is clear that the narrator's interview took place after the reform policies were implemented by Gorbachev. He provides the timeline in his interview to position his deployment to Afghanistan as *1986, the year after Gorbachev came to power.* This is followed by his chilling admission that *[t]hey were still lying then.* This shows the duration and depth of deceit practised by the Soviet government that they were still influencing public opinion after the war had been going for six years in Afghanistan.

In describing his experience of his sense of duty to the Soviet Union, narrator 30 Private Gunlayer remembers:

Narrator 30: Private Gunlayer

We were off to fulfil our international duty - it was all cut and dried...I never once heard it said that it was wrong to kill in war. I was brought up to believe that only those who killed in peacetime were condemned as murderers. In war such actions were known as 'filial duty to the Motherland', 'a man's sacred work' and 'defence of the Fatherland'. We were told that we were reliving the achievements of the heroes of the Great Patriotic War against the Nazis, and who was I to doubt it? It was continually hammered into us that we were the best of the best, so why should I question whether what we were doing was right?

The narrator allows us insight into his ideological pattern of reasoning about his understanding of the war and the perceived justification for their participation

and agency in the war. He is clear in his understanding – in the context of their Soviet allegiance they were off to do their international duty, and there was no question about it in their minds. They did not see themselves as murderers as public opinion intimated during the period of *glasnost*.

He uses phrases strongly loaded with Soviet rhetoric such as '*filial duty to the Motherland*', '*a man's sacred work*' and '*defence of the Fatherland*', and further casts these phrases in the context of the Second World War achievements of their fathers, because this is what they were told. The question that goes unanswered is *and who was I to doubt it?*

In continuation, the narrator comments about these ideological phrases *It was continually hammered into us that we were the best of the best, so why should I question whether what we were doing was right?* This view of Soviet life is put sharply into focus by **Narrator 39 NCO in the Security Service**, who happens to be a female. She states *[y]ou want to know how I came to be there? The CO called me in. 'You're needed over there,' he told me. 'It's your duty!' We were brought up on that word, it's second nature to us.* This repetitive viewpoint by several narrators provides a compelling good reason to believe these narrators who state that it is their Soviet upbringing that compelled them to participate. In phrasing it in the context of Fisher's narrative paradigm tests of fidelity and probability, it would be their social reality and patterns of logic that compel them to take this stance in life.

The narrator describes that she encountered another young woman at the clearing centre who was emotionally upset. *At the clearing centre I came across a young girl lying on a bare mattress, crying. 'I've got everything I could possibly want at home - a four-room flat, a fiancé and loving parents.' 'Why are you here, then?' 'I was told things were going badly here, that it was my duty.'* In this instance the reason is the same, it is her sense of duty that compelled her to exercise her agency in being helpful to the Soviet cause. The case is similar to

that of **narrator 30 Civilian Employee** who was about to get married one month before she left to go to Afghanistan. *My fiancé laughed when I told him. 'Doing your "solemn duty to defend the southern borders of our Socialist Motherland", I suppose?'*

These sentiments are the result of Soviet Patriotism, which at times was enforced without allowing dissent. In the case of **narrator 26 A Widow**, she tells of her husband saying *'[i]f I don't go, someone else will have to take my place. "the party's wish is the Komsomol's command", as they say'. [The Komsomol is a political youth organisation in the Soviet Union.]* With reference to obeying political authority, narrator Leading Character who is classified in case 17.5 The Second Day, positions himself and others like him as follows:

Narrator Leading Character [Case 17.5 The Second Day]

We were soldiers obeying orders. In wartime you can be shot for disobedience, and we were at war. Obviously it wasn't the generals themselves who killed women and children, but they gave the orders - and now they're blaming us. Now we're told that to obey a criminal command is itself a crime. But I trusted the people giving the orders. As far back as I can remember I've been taught to have faith in authority. No one ever told me to judge for myself whether or not to trust the authorities, whether or not to shoot. The message was hammered into us over and over again: have faith, trust us.

The data presented in this extract reflect the understanding by common soldiers of their rights and limitations in the context of the Soviet-Afghan war. They saw themselves as instruments in the hands of the State, and were obeying orders, which, when dissented, could mean being shot as a traitor or for treason (cf. Chapter 3.3.1 in which ideology as a driver of the Soviet-Afghan conflict is discussed with reference to the Soviet ideals of ideological narratives perpetuated by the Brezhnev Doctrine).

The narrator shifts the focus of the accusations emanating from public opinion away from the soldiers to those in political command who issued the orders to

engage the mujahedeen in Afghanistan. Milgram (1974:151) describes this state of being as an 'agentic state' in which means that there is no room for personal effective desire, but one has to do the bidding of those who accept responsibility and who have the authority in the given situation. Milgram (1965:57) specifically identifies war as one condition that moves forward on this principle that there is a legitimate authority, which "commands a person to destroy the enemy". This includes violence against women and children. Aberrant orders, which implicated soldiers in killing women and children, are examples of institutional violence where unjust exercise of power is exercised in following those orders to do harm against non-combatants.

In continuation, the narrator identifies his trust in authority, as a responsible Soviet citizen who has taken the military oath, one is duty bound to obey commands emanating from the State. He uses the words *trust* and *faith* to indicate his bond with the authority over him, that he had been conditioned to believe in the Soviet system and to obey authority, *[t]he message was hammered into us over and over again: have faith, trust us*. The narrator protests that he did not have the freedom to judge the legitimacy of his instructions, as he was conditioned to obey. This conditioning is well summarised in the words of **Narrator 27 A Mother** who states *[t]hey were just raw boys, almost children, who were thrown into the fire and accepted it as a matter of honour. Well, that's the way we brought them up*.

The political rhetoric that accompanied this agentic state of the Soviet limited contingent in Afghanistan is reflected in the phenomenological memory shared by narrator 28 1st Lieutenant Battery Commander:

Narrator 28: 1st Lieutenant Battery Commander

I didn't go over there with a desire to kill people. I'm a normal man. We were told over and over again that we were there to fight bandits, that we'd be heroes and that everyone would be grateful to us. I remember the posters: 'Soldiers, Let Us Strengthen Our Southern Borders!' 'Uphold

The Honour Of Your Unit!' 'Flourish, Lenin's Motherland!' 'Glory To The Communist Party!'

The narrator identifies himself as *a normal man*, meaning that he has respect for other persons, he did not go there with *a desire to kill people*. He explains that they were led to believe that they *were to fight bandits*, which implies that in their view, the bandits had no legitimate standing and were opposing the State, or even outlawed, and would be categorised as among those who mean the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics harm.

The slogans that he recalls are indicative of the politicising and justification of their mission. *'Soldiers, Let Us Strengthen Our Southern Borders!' 'Uphold The Honour Of Your Unit!' 'Flourish, Lenin's Motherland!' 'Glory To The Communist Party!'* These slogans have to do with the inclusion of Afghanistan in the USSR on its southern border, and in keeping the capitalist West from harming the Soviet ideal. Lenin is revered in Soviet history as author of the idea of the federalist state of countries that form part of the Soviet Union, whilst the communist ideal was strongly pushed by Stalin. Therefore, these slogans would have effect in motivating true patriots of the Soviet Union to engage willingly in obedience to authority over them in resisting the encroachment of capitalism on the southern borders of the USSR.

It is not as if the State had no idea about what was happening in Afghanistan. This is confirmed by **Narrator 27 A Mother** when stating *[t]he authorities knew what they were sending those boys into. Even the papers published photographs of the mujahedin, strong men thirty or forty years old, on their own land and with their wives and children beside them...* The narrator-mother does not absolve the Soviet Union from its authoritative role and responsibility in the Soviet-Afghan war, stating *they knew what they were sending those boys into*. In the context of the history of Afghanistan it can be compared to a situation where it has become the subject of a tug-of-war between the East and West in the geopolitical Cold War. The narrator-mother explains that the Soviet Union

had knowledge of the strong Muslim orientation in Afghanistan, and strengthens her argument by referring to the media coverage of mature mujahedeen males, together with their families, on their own land. This implies they were in defence of their families, homes and country, an image, which would not be lost on any Soviet audience which had recently been in the same position against the Nazi Germans in the Great Patriotic War. The implication is that those who are in possession of the land by birth right are legitimately defending what is theirs, and would proverbially speaking, fight tooth and nail to keep what is theirs.

I refer to a final argument offered by narrator 44 Private Artillery Regiment who reiterates the duty of the Soviet citizen in being faithful to the Motherland:

Narrator 44: Private Artillery Regiment

We didn't betray our Motherland. I did my duty as a soldier as honestly as I could. Nowadays it's called a 'dirty war', but how does that fit in with ideas like Patriotism, the People and Duty? Is the word 'Motherland' just a meaningless term to you? We did what the Motherland asked of us.

The narrator bases his argument on the metaphorical image of the Soviet Union as the motherland, and refers frequently to this word. He begins by showing their patriotic allegiance, by saying *[w]e didn't betray our Motherland*. In the manner in which betrayal is used here, he is implying that they did not refuse to go, and neither did they attempt to avoid their responsibility. This idea is strengthened with his next statement, *I did my duty as a soldier as honestly as I could*. The concept of *duty* is important to him, and indeed in the data studied, the understanding of duty compares consistently well across the narratives without contrary views, thereby strengthening its factual accuracy. In itself, the notion of doing one's duty as portrayed in the text of *Zinky Boys* depicts a social reality for those Soviet soldiers which, when read as a whole, provides compelling good reason for the reader to accept the narratives as truthful and probable as required by Fisher's tests of fidelity and probability.

The narrator continues by referring to the public opinion that calls it a *'dirty war'*, but does not pause to lend validity to the sentiment. Instead, he immediately asks, *but how does that fit in with ideas like Patriotism, the People and Duty?* In asking this question, he elevates the ideals of patriotism, loyal people or citizens of the Union, and doing one's duty to protect and preserve the Leninist ideal of social soviet republics in unification.

He concludes his argument by asking whether the word *'Motherland'* is just a meaningless term. This argument refers to the Soviet way of life, to how young people were raised to believe in the ideal of the socialist collective that protects and nurtures its subjects. He concludes by stating *[w]e did what the Motherland asked of us*. In saying this he holds the motherland accountable as the responsible authority that tasked them to do their duty and, by implication, which has the responsibility to ensure its continued survival as a socialist state.

The acute awareness of their duty and obligation to the State as experienced by young Soviet soldiers did not manifest by itself. It is the result of, for them, a lifetime of conditioning and exposure to messages proclaiming an ideology fit for Soviet people, which is discussed in the next sub theme.

Sub Theme 8.2.3 Shattered Ideology and Futility

The propagandistic messages that were used to achieve an ideological impact on the Soviet contingent are diverse in nature. Narrator 05 Nurse remembers:

Narrator 05: Nurse

We were told that this was a just war, that we were helping the Afghan people to put an end to feudalism and build a wonderful socialist society...Twice a week we attended a political 'seminar', where we were continually told that we were doing our sacred duty to help make the border totally secure.

The narrator-nurse provides a clearly expressed statement to say *[w]e were told that this was a just war, that we were helping the Afghan people to put an end to feudalism and build a wonderful socialist society...* Perhaps there is an element of validity to this viewpoint as the statement aligns well with the statements found in the survey of the literature on the Soviet-Afghan war as discussed in Chapter 3. The point that I raise in Chapter 3 is that the delicate cultural balance was not properly taken into account when the attempted Sovietisation of Afghanistan was undertaken. The narrator's culture-centric statement in the extract provided positions socialist society as something that is wonderful, and feudalism as something that should be ended. From a socialist viewpoint, the glorification of the socialist way of life is the result of an ideological positioning, which can be traced back to the political worldview of Lenin.

The expansionist views of the Soviet Union that were advocated by the 'seminars' that the support services were exposed to in their training, advanced the view that they were fortifying the southern border to be totally secure against capitalist influence. In the context of the literature surveyed and the history of Afghanistan, which has received international aid both from the East and the West, and whose geographical position is key to both, successful integration on either side would be regarded as a strengthening of the Cold War border. The emotive use of the phrase *we were doing our sacred duty* ironically elevates the war on the Soviet side to the same level as experienced by the mujahedeen, namely a *jihad*. However, in this context the sacredness of their duty means it is a high-order duty to answer to.

This sentiment is further advanced by **narrator 06 Private Driver**, who states *[n]ot a single political instruction period went by without them telling us that 'our forces were bravely protecting the frontiers of the Fatherland and providing assistance to a friend and ally'*. From the data studied, it is clear that the ideological agenda was to justify involvement in Afghanistan to secure the

southern borders against the perceived threat that Afghanistan would hold should it align itself with a western superpower.

In the beginning of the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan, the media was reporting on the aid that the Soviet Union was providing to Afghanistan, but the soldiers who were involved in the armed conflict had a different experience in that they had to endure armed conflict. Because of the media coverage and the geo-political agenda in which the balance between superpowers had to be maintained, the Soviet Union could not declare war on Afghanistan, as they were on record as aiding the country following the April 1978 Revolution. Some soldiers were sensitive enough to understand this position, as is evidenced by the words of **Narrator 47 Private Intelligence Corps** who states: *We weren't issued with identification tags because of the 'danger' of them falling into enemy hands. This was an undeclared war, you see - we were fighting a war which wasn't happening.*

The narrator's statement is to admit to the armed conflict that was happening in Afghanistan, and he is quick to say that they were not issued with identification tags as these would provide proof of military agency by Soviet troops, should they be recovered from soldiers' bodies in such conflict. Therefore, if the war was *undeclared*, it was also not happening. This provided the Soviet government with further grounds to deny direct military agency in Afghanistan, even though they were providing arms and armament to the Afghan army. The casualties of the conflict were transported back to the Soviet Union, as reported by narrator 03 Private Grenadier Battalion.

Narrator 03: Private Grenadier Battalion

In those days no one had seen the zinc coffins. Later we found out that coffins were already arriving in the town, with the burials being carried out in secret, at night. The gravestones had 'died' rather than 'killed in action' engraved on them, but no one asked why all these eighteen-year-olds were dying all of a sudden. From too much vodka, was it, or flu? Too

many oranges, perhaps? Their loved ones wept and the rest just carried on until they were affected by it themselves. The newspapers talked about how our soldiers were building bridges and planting trees to make 'Friend- ship Alleys', as they called them, and about how our doctors were looking after Afghan women and children.

The narrator-private was deployed to Afghanistan in 1981 and comments that *[i]n those days no one had seen the zinc coffins*. He provides the reason for this that the *burials [were] being carried out in secret, at night*. This was because of the instructions that the families received, as is evidenced in the text they could not even select the burial plot as the government was trying to avoid the conglomeration of graves in one spot that would provide visual evidence of the number of deaths (Cf. Section 8.2.1).

The cause of death was described in non-military vocabulary as was evidenced by the gravestones that *had 'died' rather than 'killed in action' engraved on them*. The narrator says *no one asked why all these eighteen-year-olds were dying all of a sudden*. The behaviour can be explained as a consequence of the social conditioning of the Soviet citizens who would not endanger themselves in the public sphere by publically criticising the government, especially early in the conflict before *glasnost* (Cf. Section 4.4.2). The proposed causal factors of their deaths that are voiced by the narrator are meant as a sarcastic criticism of their silence – *[f]rom too much vodka, was it, or flu? Too many oranges, perhaps?* However, as evidenced by **Narrator 05 Nurse**, *[t]here was a conspiracy of silence about our casualties...* while the government continued to advance the ideology that it was building socialism in Afghanistan.

In continuing, the narrator explains that the Soviet public were unaware of the impact of the Soviet-Afghan war on those families, and it is only when they themselves lost somebody, that they would realise the intensity of the conflict. The media still maintained its campaign of disinformation at this time, to inform the public of the aid that was rendered to the Afghan population by providing infrastructure and medical assistance. From the evidence studied above there is

no reason not to accept the factual accuracy of these phenomenological narratives which compare consistently well with regard to the role of the Soviet Union in suppressing evidence about their involvement in Afghanistan, thereby providing compelling good reason for the reader to accept these narratives as accurate.

Early in the anthology of *Zinky Boys* criticism of the war is expressed, in the words of narrator 03 Private Grenadier Battalion.

Narrator 03: Private Grenadier Battalion

People are already saying the whole thing was a political mistake; they may be whispering at the moment but soon they'll be shouting it from the rooftops. I left my blood over there, and the blood of my friends too. We were given medals we don't wear and will probably return, medals honestly earned in a dishonest war.

The narrator gives voice to the dissenting public opinion by repeating what people are saying, that *the whole thing was a political mistake*. This view is accurate as the literature review indicates awareness of this line of reasoning in the mid-1980s, as is evidenced by the Chernyaev diaries (Cf. Chapter 3, Section 3.5). The change in the political climate and the increased opening up of the public sphere is evidenced by the narrator's words, *they may be whispering at the moment but soon they'll be shouting it from the rooftops*. The rumours were about to become openly voiced protest, as was indeed the case as shown in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

The narrator reveals his own sacrifice in his interview again by saying *I left my blood over there, and the blood of my friends too*. The sacrifice of Soviet lives in the war had become a strong public argument as the war had cost at least 15,000 Soviet lives and many more injured (Cf. Chapter 2, Section 2.2.10). Because of the disrepute into which the war had fallen, the narrator says they do not have any pride in wearing the medals that they had been awarded, and

would most likely return them. This sentiment is in agreement with the observation by Astapenia (2013) whom I quote in Chapter 3 (Cf. Sub theme 3.1) as stating that the Soviet involvement in the war was “a point of shame and disgrace”. In addition, many of them refused to accept any medals following the war as they regarded it as alien to them.

The ideological disillusion is evident in the sentiment expressed by narrator 09 Private Artillery Regiment in his interview:

Narrator 09: Private Artillery Regiment

Do you expect us to talk about our 'socialist ideals' like all those interviews in the official media? I don't need to tell you it's hard to have ideals when you're fighting a useless war in a foreign country. We were all in the same boat there but that didn't mean we all thought the same way. What we had in common was that we were trained to kill, and kill we did. We are all individuals but we've been made into sheep, first here at home and then over there.

In the extract selected from his interview that I present here, the narrator by implication brings the Soviet media into disrepute by asking the question *[d]o you expect us to talk about our 'socialist ideals' like all those interviews in the official media?* He proceeds to answer the question by stating that it is *hard to have ideals when you're fighting a useless war in a foreign country*. This statement expresses the improbability of a Soviet victory for the ideology of socialism as seen through the eyes of the narrator. The unasked question is, if this is the case, why has the Soviet Union not realised this? The literature review suggests that the decision to withdraw from Afghanistan had already been taken in 1985, but there were difficulties in its achievement without the Soviet Union losing face in the process (cf. Chapter 3, Section 3.5). In the same survey, evidence is uncovered that a Soviet victory was likely, had the West not engaged by supporting the mujahedeen.

In explaining their collaboration, the narrator implies that there were ideological differences between those deployed in Afghanistan, but that they were united in ensuring their own survival. As previously explained in this thesis, the *Gewaltraum* of Afghanistan required violent agency of those who wanted to survive. The last line of the extract provided reveals an important disillusionment with the ideological position that the narrator experienced by stating *[w]e are all individuals but we've been made into sheep, first here at home and then over there*. This is an important revelation of his view of the socialist dream by implying that the Soviet socialist doctrine could be likened to a total institution in that the system produces individuals who undergo a process of total institutionalism. This happens when they are raised, and indeed, the text of *Zinky Boys* supports this view that the phenomenological position of the average Soviet citizen is one of utmost loyalty to the Union. This is the interpretation that I ascribe to his statement *first here at home*.

The effect of the military processes undergone during training and *Gewaltraum* Afghanistan in stripping individuals of their ethical principles have resulted in soldiers being prepared to kill without question. In this way, his statement with reference to them having been made into sheep in Afghanistan... *and then over there*, implies that they were non-thinking agents who had developed a herd-mentality. This is what the Soviet Union and the war had done to them, to turn them into unthinking individuals through their ideological inculcation in the Soviet Union, and violent behaviour in Afghanistan.

The idea of a lack of individual thinking is echoed by narrator 11: Sergeant Major Medical Instructor in a Reconnaissance Unit, who passes his lived experience on to his recruits. *'Teach yourselves to think so that you won't be made fools of like we were, and come home in zinc coffins!' That's what I tell my pupils now*. These sentiments acknowledge the establishment and existence of group-think at the levels where authority is wielded. Through repeated statements by the organs of the State, individuals are conditioned to ascribe to

ideological value sets and to live by them. With the advent of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, the Soviet Union seemed to have lost its Stalinist hold on the populace and its full control of the public sphere, as indicated in Chapter 3 of this thesis. These dissenting voices that are evident in the data extracted from the interviews in *Zinky Boys* act as precursors to the later openness that would manifest with the dissolution of the Soviet Union on 26 December 1991.

The realisation that the war in Afghanistan is in itself a questionable war is evident in the reflective opinions of veterans about their earlier involvement in Afghanistan.

Narrator 11: Sergeant Major Medical Instructor in a Reconnaissance Unit

When I got home I found a telegram from Sasha's mother waiting for me: 'Please come. Sasha killed.'
'Sasha,' I say to him at the cemetery, 'I'm ashamed that in my finals I got an "A" in Scientific Communism for my critique of bourgeois pluralism. I'm ashamed that after the Congress of People's Deputies pronounced this war a disgrace we were given 'Internationalist Fighters' badges and a Certificate from the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

The narrator in the extract visits the cemetery where his friend is buried, and expresses his sense of shame at being an ardent communist who would use force to subjugate others into communism. He expresses his shame at getting an A-symbol, or being excellent in Scientific Communism [this was still a compulsory subject at Soviet universities in the 1980s]. He is ashamed at receiving his Certificate and '*Internationalist Fighters*' badges...*from the Supreme Soviet of the USSR* [the Supreme Soviet is the highest state organ of the Soviet Union]. The Internationalist Fighters badge is a medal cast in brass that depicts two hands clasping in a greeting against a blue background.

A second medal was also awarded from the Grateful Afghan People, which was a state medal of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan that was handed to

servicemen who served in the Soviet limited contingent in Afghanistan. The medal portrays the flag of Afghanistan superimposed over the Soviet flag. From time-to-time these medals together with certificates are advertised as available for sale on *Amazon* and *eBay*.

Not all of the voices in the collection of narratives in *Zinky Boys* are dissenting voices. One such voice is that of narrator 15 Army Doctor, who only holds the authority that sent him there accountable.

Narrator 15: Army Doctor

No one who was over there wants to fight another war. We won't be fooled again. All of us, whether we were naïve or cruel, good or rotten, fathers, husbands and sons, we were all killers. I understood what I was really doing - I was part of an invading army, let's face it- but I don't regret a thing. Nowadays there's a lot of talk about guilt-feelings, but I personally don't feel guilty. Those who sent us there are the guilty ones. I enjoy wearing my army uniform, I feel a real man, and women go crazy over it.

The narrator in the extract, who served as an army doctor, portrays his phenomenological experience of the Soviet ideal for Afghanistan in the harshest and most direct vocabulary. At first, he expresses a general truth, those who had fought in a war like that do not want to do so again. However, he positions himself and others in the role of victim, to say *[w]e won't be fooled again*. He is inclusive in his description that everybody, no matter their station in life while in the Soviet Union, were killers with a shared understanding that they were part of an invading army.

In his experience, he has no regrets, and while there is talk in the public sphere about guilt and guilt-feelings, he personally does not feel guilty. He states that *[t]hose who sent us there are the guilty ones*. I interpret this in the context of the agentic state in that the authority that issued the instruction should be the one taking both the responsibility and the guilt for what transpired there. The

narrator takes pride in wearing his military uniform and points out that women find him attractive whilst he is wearing his uniform. The latter statement is stereotypically in agreement with the universal sentiment that women like a man in uniform.

Another voice that refuses to accept the role of victim is narrator 20 Private Grenadier Regiment who states:

Narrator 20: Private Grenadier Regiment

I had a talk with an old lecturer at college. 'You were a victim of a political mistake,' he said. 'You were forced to become accomplices to a crime.' 'I was eighteen then,' I told him. 'How old were you? You kept quiet when we were being roasted alive. You kept quiet when we were being brought home in body-bags and military bands played in the cemeteries. You kept quiet over here while we were doing the killing over there. Now all of a sudden you go on about victims and mistakes . . . ' Anyhow, I don't want to be a victim of a political mistake. And I'll fight for the right not to be! Whatever anyone says, those boys were heroes!

In his interview, the narrator explains how, upon integrating back into Soviet life, he was accosted by his lecturer at college. The vocabulary used by the lecturer includes the phrases *victim of a political mistake* and *accomplices to a crime*. The choice of words reflects the published view of the day that proclaimed the invasion as a political mistake by the Soviet Union (Cf. Tamarov, 2001 in Chapter 3.7.2). In addition, the lecturer criminalises the action of the government and positions the veterans as accomplices to a crime.

The response of the veteran is very insightful. He points out that he was young, and by implication, naïve and ideologically blinded. He claims the lecturer who was older, had the moral responsibility to speak out as he was an older person, who by implication, would have had better insight into the situation. The veteran keeps up a barrage of accusations in his defence of his lack of insight at a young age: *'I was eighteen then,' I told him. 'How old were you?'* The question is meant to put the two opponents in a juxtaposition. Being young, fresh from

school, undergoing a process of total institutionalisation, the young man cannot be blamed for his lack of insight, as he was ideologically blinded by the political system that used the schools, youth organisations and the military as instruments to propagate its socialist doctrine. This view aligns with theories about ideology as a set of social practices as proposed by Althusser (1968), which would in the Soviet context, impress upon citizens their role as obedient subjects of the State.

In continuation, the young man now accuses the old lecturer: *You kept quiet when we were being roasted alive. You kept quiet when we were being brought home in body-bags and military bands played in the cemeteries. You kept quiet over here while we were doing the killing over there. Now all of a sudden you go on about victims and mistakes...* ' The accusations are serious. They imply that there had been public knowledge about the loss of Soviet lives in Afghanistan about which the old lecturer as representative of the Soviet citizenry, being an elitist, did not speak out. In as much as the veteran is accusing the old lecturer, he is also accusing the Soviet public at large. Now that the old lecturer sees ideology as false consciousness, he is speaking out against the established concepts of helping the motherland to grow, or to spread socialism (Cf. Narrator 05 Nurse).

The narrator exerts his right to challenge the new stance about the Soviet Union's involvement in the war in Afghanistan by refusing to accept the role of victim. He does not want to be victimised by the general public which in the context of *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* are now disavowing Soviet veterans who accepted their role in society to defend and uphold the socialist Motherland. Their experience was real, and in response to (for some) their sense of obedience to the Soviet State. To accept the new status and viewpoint that the war was a mistake, was to introduce an element of futility, in a sense, to disavow and discredit themselves, and this the narrator refuses to do. He insists on seeing their obedience as heroism. *Anyhow, I don't want to be a victim of a*

political mistake. And I'll fight for the right not to be! Whatever anyone says, those boys were heroes! In my interpretation, the stance of the narrator is similar to that of **Narrator 33 A Soldier** who says *[w]e believed we were there to defend something, namely the Motherland and our way of life*. The sentiments that are expressed in this way stress the authentic nature in which these narrators understood their identity (Being) and patriotism; their relationship with the state was authentic. Somogy and Guignon (2020) explain that “to be authentic recommended that one should be true to oneself *in order thereby* to be true to others”, which in my understanding was in the time-frame of the Soviet-Afghan war, part of the essence of being a true socialist citizen. This sense of authentic self that is implied by the narrator reminds me of the existentialist understanding of authenticity that implies one’s agency is aligned to one’s convictions, as proposed by Heidegger (cf. Chapter 4.2). In the words of Sherman (2009), “ [t]he challenge is to bring ourselves back from our lostness in the I to retrieve ourselves so that we can become our authentic selves.” Therefore, I interpret that narrator-private does not want to lose his identity in the new shift in ideology, which is pronouncing the Soviet ideal to be a false ideal.

To some of the individuals the ideological shift is incomprehensible and unacceptable as is evident in the interview of narrator 40 Private:

Narrator 40: Private

Don't try and tell me we were victims of a mistake. I can't stand those two words and I won't hear them spoken. We fought well and bravely. Why are we being treated like this? I knelt to kiss the flag and took the military oath. We were brought up to believe these things were sacred, to love and trust the Motherland. And I do trust her, in spite of everything. I'm still at war, really, although it's thousands of miles away.

Narrator 40, a private in the army, refuses to entertain the idea that the war was a mistake. He finds the words *victims* and *mistake* an abomination. He counters this viewpoint with his statement *[w]e fought well and bravely*. In doing this, he

reaffirms to himself and others the authenticity of their existence as soldiers in Afghanistan.

Continuing, the narrator questions why they are being treated like this. He establishes himself as a Soviet patriot by saying *I knelt to kiss the flag and took the military oath*. In this context it means that he was willing to sacrifice his own life so that the socialist ideal of the Soviet Union may continue existing. In the context of socialist culture, there can be no greater loyalty than going to war to protect the ideology advanced by the Soviet Union. Indeed, as pointed out earlier, this ideology was inculcated as a set of social practices from a young age, and this is how individuals would define their *Dasein*, their very Being. He provides proof for his viewpoint by stating *[w]e were brought up to believe these things were sacred, to love and trust the Motherland*. This demonstrates his authentic existence as a socialist.

In conclusion, the narrator-private does not want to relinquish his ideological viewpoint, as he says *[a]nd I do trust her, in spite of everything. I'm still at war, really, although it's thousands of miles away*. His phenomenological encounters have changed his very sense of identity, and he has come away scarred, still reliving the war through his remembered experiences. Yet he has returned alive to the motherland, where his allegiance and loyalty is grounded, and he indicates he is still a loyal Soviet citizen who trusts the government that has authority over him. These repeated statements about their ideological disillusionment that are repeated across the narratives studied above, provide compelling good reason to accept them as accurate narratives about the disillusionment experienced by the Soviet limited contingent in Afghanistan.

An idea that finds thematic expression arising from the data studied that links up strongly with ideology, is the sense of futility that permeates the veteran's circle after the war. The reflection of narrator 05 Nurse offers a valuable window in on this train of thought:

Narrator 05: Nurse

Gradually we began to ask ourselves what we were all here for. Such questions were unpopular with the authorities, of course...I too wish I could understand what it was all about, and what it was all for. Over there we had to force such questions back inside us, but at home they just come out and have to be answered.

We must show understanding for the kids who went through all that. I was a grown woman of thirty and it was devastating enough for me, but they were just boys, they didn't understand a thing. They were taken from their homes, had a gun stuck in their hands and were taught to kill. They were told they were on a holy mission and that their country would remember them. Now people turn away and try to forget the war, especially those who sent us there in the first place. Nowadays even we vets talk about it less and less when we meet up. No one likes this war...I'll be haunted by Afghanistan for the rest of my life...

The narrator-nurse had gone to serve in Afghanistan early in 1980, therefore her remembered experiences are contextualised in the early phase of the war. The opening lines of the extract that I provide above relate to not only herself, but others, questioning their true purpose and presence in Afghanistan. It is clear that these questions were followed-up with authorities, as she says [*s*]uch questions were unpopular with the authorities, of course. From the Chernyaev Diaries of 1985 that are referenced in Chapter 3 (Cf. Section 3.5), the picture emerges that points to uncertainty of purpose among the combatants who could not align their ideological framework to what they were experiencing in Afghanistan. The narrator continues reminiscing and shows that she does not have a clear view of the purpose of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, saying that while they could not entertain their uncertainty whilst in Afghanistan, they now need answers to their questions. In the time-frame and the movement toward *glasnost* this is an admirable viewpoint, which becomes even more admirable when one realises she is not only doing this for her own understanding.

In continuing she raises her concern with Soviet victims of the war, the draftees who had no choice but to obey and go to Afghanistan to continue the Soviet Union's diplomacy on the battlefield. The narrator pleads understanding *for the kids who went through all that*. The use of the word *kids* is important in this context, as it points to their youthful age and inexperience of life. The use of the phrase *[t]hey were taken from their homes, had a gun stuck in their hands and were taught to kill*, evokes strong images of helplessness against an abusive system of government that did not consider the innocence of these young people.

The added persuasion that is identified in that they *were told they were on a holy mission and that their country would remember them* holds great irony. The irony is that it was the mujahedeen who had declared *jihad*, or a holy war. Yes, these draftees are remembered by the Soviet Union, but now for the wrong reason, for not being strong enough to refuse their government, which had they done so, would have been equally despicable in the eyes of the Soviet citizenry. These soldiers are still trying to survive, and do so by trying to forget the war. The narrator-nurse accuses the Soviet Government that it is also trying to forget the war when she says *especially those who sent us there in the first place*. This phrase strengthens the disavowal of the government through its state organs that were practicing institutional violence by not recognising the veterans as true veterans and providing their promised rights in accordance with their veteran's status (cf. Chapter 3.7.1).

The narrator indicates that the veterans talk less about the war, which is in agreement with the changes that were happening in the Soviet Union and rising protests not only from their political opponents, but also from within the Soviet Union against its hegemonic behaviour. The last statement in the extract summarises public opinion of the war – *[n]o one likes this war...I'll be haunted by Afghanistan for the rest of my life...*

Another voice that brings the sense of futility to the fore is that of narrator 44 Private Artillery Regiment:

Narrator 44: Private Artillery Regiment

Nowadays they say we were an occupying force. But what did we take away with us, except for our comrades' coffins? What did we get out of it, apart from hepatitis and cholera, injuries and lives crippled in all senses of the word? I've got nothing to apologise for: I came to the aid of our brothers, the Afghan people. And I mean that. The lads out there with me were sincere and honest. They believed they'd gone to do good - they didn't see themselves as 'misguided fighters in a misguided war', as I saw it described recently.

The narrator is unapologetic about his participation in the war. He is aware of the new narrative in the public sphere that classifies their agency in Afghanistan as the actions of *an occupying force*. However, his argument is not so much with the label *occupying force* as it is with the futility of the Soviet engagement in Afghanistan. He sounds off with a barrage of questions about the gain of their involvement there. *But what did we take away with us, except for our comrades' coffins? What did we get out of it, apart from hepatitis and cholera, injuries and lives crippled in all senses of the word?* In asking these questions the narrator is highlighting the futility of their presence in Afghanistan. He describes the terrible price that they had to pay in Soviet lives, in combatting tropical diseases as well as injuries and lives crippled in all senses of the word, that refers to the physical and mental scarring of the returning veterans. In this regard, the Soviet Union would still be paying the price for many years to come as these young men make up a lost generation (cf. Danilova in Chapter 3.7.1).

In continuation of his argument, the narrator reaffirms his sense of identity and ideology by being unapologetic in stating that he came to the aid of his Afghan brothers – in this he positions them as socialists who needed to be protected by the Soviet Union, and his comrades in arms were *sincere and honest* with regard to this purpose. He posits them as taking the ideological high ground in

saying *[t]hey believed they'd gone to do good – they didn't see themselves as 'misguided fighters in a misguided war', as I saw it described recently.* In saying this, he bases his conviction on the accepted view of socialist ideology and puts them in an authentic relationship in that they were doing good for the benefit of others. His positioning of their belief in the past tense is interpreted to mean that they did not go to Afghanistan with ill intent or as misguided individuals. The narrator argues for credibility for his agency and that of his comrades who were with him as they were in their view, posted to Afghanistan legitimately.

Some of the conscripts who had, for various reasons of their own, brought the futility of the Soviet-Afghan war into sharp focus, were those who had either deserted during, or before deployment, as is illustrated next.

Narrator 42: Sergeant Intelligence Corps

*I assumed people would become kinder and gentler after all the bloodshed. Surely they wouldn't want even more killing? But this friend of mine picks up the paper. 'They have returned from captivity,' he reads, and starts swearing. 'What's up with you?' I ask. 'I'd put 'em all up against the wall and shoot them myself!' 'Haven't you seen enough blood already?' 'They make me sick, those traitors. We were getting our arms and legs blown off while they were going round New York looking at skyscrapers.'**

** A reference to a few well-publicised cases of Soviet Army deserters who were taken from Afghanistan to the USA and other Western countries (where they were much feted) but who later returned voluntarily to the USSR.*

In the exchange between the two veterans, Narrator 42 reflects on the bloodshed that occurred during their deployment, and in the context of his dialogue with his fellow-veteran, had the same assumption of him, that he too had experienced enough bloodshed. The statement by his fellow-veteran *'[t]hey have returned from captivity,'* is a heading that he has read in the newspaper which refers to army deserters who were taken from Afghanistan to the USA and other Western countries where they were entertained in a lavish style. However, these deserters later returned to the USSR of their own accord.

The statement by the fellow-veteran *'I'd put 'em all up against the wall and shoot them myself!'* points to the vehement dislike of deserters or draft evaders by conscripts who had successfully served and returned from Afghanistan. The normal treatment of deserters would be for the government to declare them as traitors and to have them shot. In the absence thereof, the fellow-veteran expresses the desire to shoot them himself, in compensation for the suffering they had personally endured while the deserters had been treated lavishly by their host countries who had, no doubt, treated them as very important persons and media celebrities in order to discredit the Soviet-Afghan war.

I conclude with a last extract from Narrator 44 Private Artillery Regiment, who illustrates the point that the ideology of the war was lost in the public sphere on the home front.

Narrator 44: Private Artillery Regiment

Who says we lost the war? Here's where we lost it, here, back home, in our own country. We could have won a great victory here too. We came back as strong as steel forged in the fire, but we weren't given the chance- or the power. Every day someone or other scrawls the same protest over the war memorial: 'Put it in your Army HQ where it belongs!' And my eighteen-year-old cousin doesn't want to go into the army 'to obey a lot of stupid or criminal orders'.

The narrator questions the power-base from which people speak when they say the war was lost by the Soviet limited contingent in Afghanistan. His opinion is that the war was lost on the home front, in the Soviet Union. He believes that a great victory could have been won at home in the USSR. By implication, he is saying that had the Soviet population united in support of the war it would have been an ideological victory for the Union. He follows this with an image of soldiers forged in fire, emerging as strong as steel. However, they were not afforded the opportunity or the power to return as victors or champions of the Soviet socialist cause.

In continuation, the narrator refers to the ongoing wave of protests from within the Soviet borders in the public sphere against the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. He uses the example of the war memorial, which is in the social space of the ordinary citizen which is desecrated on an almost daily basis by people who paint messages on it that it should be moved to the army headquarters where it belongs. By implication, the message is to take the war memorial out of the public spaces and thereby out of the citizen's public sphere.

As a whole, the image of the victorious Red Army has suffered inexorably from its inability to secure a socialist victory in Afghanistan. It has thereby proven the Soviet ideology to be unattainable in Afghanistan. The reputation of the army has been tarnished to the extent that young Soviet males no longer desire to enlist, as is illustrated in the extract by the narrator's cousin who *doesn't want to go into the army 'to obey a lot of stupid or criminal orders'*. This statement indicates that the public takes the view that the command chain in the army is no longer honourable.

8.3 A THEMATIC INTERTEXT – RESTORYING AFGHANISTAN IN THE SOVIET PUBLIC SPHERE

I present a thematic intertext derived from the analysis above regarding the Soviet public sphere in alignment with research objective three to construct and interpret the intertextual narrative of *Zinky Boys*. The thematic intertext that is generated here will contribute to the identification of the public moral argument in the text when it is read in conjunction with the thematic intertexts generated in chapters 6 and 7.

The evidence from the text indicates that the Soviet media, especially the press, were used as instruments in the hands of the Soviet State to advance the ideological views of the socialist union of states among its citizenry. The data

studied supports the claims that a campaign of disinformation was waged to generate the illusion that the Soviet Union's limited military contingent was deployed to Afghanistan to advance its socialist ideals in providing socio-economic aid and medical care to vulnerable groups, namely women and children.

The campaign of disinformation was particularly effective early in the war as this campaign led some individuals to enlist their services to aid the Soviet Union in achieving its published objectives. There is clear textual evidence that the Soviet State was using the media to inform and shape public opinion about the war, and that the Afghan State was a beneficiary of Soviet aid. Similarly, the media impressed upon the Soviet citizenry that it was their duty to help in Afghanistan.

In the tradition of the Soviet public sphere, the press was speaking with an authoritative and prescriptive voice as an extension of the State, and morally justified what to believe. Through its televised programmes, the media strengthened the view of liberating and Sovietising Afghanistan by showing images of Soviet and Afghan troops fraternising, tanks strewn with flowers, and peasants kissing the ground they had been allotted by the Socialist government.

The press in the hands of the Soviet government was compelled to practise a conspiracy of silence during the early years of the war and up to 1986 about the casualties suffered in Afghanistan. The evidence presented in Chapter 3 Section 5 underscore the Soviet government's agenda of presenting the war as an internationalist mission, rather than a war. Public opinion and perception were against the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, which may have compelled the government to perpetuate the internationalist mission view rather than admit the true state of affairs in the face of growing pressure from soldiers and military families. Evidence provided by the text reveals the transportation of coffins and funerals conducted under cover of darkness so as not to alert the general

population to the high number of casualties suffered. Soviet personnel in Afghanistan who were authorised to contact relatives about deaths incurred in Afghanistan were instructed to cover up the nature of the war casualties with fake news about accidents or deaths resulting from contracting a tropical disease.

Due to a lack of clarity and purpose about the Soviet engagement in Afghanistan, ideological uncertainty was present among conscripts in Afghanistan. In particular, the data suggests that returning veterans reported a disconnect between what the media reported and what they experienced. There was very little published about the horror of the war they had been exposed to, making the journalistic references to Afghanistan surreal and laughable to them. The cause for this is that in the early years of the war the campaign of censorship contributed to the obfuscation of who was responsible for what; with an underreporting of actual violence experienced by the Soviets, but with the advent of glasnost, the newspapers reported more honestly about the war and this brought about an ideological shift in the beliefs of the average Soviet citizen to adopt a view against Soviet involvement in Afghanistan.

The data supports the argument that with the change in the media reporting style, the war became a matter for open discussion in the public sphere. Veterans of the war found themselves alienated from, and unwelcome in the public sphere, with regard to the Soviet-Afghan war. It became increasingly difficult for returning veterans to establish an identity and ideological position for themselves in the public sphere. Public sentiment swayed towards the opinion that the war in Afghanistan had been in vain.

Many of the veterans position themselves as patriotic citizens of the Soviet Union. The cultural upbringing of youths in the Soviet Union contributed to their willingness to express their sense of duty and patriotism. The Soviet youth were indoctrinated to believe in socialist ideologies, which formed the basis of their

agency in Afghanistan. In addition, the taking of the military oath and kissing the flag (cf. Narrator 40 Private), bound the Soviet conscience of every individual sent to Afghanistan. It made them duty bound to obey the orders of the Soviet Government, and therefore they acted as willing instruments in the hands of the Soviet State. As seen in the earlier analyses (cf. Chapter 6), this taking of the military oath acted like a blanket that covered much of the unsanctioned agency by the Soviet forces in Afghanistan.

The data show that fulfilling one's international duty was a matter of honour to most Soviets and provided a justified reason and understanding for their involvement in the war. In executing this honour, they were not betraying the motherland -they did what the motherland asked of them. As such, the motherland is held accountable as the responsible authority that tasked them to do their duty and, by implication, which has the responsibility to ensure its continued survival as a socialist state.

Due to their sense of duty and ideological orientation, the conscripts did not doubt their legitimacy and the sacred nature of their duty in Afghanistan. Political youth parties played a contributing role in influencing young Soviets to go to Afghanistan to 'do their international duty'. The Soviets in Afghanistan saw themselves as obeying the wish of the State, and placed themselves in an agentic state to do the bidding of their government, whom they believed had the authority, and would be taking responsibility, for their actions in Afghanistan.

While their ideological conditioning and positioning prevented them from questioning the legitimacy of the war and their involvement in it, returning veterans became severely disoriented by the new shift in ideology brought about by *perestroika*, and in particular *glasnost* and the truth about the war. Yet despite this, many narrators expressed their trust in the Soviet authority.

From the data studied, it is clear that the Soviet ideological agenda was to justify involvement in Afghanistan to secure the southern borders against the perceived threat that Afghanistan would hold should it align itself with a western superpower. A clear view emerged that the Soviet limited contingent members were told that this was a just war, that they were helping the Afghan people to put an end to feudalism and build a wonderful socialist society. From a socialist viewpoint, the glorification of the socialist way of life is the result of an ideological positioning, which can be traced back to the political worldview of Lenin. There is a sense of irony in the use by some narrators of the term 'doing our sacred duty' which elevates the war on the Soviet side to the same level as that experienced by the mujahedeen, namely a *jihad*.

Because of the Soviet media coverage strategies and the geo-political agenda in which the balance between superpowers had to be maintained, the Soviet Union could not declare war on Afghanistan, as they were on record as aiding the country following the April 1978 Revolution. The Soviet government, however, did their best to maintain the published image of them aiding the Afghan government by maintaining a conspiracy of silence about the casualties that they were suffering, and falsifying Soviet death reports relating to the conflict. The result is that many families who were not directly impacted by the war in Afghanistan, remained uninvolved about it in the public sphere, especially in the early years of the war.

With the advent of *glasnost*, the emerging and dissenting public opinion from the text is that 'the whole thing was a political mistake'. Because of the disrepute into which the war had fallen, some veterans do not have any pride in wearing the medals that they had been awarded, and would most likely return them. Some narrators expressed the view that 'it is hard to have ideals when you're fighting a useless war in a foreign country'.

Through repeated statements by the organs of the State as evidenced in the text, individuals were conditioned to ascribe to Soviet ideological value sets, and to live by them. With the advent of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, the Soviet Union seemed to have lost its Stalinist hold on the populace, and its full control of the public sphere. In addition, Afghan veterans became ideologically disillusioned because their government had disavowed them. The realisation among these veterans that the war in Afghanistan is in itself a questionable war, is evident in the reflective opinions of veterans about their earlier involvement in Afghanistan. This is visible in dissenting voices that are evident in the data extracted from the interviews in *Zinky Boys*, which act as precursors to the later openness that would manifest with the dissolution of the Soviet Union on 26 December 1991.

Not all of the voices in the collection of narratives in *Zinky Boys* are dissenting voices. Some of them hold the authority that sent them there accountable while refusing to be held accountable as individuals themselves. Other veterans experience feelings of guilt and position themselves as victims, but this is not the case for all veterans. However, in the public sphere some veterans are portrayed by the citizenry as accomplices to a crime. The refusal of some veterans to see themselves as victims of the State aligns with their struggle for identity, and upholds the idea that they had a positive sense of authentic Self (Heidegger) and exercised an existentialist understanding of authenticity that implies one's agency is aligned to one's convictions. Many victims see themselves as Soviet patriots - this ideology was inculcated as a set of social practices from a young age, and this is how individuals would define their *Dasein*, their very Being.

The data studied support the view that the average conscript sent to Afghanistan was ideologically blinded by the political system that used the schools, youth organisations, and the military as instruments to propagate its socialist doctrine. This view aligns with theories about ideology as a set of social

practices, for example as proposed by Althusser, which would in their application in the Soviet context, impress upon citizens their role as obedient subjects of the State. Therefore, many veterans do not want to lose their identity in the new shift in ideology, which is pronouncing the Soviet ideal to be a false ideal, as it would mean that they have to renounce their earlier social conditioning. That is why many narrators cling to their belief that they fought well, and bravely. In believing so, they reaffirm to themselves, and others the authenticity of their existence as soldiers in Afghanistan.

The futility of the Soviet-Afghan war is a thought that occupies the mind of many veterans. Even early in the war while in Afghanistan, some members of the Soviet limited contingent questioned their presence and purpose there. Strong images of helplessness against an abusive system of government that did not consider the innocence of young people abound in the narratives. The disavowal of the government through its state organs that were practicing institutional violence by not recognising the veterans as true veterans and providing their promised rights in accordance with their veteran's status has become a topic for discussion among the veterans who find themselves discriminated against in the public sphere. Although these draftees are remembered by the Soviet Union, it is now for the wrong reason, for not being strong enough to refuse their government when sent to Afghanistan, which had they done so, would have been equally despicable in the eyes of the Soviet citizenry.

The changes that were happening in the Soviet Union during the period of *glasnost* and rising protests from within the Soviet Union against its hegemonic behaviour establish a strong character of futility regarding the Soviet-Afghan war. The futility in participating in the war is accentuated by the high price paid in lives and the physical and mental injuries sustained. However, despite these negative events, many narrators reaffirm their sense of identity and ideology by being unapologetic in stating that they came to the aid of those in Afghanistan.

In so doing the narrators position themselves as socialists who needed to be protected by the Soviet Union. The accepted view of socialist ideology as portrayed by the narrators puts them in an authentic relationship in that they believed they were doing good for the benefit of others. Some of the conscripts who had, for various reasons of their own, brought the futility of the Soviet-Afghan war into sharp focus, were those who had either deserted during, or before deployment.

The text suggests that the Soviet ideology for Afghanistan was lost in the public sphere on the home front. As a whole, the image of the victorious Red Army has suffered inexorably from its inability to secure a socialist victory in Afghanistan. It has thereby proven the Soviet ideology to be unattainable in Afghanistan even though the majority of the conscripts were hardened socialists to the core.

8.4 THE PUBLIC MORAL ARGUMENT OF *ZINKY BOYS* AND LOCATING THE EPIPHANY

I refer to Chapter 4 of this study in which I set out Fisher's (1984) view of the public moral argument (PMA). Fisher (1984:12) presents the differentiating features that sets the public moral argument aside from reasoned discourse of the type used in more formal settings such as arguments in court; theological and academic debates, or arguments in specialised communities. The differentiating features are:

1. It is publicised, made available for consumption and persuasion of the polity at large
2. It is aimed at what Aristotle called "untrained thinkers", or to be effective, it should be.
3. PMA is a form of controversy that inherently crosses fields. It is not contained by subject matter and because its realm is public-social

knowledge, public moral argument naturally invites participation by field experts and is dominated by the superiority of their arguments.

4. PMA, which is oriented toward what ought to be, is undermined by the 'truth' that prevails at the moment. The rational world paradigm and presence of experts in PMA make it difficult for the public of untrained thinkers to win an argument.
5. PMA is moral in the sense that it is founded on ultimate questions – of life and death, of how persons should be defined and treated, of preferred patterns of living.
6. PMA refers to good reasons in the narrative paradigm and inferential structures in the rational world paradigm
7. PMA may also refer to public controversies – disputes and debates – about moral issues e.g. war

Having set out the features of what a public moral argument is in the view of Fisher (1984), it is appropriate that I first evaluate whether the anthology of narratives in *Zinky Boys* answers to these requirements.

The book *Zinky Boys: Soviet Voices from the Afghanistan War* was first published in 1989 and translated into English and published again in 1992. The Nobel Foundation awarded Alexievich the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2015. The page that contains her biographical sketch testifies to the publication of the book, and that both the Communist newspapers as well as the military had verbally attacked her. In addition, court proceedings had been initiated against her in 1992, but the case was later closed when the public came to her defence.

The collection of narratives present the emotive experiences that individuals felt about their involvement in the war. It contains the remembered lived experiences of ordinary Soviet citizens who had a part in the war, and as such is not a technical work that is aimed at a particularly specialised audience.

The controversy that is raised in *Zinky Boys* comprises a diversity of views from devoted socialists to dissenting voices who feel betrayed by their government. As wars are events that are generally considered to be in the domain of public social knowledge; or in the public sphere, as I argue in this thesis, it answers to this requirement. In addition, the phenomenological experiences are shared in the words of the narrators themselves, who are the 'field experts' for it their lived experiences and emotive arguments that are printed.

The public moral argument in *Zinky Boys* is oriented towards sharing news, insight and truth about the war in Afghanistan, which contrasted with and brought about a subaltern voice, opposing the propagandistic 'truth' that was perpetuated by the government of the Soviet Union. The public moral argument in this instance deals with the perceived unnecessary slaughter of young Soviets on the battlefield in Afghanistan, therefore it meets the requirement of being moral.

The narrators in their shared emotive narratives provide compelling good reasons for the reader to believe in their narrated phenomenological experiences as social realities. These experiences overlap with regard to factual accuracy and comparability of similar experiences shared by other narrators in the anthology. There is an authentic nature or characterological coherence evident in the sharing of the emotional pictures that are generated.

As mentioned earlier, the Communist press, as well as the military as an organ of the State, disputed the collection of war-narratives. Therefore, in this regard, it meets the last requirement set by Fisher, as both the book and the war have become the centre of a public controversy.

From the evidence that I present above, I conclude that the text of *Zinky Boys* meets all of the requirements set out by Fisher (1984) for the text to be considered a public moral argument. It now remains for me to represent the

public moral argument itself, that is contained in the narratives. It is important to note that the public moral argument that I perceive in the text is my understanding derived from the analysis of the data. In presenting the public moral argument I answer the final research objective of this study, namely to describe and explain the public moral argument in the case of the Soviet-Afghanistan war from the phenomenological viewpoint of the narrators. The moral argument comprises a set of arguments that are enumerated below. However, before I do so, I need to make a few brief comments on Denzin's (2002) view of the epiphany.

The first comment that I wish to make is that interactional moments impact on people's lives in either a positive or negative manner, but they "create transformational experiences" (Denzin, 2002:34). Denzin describes these moments as 'epiphanies'. These moments represent and shed light on "moments of crisis that appear in individuals' lives. Such moments are often interpreted...as turning-point experiences" (Denzin, 2002:34 on Strauss, 1959). Such a moment represents a transformation in a person's life after which that person can no longer be the same person again.

The second comment relates to the types of epiphanies identified by Denzin (2002:34). He describes a taxonomy of four epiphanies: major, cumulative, minor and illuminative, and relived. A major epiphany is like a Damascus moment, it is life changing. The cumulative epiphany is when a series of occurrences result in a decision or action. When situational problems or tensions surface, the term minor or illuminative epiphany is used. Finally, when a major epiphany is relived, or repeated in the individual's life, it is classified as a relived epiphany. This taxonomy is presented here to support the claim that I make that I situate the epiphanic moment primarily in the altered state of Being, and in the public sphere, as is demonstrated in sections 8.4.1 and 8.4.4 below.

8.4.1 We, the *Afghantsi*, endured unbearable levels of violence in Afghanistan, in an unjustified war

The narratives in *Zinky Boys* make a compelling argument that when the Soviet Union first decided to assist the government of Afghanistan in 1979 by sending a limited contingent of forces to counter the mujahedeen rebel forces, it did not take the Soviet public into its confidence. In fact, it went to extreme lengths, to manipulate the media and deceive the Soviet public at large.

The evidence studied indicates that the State took advantage of the ideological conditioning of its subjects to bind them morally to their Soviet military oath to 'defend' the motherland. This motherland was not directly under any form of attack, but its government was overzealous in wanting to expand the Soviet footprint into Asia by the Sovietisation of Afghanistan. It drafted and sent poorly equipped and underprepared troops into battle, literally 'throwing them to the wolves'. The mountainous terrain lent itself to conducting guerrilla-style warfare for which the Soviets were poorly trained, resulting in them suffering heavy losses. In addition, they struggled climatically to adapt to the extreme temperatures of the country.

The data supports the opinion that these conscript troops were misguided in their ideological belief that they were strengthening the southernmost border of the Soviet Union. Their task was complicated by the strong international support and presence of professional soldiers who acted as mercenaries with the mujahedeen against the Soviet troops. From the text of *Zinky Boys* it is evident that large quantities of foreign weaponry and supplies in aid of the mujahedeen rebellion was recovered, making this an imbalanced conflict. The imbalance was further complicated by the limitation of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan which was kept at around 100 000 troops at a time, strengthening the argument that the Soviets were not at war, but helping to keep the peace by subduing the

rebels. However, the textual evidence shows they paid a terrible price in the brutal loss of individual lives.

The Soviet ideological positioning came under scrutiny when it became public knowledge that the Union was backtracking on its earlier position that their presence in Afghanistan was justified. The textual evidence suggests that this is the reason why returning veterans were not idealised in the same manner as those who partook in the Second World War. The narratives in *Zinky Boys* point not only to physical conflict, but also to cultural and psychological conflict. At the cultural level, the evidence supports the view that the Soviet Union did not understand and underestimated the cohesiveness and unity of the Muslim faith as a driver of the conflict from the side of the mujahedeen.

Ontologically speaking, the evidence studied show that individuals who participated on the Soviet side of the conflict underwent a process of self-mortification in order to survive, and so became troubled individuals who could not integrate successfully back into Soviet society after the war. These are moments of major epiphany that resulted during and after enemy contact. In the text of *Zinky Boys*, the evidence points to individuals changing after contact with the enemy and the realisation that they are no longer the same. For different individuals the major epiphany is situated around differing events, but most of them, after a few weeks in Afghanistan, were changed individuals. In the language of Denzin, these experiences unfold on the level of a crisis in the individual's life that he or she needs to confront. In some instances, repeated exposure to violence in the *Gewaltraum* of Afghanistan acts as a cumulative epiphany.

In the context of the Soviet-Afghan war, I understand these epiphanies to have occurred "within the larger, historical, institutional, and cultural arenas that surround an individual's life" (Denzin, 2002:37). At the institutional level where these soldiers were in an agentic state in the hands of the military, which is an

extension of the government of the Soviet Union, their epiphany is situated on the canvas of the larger historical scene of Soviet imperialism in Asia. In continuation of locating the epiphany, whilst the individuals were all experiencing troubles at the biographical and personal level in the epiphanic sense, I contend that their experience of epiphany impact on the issue level, meaning these experiences have become a public matter. These are phenomenological, existential problems, which have become a matter for debate in the Soviet public sphere, and not only debate, but a societal problem to be resolved.

The only tether to their past were the maternal figures of the motherland and their mothers at home. The text suggests that this was a mother's war as they paid dearly in suffering uncertainty and in having to deal with the death of their loved ones. In the Foucauldian sense, these mothers acted as truth speakers or *parrheisiastes* in that they were subaltern voices crying out for justice and recognition in the war through their societal bodies, such as the Committee of Soldiers' Mothers.

At the level of hermeneutic phenomenology, these individuals who participated as part of the Soviet forces suffered intensely in the *durée* of *Gewaltraum* Afghanistan, which had a transformational effect on their Being, or a negative epiphany. The text shows that these psychological changes and their attitude to death permeated through to a disregard for human life, and the lives of the civilian population. The scale of violence practised by the Soviets at times far exceeded the minimum force required and this became an addictive state of being for them. The evidence further shows that the Afghan population was 'othered' by the Soviets, which allowed a perception to manifest that they were justified in exercising their violent behaviour towards the Afghans. This state of Being was further exacerbated by the challenging physical conditions of terrain, climate and lack of support from the motherland through the Soviet Army in terms of medical, food and equipment abound.

Deviant behaviour in the ranks that is evidenced in the text made survival difficult for the conscripts. Additionally, the emotional scarring suffered by individuals that is described in-text, often led to further deviant behaviour and even suicide. With the exposure to the violent conditions experienced in Afghanistan, these individuals encountered impossible challenges that made it difficult for them reintegrate into Soviet society upon their repatriation. Chief among these is the lack of trauma counselling to minimise the future fallout from their emotional scarring.

8.4.2 We, the *Afghantsi*, did what we could do to survive the war in Afghanistan

The textual evidence points to the fact that conscripts perceived themselves to be in an agentic state, ordered by their government to participate in a war on foreign soil to expand socialism. Driven by their self-preservation instinct they often had to choose among limit-case decisions and deeds, which they would otherwise have avoided. However, the data studied reveals a deeply-rooted reverence for the motherland and the socialist cause.

The data shows they suffered *Dedovshchina* at the hands of their seniors, and were severely abused and victimised by their own forces, including the loss of life by the hands of own forces. In order to deal with the trauma inflicted by *Gewaltraum* Afghanistan, many of these troops and support personnel found escape through agency in violence, alcohol, smoking and drugs, and in some instances prostitution. Upon repatriation, they brought these addictions back with them to the Soviet Union. In addition, violence bribery, theft and corruption became currency with which to assert one's will over others and to gain access to material goods not readily available in Soviet markets at affordable prices.

Once the realisation about conditions in Afghanistan became manifest at the knowledge level of the Soviet population, instances of draft evasion became more pronounced, with soldiers turning to self-mutilation or even committing suicide. Mothers who bribed officials to change their sons' draftee orders exacerbated the problem of bribery.

These conscripts who fought in Afghanistan underwent personality changes at the very core of their Being. They emerged from the war prone to violence, addicted, and filled with anger and hatred, making their integration back into Soviet society problematic. The evidence points to a loss of 'happiness' which I interpret to mean that they had lost their centre of balance in life. The impact of the ethical and moral corruption of these individuals on their agency put them in conflict with the general Soviet population.

8.4.3 We, the *Afghantsi* and mothers of the deceased, have become victims of this war at the hands of the State

Many *Afghantsi* are portrayed as having been subjected to *suffering agency* whilst in Afghanistan. While being obedient to the Soviet Union, they experienced a state of 'low agency', which left them with limited choices, but overall they were driven by the desire to survive. Similarly, the mothers of soldiers who died in Afghanistan are portrayed as victims of institutional violence as they were not always given the grants due to them on the deaths of their sons, and they had to fight individually, or through associations, or use political contacts to effect a result.

The returning veterans suffered at the hands of the State as they were disavowed as war veterans upon their initial return from Afghanistan. In the absence of an officially declared war the Soviet government took *carte blanche* in what privileges they afforded or did not afford these veterans. The evidence uncovered points to the fact that the medical care that was offered was very

limited and rudimentary. In addition, it was suggested that no valuable psychiatric assistance was offered to troops in the process of demobilising and reintegrating into society. In this regard, they became victims of institutional violence, as the Soviet government as institution had the moral responsibility to look after them in terms of its social contract with them as war veterans.

Upon their return to the Soviet Union these troops found they were not given a proper hero's welcome, instead they were despised and looked down upon, even criminalised by members of the citizenry. Many of the relationships that these veterans had with family members disintegrated due to the altered state of their Being, thus the impact at the level of the family was notable. The data shows that power-relations through the use of violence had become a troubling characteristic which veterans experienced difficulty in letting go.

The mothers of deceased soldiers were also victimised and suffered psychologically, in that the government did not give them proper recognition as they were poorly compensated for their loss. In addition, they were not allowed to participate in laying out the bodies of their sons (and daughters) who were killed in Afghanistan. They could not even view the bodies before the interment. Plots were allocated for their burial in the cemetery by the State, thus the fallen could not even be buried together as testimony to their sacrifice. The words that were inscribed on their grave stones did not honour them for their sacrifice.

Mothers resorted to comforting one another at the cemetery and shared the stories of their fallen with one another. These mothers and those of the returned veterans additionally formed pressure groups to expose the conditions in the military under which their children were trained and did combat. In taking their message to the public sphere these mother-figures were agentic as truth-speakers or *parrheisiastes* on behalf of the troops and themselves.

The evidence provided in the text by the veterans bears testimony to the Soviet suppression of the facts of the war as the State issued a gagging order to prevent troops from talking about the war. This agency by the Soviet State weighs heavily on the conscience of the mothers who had lost their sons in a war, a war that is undermined and underplayed by the very government that had sent its troops into combat.

8.4.4 We, the *Afghantsi* and the Soviet-Afghan War had become a matter for debate in the Soviet public sphere

The evidence studied show that the Soviet media were used as an extension of the Soviet government to inculcate and elevate its ideological views of socialism as a preferred mode of life. However, the data in the text questions the justification of the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan to thereby advance its socialist ideals. The media was used to inform and shape public opinion in support of socialist ideology, and intervention in Afghanistan, which was underrepresented as low-key involvement rendering of development aid. However, the duty of Soviet citizens to assist in the Sovietisation of Afghanistan was advocated and strengthened through the media, which was understood to be speaking with the authority of the State.

Most individuals who had been indoctrinated with socialist ideologies from a young age were susceptible to accepting the published ideology without question. The binding of their conscience to advance Soviet ideals through taking the military oath kept them morally blinded to alternative considerations that the war may not be justified, hence they acted as willing instruments in the hands of the State. For the average Soviet conscript it was a matter of honour to do one's international duty, and honouring the Motherland in doing so. The data shows that due to their sense of duty and ideological orientation, the conscripts did not doubt their legitimacy and the sacred nature of their duty in Afghanistan.

With the introduction of *glasnost* and the change in leadership, the debate on the Soviet-Afghan war entered the Soviet public sphere. In it, and through the text of *Zinky Boys* and its narratives, the disinformation and conspiracy of silence campaigns were exposed to the public. The opening up of the public sphere introduced a new era in ideological positioning for many Soviets. Whereas conscripts were formerly convinced they were doing their sacred duty, they were now confronted with an ugly truth, that they were despised by their fellow Soviets.

The earlier ideological conditioning that the Red Army was invincible, as emanating from the memories of the Second World War, now no longer applied, and individuals in uniform were despised. The shift in ideology now meant that to be involved or to have been involved in the Afghan war is a matter of shame to the individual. The veterans were depicted as victims of a political mistake and as accomplices to a crime. However, the data shows that this accusation positioned individuals in conflict with themselves. To accept the judgement that the war was a mistake was to remove the foundation that justified their agency in Afghanistan. This would mean moving from an authentic existentialist understanding (as posited by Heidegger) to an inauthentic existence. The texts studied show that many veterans see themselves as Soviet patriots and this characteristic constituted part of their *Dasein*. The debate around the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan in the new Soviet public sphere confronted many veterans with a *Litmus test* about their former Soviet ideology; and further established their involvement in Afghanistan as a public issue in the public arena. Yet, despite this, many narrators cling to their belief that they fought well, and bravely. In believing so, they reaffirm to themselves and others, the authenticity of their existence as soldiers in Afghanistan.

In following Denzin's (2002:38) framework, I as a researcher, locate the epiphanic moment for these veterans in the public sphere. In working from the

public to the private to locate the troubles that afflict these individuals, I find that they are self-apparent in the narrators' disclosures of the emotive experiences of the Soviet-Afghan war. As encouraged by Mills (1959:5), I sought to understand the "larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life". However, I wish to add one caveat in that I do not find it possible to restrict my understanding of locating the epiphanic moment to only one of the categories offered by Denzin (2002). Instead, I propose that these individuals experienced their epiphanic moments at the compound level, which is a level that I devise to explain my understanding. At the compound level, the average individual has been exposed to a major epiphany, and perhaps so on cumulative occasions, which are relived in their memory. This means that these veterans are not simply dealing with a major epiphany, they are dealing with cumulative epiphanic moments, which are constantly relived in their memories wherein they go back to confront those moments of epiphany. In my advancing the suggestion of a compound epiphany, I position those moments as life-threatening to the well-being of the individual's ontological sense of Being, as they have not received psychological help in coming to terms with their phenomenological experiences.

The public's embarrassment about the war and a sense of distrust of the Soviet government now emerged and this probably contributed to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Even though some veterans still remained patriotic, the popular value judgement that arose from the text is that the Soviet-Afghan war was an exercise in futility. The narrators in the text tend to focus on the issue of the war as being futile, rather than being unjust. There may have been a political shift in the stance taken by the Soviet Union, but for the veterans this did not invalidate their agency, which was their obedient response to a Motherland that they revered. The irony that emerges from the text is that the war was not only fought and lost on Afghan soil, but it was also lost in the political arena of the Soviet Union, which had practised public deception about its involvement in Afghanistan.

8.5 A REFLECTIVE-THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING OF THE PUBLIC MORAL ARGUMENT

The following paragraphs contain my reflective thoughts on the relationship between the theoretical underpinning of the study in Chapter 4, and the public moral argument that is expressed in 8.4. I begin with some reflective thoughts on Heidegger's notion of Being and its relevance to the public moral argument.

Heidegger's description of *Dasein*, or Being, is that it is self-evident; it is rooted in the concept of the realities of our experience that contribute to our 'there being', or *Dasein*. "What we are is 'Being', and so is how we are" (Heidegger; 1927:7). Therefore, in a philosophical sense, I am the sum of all my experiences. To know this is to have an authentic relationship with the Self and with the world around me. Although Being in the true sense is not a static representation of the Self, but rather a transcendental representation of the Self. It is like a snap-shot frozen in time of the full sum of the entity that I am at a given moment. It summarises how behaviour and responses to entities confirm who we are, and reinforce who we are. With reference to experiences, Husserl (1973) uses the term 'phenomenology', to indicated lived experiences. Thus, if I were to focus on the interpretation of ontological meaning, it would mean I am in Heidegger's arena of hermeneutic phenomenology.

In reading *Zinky Boys*, there are numerous narratives that tell personal stories. Stories that in their telling, reflect the 'who I am' of the narrator, and the 'what I feel' of the narrator. These are moments that offer a window on the lived experiences of individuals who served in Afghanistan or who suffered at home. These narratives that are shared are revealing of the conflict that individuals experience within themselves. The battle for identity. To attempt to reach an understanding of 'how did I get to be like this'? To understand how did buying into an ideological dream and being a good patriot, leave me as an outcast in

society. These existential conflicts are reminiscent of Nietzsche's (1886) famous saying "[h]e who fights with monsters might take care lest he thereby become a monster. And if you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you." How do you grapple with the truth that in fighting the anti-socialist monster in Afghanistan, you become a monster yourself? In propagating the socialist dream and socialist ideals as a 'truth', but with violence and force, the value of the socialist way of life is put into sharp relief. In seeking to achieve a state of 'truthful existence' for the people of Afghanistan, and in misjudging the cultural importance of *Dasein* for the Afghanistan population, the Soviet limited contingent's phenomenological experiences brought them into conflict with their own 'ideology as truth' that they formerly believed in.

The conflict of Being for the *Afghantsi* is a deep-seated existentialist crisis. From an idealist and hegemonic belief in socialism as the solution to every Soviet's needs, the spurn and disregard, even rejection, of their belief-system, shook every socialist to their core. No one escaped unchanged, and these changes affected their very sense of Being. In presenting a solution to Afghanistan's political problems, the Soviet Union's efforts proved to be its own undoing.

The social space in which the conflict within Afghanistan occurred has brought unique challenges to those individuals entangled in it. Lefebvre's (1991:73) notion of social space as a social product applies very well here. The social space is the result of human interaction, which is principally informed by the behavioural characteristic of the Soviets in Afghanistan, who in turn formed their own heterotopia of admission. In applying Foucault's notion of heterotopias here, I am thinking of spaces of inclusion and exclusion. The inclusion of PDPA elements and the Soviet limited contingent members who were advancing the ideal of socialism for Afghanistan and the exclusion of the mujahedeen, whose cultural and religious beliefs were not ready to accommodate the proposed ideals. To my thinking, the most overlooked aspect of the conflict lies in the *jus*

ad bellum principle of the war. Afghanistan was a divided country characterised by layer upon layer of heterotopias affecting the status of children, women, men, those of the Muslim faith, and those not. These strata were too deeply ingrained for a revolution initiated from the top-down by an elitist few to succeed with an ideological system that was essentially alien to hundreds of years of existence in Afghanistan. The counter-revolution launched through the *jihad* of the mujahedeen, represent to me a struggle to preserve familiar heterotopias and social spaces.

Using Bourdieu's notion of space of positions, I see how social spaces in Afghanistan were represented through the commonality of characteristics and properties of the Soviet limited contingent. These positions occupied within their social spaces helped to frame the narratives as subjective viewpoints of the survivors. As products of the Soviet system of ideology, their positions in Afghanistan are pre-determined, and in the absence of viable alternative ideologies to socialism, absolute in their frames of reference. The spaces of social nature that they occupied in Afghanistan, therefore, are the direct result of the political spaces occupied by those pro-socialist and anti-socialist, which in turn, demarcated the geographic space within which the conflict took place. In applying the thinking of Bourdieu, the Soviets as a grouping of agents were subject to the active powers of the 'Sovietverse' that delineated their habitus as a spatial dimension, which in the context of this study is identified as a *Gewaltraum*. This space both capacitated and limited their agency, and helped to frame the specific social context in history.

In the representation of the mental spaces of the Soviet limited contingent in Afghanistan through their writing and narratives, I see their inner struggles surface, which show how their individual existence is disrupted and disordered by the power struggle in Afghanistan. The strong rhetoric used by the mothers in *Zinky Boys*, for example, shows how their language in a Bakhtinian sense, is capable of disrupting and disordering power within the Soviet Union's political

and military systems and spaces. These voices that were published, and the debates and publicity that followed on the publication, catapulted the subject matter of the narratives into the public sphere. In the publication of these narratives, the bracketing circumstances that formerly delineated the individual troubles to the private realm, dissolved as the subject matter gained status to the level of issue. In borrowing from Cassegard (2010), I believe the social space became public sphere because the subject matter represented “conflictual tension with the political system”. The conflicting tension is well understood when one takes von Seth’s (2011) contention into consideration that the press was used as part of the State to “legitimise the political system”.

I believe Voronkov’s (2004) observations of the emergence of the private-public sphere in the post-Stalinist era as accurate, but to a lesser degree in the Soviet Union of the 1980s. Whilst citizens paid lip service to official socialist ideology, and were unified in their world-view on matters discussed in public, they tended to discuss matters of importance among themselves in private. This is evident by the examples in *Zinky Boys* where ‘rumours’ were heard about actual events in Afghanistan that did not align well with the official view of developing friendship alleys and improving infrastructure. In following the thoughts of Hannah Arendt (1998) I see that a subaltern or counter-sphere to the public sphere developed where the official grand narrative of the Soviet State was countered. It is through the metaphor suggested by Hyvärinen of *life as narrative* that these first-person eye-witness accounts emerged to become the subject matter of the public sphere. These are not merely narratives, but they are instances of reflexive monitoring of the agency of individuals and the context (social and political space) within which these occurred. In following the Stratification Model of the Agent as proposed by Giddens (2010), it is clear that the Soviets in Afghanistan had to contend with unacknowledged conditions of action and unintended consequences of action as they narratively attempt in *Zinky Boys* to come to terms with their motivation and rationalisation of their action. It is in this broader cultural turn to the narrative, that the larger socio-

cultural change in the Soviet society became the subject matter for public discussion, enabled by the introduction of *glasnost*, which facilitated more openness especially in the public sphere.

With reference to the *suffering agency* of the Soviet limited contingent in Afghanistan I pause briefly to consider the impact of Frankfurt's (1971:18) premise that a "person's will is free only if he is free to have the will he wants". It is in this context that I reflect on the repetitive desire to 'stay alive' that is expressed in *Zinky Boys*. This desire manifested as an effective desire that moved the contingent to agency. In the reflection that is visible in the narratives, the moral responsibility for their agency is clearly an issue that lies at the heart of the existentialist crisis that the survivors face. From the Soviet public's viewpoint those who served in Afghanistan have sole responsibility for their action. This conflicts with the viewpoint of the survivors who feel that the Soviet Union should take full moral responsibility, as they were patriots who were obeying the orders of the State through its military arm in Afghanistan. The public moral argument makes a key statement that the survivors were in an agentic state, without free will, to act out the will of the Soviet Union.

An interesting aspect relating to the agency of the Soviet limited contingent in Afghanistan is the notion advanced by Barker (2012) that agency is dependent upon social structures being in place. In the *Gewaltraum* that is Afghanistan, there is no undetermined act that originates from nothingness. As Soviet agents in Afghanistan, the members of the limited contingent were already a product of their soviet cultural space and history, and sustained the cultural *Gewaltraum* in Afghanistan through reinforcement of action, which Giddens (2010) refers to as structuration. This structuration is the result of recursive structures that produce action in the context of the *durée* of life in Afghanistan, but it is also a reproduction of action in that context. It is also my view that the Soviet agents in Afghanistan who generated repetitive patterns in social patterns, produced systems of social patterns that found their way back into governing and shaping

the behaviour of agents. Therefore the double hermeneutic as advanced by Giddens (2010) informs one that the nature and agency of the *Gewaltraum* in Afghanistan is altered by the capacity of the participants to exercise their agency in the social spaces in which they were operative. The concern about the Soviets sustaining the *Gewaltraum* in Afghanistan is addressed by applying the findings of a study undertaken by Haslam and Reicher (2017) whose research aimed at understanding the concept of Obedience to Authority, especially in the context of the Nazis in WWII. They found that where individuals identify with goals, they had “developed an associated desire to play their part in supporting and advancing them” (2017:66). Haslam and Reicher (2017:72) argue the notion that agents become “motivated instruments of a collective cause” in which they see themselves as doing good. This is indeed supported by the narratives in *Zinky Boys* that the Soviets believed in the ideological positioning of socialism as an ideal that should be aspired to by the Afghanistan population, and saw themselves as obedient patriots who were defending the interests of the motherland.

In concluding my reflective-theoretical underpinning of the public moral argument that emerges from *Zinky Boys*, I refer briefly to the work of Lucaites and Condit (1985) who identify the concern with the transmission of knowledge, or telling of the truth, that is the focus of the dialectical narrative. This focus of the dialectical narrative links up with Foucault’s notion of the ‘truth speaker’ or *parrheisiastes*. In particular, I see the women who served in Afghanistan and the widows and mothers of the deceased combatants, as truth speakers who advance their plight as victims of the war into the public sphere.

In playing their part in the interpretation of the public moral argument, the audience members are participatory message makers, hence the narratives under study become narratives as human communication. These narratives are part of the cultural turn to the narrative that is identified by Hyvärinen (2010), and which are indicative of the socio-cultural change in society at the level of

everyman. In the context of reading and understanding *Zinky Boys*, these narratives deepen understanding of Soviet lives, but also on how we live out our own narratives, as suggested by MacIntyre (1981). From a personal viewpoint as researcher, and veteran who waged war in another country, the research experience has been cathartic in coming to a better understanding of the Self, and achieving empathy with those who have been in similar situations.

8.6 CONCLUSION

Three sub themes were discussed in this chapter, which comprise the theme *Afghanistan in the Public Sphere*. The purpose of this thematic discussion is to show how the Soviet Union, through controlling the media and in particular the printed press, waged a campaign of disinformation on its citizens. In doing so, it positioned and disguised the war effort in Afghanistan as the ideological advancement of socialism in the Union's southern border through the development of aid to the socialist government in Afghanistan, which had come to power through a coup.

The Soviet lifestyle inculcated through its socialist policies, cultivated a dedicated population of youths who were prepared to fight and die for the socialist ideals of the State. Through control of the media, families, schools and youth organisations, young Soviets were indoctrinated in socialist ideology through developing a sense of duty and patriotism. However, with the introduction of *glasnost* an ideological shift accompanied by a shift in the Soviet public sphere, occurred. These shifts put the veterans of the Soviet-Afghan war in the spotlight and led them to question their agency and existence as loyal citizens through a process of introspection. The results from the data analysis show they were loyal to their motherland, but were deceived by their government, which actively engaged in acts of disinformation through media manipulation.

In presenting the public moral argument, I contend that Soviet conscripts endured unbearable levels of violence in Afghanistan in an unjustified war. These events manifested in major epiphanic moments for these conscripts and individuals from support elements, who realised that they had undergone changes in their Being. With repeated and escalated contact with violence, these changes became ingrained into the very core of their Being. They were lied to by their government about the nature of their involvement and the reasons why they needed to fight in Afghanistan. These epiphanic moments are not only personal experiences by individuals, but have become a societal issue of the Soviet Union that was discussed in the Soviet public sphere.

The agentic behaviour of the Soviet conscripts and support personnel often weakened their efficacy in achieving their objectives in Afghanistan. Violence against own forces, drug and alcohol addiction, and prostitution manifested as behavioural deviations. In addition, problems of bribery, violence, theft, and corruption, characterised their behaviour in Afghanistan.

The Soviet involvement in the war left both veterans and mothers of deceased combatants as Soviet victims of the war at the hands of the State, which practically disavowed them. In addition, returning veterans found it difficult to regain a sense of balance and normalcy that would enable them to integrate back into Soviet society. Their lives were shattered and they hardly recognised their former selves, resulting in uncharacteristic personal behaviour that put them into conflict situations with their families and employers.

The returning veterans were at loggerheads with the Soviet population, which confronted them in the Soviet public sphere. Whilst it was the Soviet government that had decided to deploy their military forces in Afghanistan under false pretences, it was the returning veterans who were blamed for their involvement in Afghanistan. This is indicative of the fact that the Soviet citizenry did not recognise or understand the agentic state and *suffering agency* of the

Soviet limited contingent in Afghanistan. An ideological shift has now manifested itself wherein the illusion of the Soviet socialist dream was shown to be fraught with conceptual limitations, and this led to the veterans confronting existentialist challenges of inauthentic existence.

The epiphanic moment of the narrators in *Zinky Boys* is thus situated in the public sphere as their involvement in the war has become a public issue for debate, and they are no longer the troubles of individuals. I propose a new category of epiphany to be added to the taxonomy offered by Denzin (2002), namely 'compound epiphany', which accommodates cumulative occurrences of major epiphany that are constantly relived, and which dominate the thoughts and agency of the individual. In working with the data yielded by *Zinky Boys*, I conclude that there is compelling good reason to accept the social reality that the narrators had to endure, because of the factual and argumentative coherence offered.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In the final chapter of this thesis, I first present a concluding overview of the research design and method, as well as a summary and interpretation of the research findings. The chapter then offers conclusions and recommendations on the research undertaken. The contributions and limitations of the study form the final part of the chapter, which is ended with concluding remarks.

This study investigates the public moral argument that is made by survivors of the Soviet-Afghan War of 1979-1989 by examining the published narratives that are contained in the anthology *Zinky Boys: Soviet Voices from the Afghanistan War*. A study of the literature surveyed about the Soviet-Afghan War revealed that the corpus of literature about this war could be organised thematically into six themes based on the findings of the literature study. These themes deal with reasons for engagement in the war, drivers of the conflict, agency, perceptions of the war, the withdrawal and dissolution of the Soviet Union, and Soviet veterans and women as victims of the war. Similarly, four themes emerged from the study of *Zinky Boys*, which resulted in the fourfold thematic discussion of: Gewaltraum Afghanistan, Soviet Agency in Afghanistan, Soviet Victims of Afghanistan, and Afghanistan in the Public Sphere.

The claims made in the text of *Zinky Boys* are supported in the following aspects by the corpus of literature discussed in Chapter 3: violence, agency, victimisation, and activity in the public sphere. As the summary and discussion of results in Chapter 8 further demonstrate, the public moral argument that emerges from studying *Zinky Boys* is triangulated by the corpus of literature about the war (cf. Chapter 8, Section 5). However, the publications that triangulate the public moral argument were mostly published after the end of the Soviet-Afghan War, whilst the narratives contained in *Zinky Boys* were collected

before the war ended. I believe therefore that the communicating voices in *Zinky Boys* may be regarded as authentic voices or parrheisiastes (truth speakers) as they are the voices of eye-witness accounts of the violence, agency, victimisation and subjects of discussion in the public sphere.

The thematic information presented in Chapter 3 serves the purpose to provide factual information about the Soviet-Afghan War. In generating the thematic presentation, I applied an interpretative process of reading, coding and theming the information that was studied with the assistance of NVivo 12 to create a corpus of information that would provide verified information against which to interpret the narratives offered in *Zinky Boys*. The same process of reading, coding and theming was applied to the narratives in *Zinky Boys* to uncover the themes resulting from the polyphonic voices speaking in the text. It is important to note that the purpose of the research was to discover the public moral argument offered in *Zinky Boys* by following an emic process, allowing data to emerge from the text. Therefore, the purpose was not to read the themes established in Chapter 3 of this thesis into those uncovered in *Zinky Boys*, but rather to provide a source of triangulation outside of *Zinky Boys* that echo and support the arguments offered.

The thesis argues that Svetlana Alexievich's non-fictional work, *Zinky Boys: Soviet Voices from the Afghanistan War* contains a public moral argument about the Soviet involvement in the War in Afghanistan (1979-1989). The public moral argument emerged through the process of reading, codification, theming, re-storying, and finally, extrapolating the public moral argument (cf. Chapter 8, Section 4). The crux of the argument made by the survivors provides a new contribution to the existing body of research through demonstrating the lack of conviction experienced at an individual level in the proposed solution of Socialism as offered by the Soviet Union to Afghanistan's problems. Moreover, there are compelling good reasons to accept this contribution through the application of Fisher's fidelity and probability tests. Using the lived experiences

of Soviet individuals in Afghanistan as evidence, *Zinky Boys* strongly argues the case of the *unsuitability of Socialism as a solution*, as the social and ideological apparatuses at work in Afghanistan proved to be unfit for adaptation to Socialism (cf. Chapter 8, Section 3).

The Soviet individuals who were sent to Afghanistan were confronted with an alien cultural experience and hostile environment for which Socialism had not prepared them adequately (cf. Chapter 6, Section 2.2 and 2.3). Unconventional forms of violence and warfare forced them to adapt to this alien existence by embracing a culture of indiscriminate violence in order to survive. Embracing and practising indiscriminate violence conflicted with their own cultural upbringing and personal identities, especially with their view of the Motherland and themselves as proponents of Socialism and achieving cultural advancement through Communist ideology (cf. Chapter 7, Section 2.5).

The Soviet Union's dream of achieving Socialism in Afghanistan quickly receded into a personal struggle for survival for each Soviet individual who served in Afghanistan. Survival strategies required the adaptation to a unique form of agency that included the lows of drug abuse, prostitution, corruption and bribery, to make life in Afghanistan bearable. The belief in Socialist ideology as a solution to Afghanistan proved an impractical and unachievable dream, which quickly lost the support of these individuals and their families at home.

Those who had been directly affected by violence, injury, and the death of Soviets in Afghanistan, such as the mental and physically injured survivors as well as the mothers of the deceased, lost their ideological belief in Socialism as practiced through the military arm of the Soviet Union (cf. Chapter 8, Section 2.2). Coupled with the practice of *Dedovshchina* where Soviets experienced violence against them as practised by their own forces, the sense of disillusionment permeated through their narratives to reveal voices that make a strong argument against the forms of institutional violence practiced by the

Soviet Union against its own citizens (cf. Chapter 7, Section 2.1). The forms of institutional violence that are recognisable in the text include: Inadequate preparation for the *Gewaltraum* of Afghanistan and the type of warfare experienced (cf. Chapter 6, Section 2); the manipulability of the drafting system through bribery which allowed some to buy their way out of service in Afghanistan,(cf. Chapter 7, Section 2.3); the poor support from the Soviet Union received by those deployed in Afghanistan,(cf. Chapter 6, Section 2); the disavowal of veteran status for those who survived through the media campaign of disinformation about the war, especially up to 1987, the poor psychological care offered to returning veterans, (cf. Chapter 7, Section 4.1); and finally, the struggle that mothers had to endure in protecting their sons who joined the military, and not being able to provide them with proper funeral rites associated with their cultural practices, thereby not achieving proper closure on the deaths of their sons (cf. Chapter 7, Section 4.2). This resulted in an ideological rejection by the citizenry, and especially the mothers of soldiers, of the practice of the achievement of Socialism through military force, as practiced by the Soviet Union (cf. Chapter 8, Section 4.4).

The text of *Zinky Boys* is the result of Alexievich (2015) writing as a narrative journalist to capture “actual human voices and confessions...a chorus of individual voices and a collage of everyday details”. Alexievich spent four years travelling her home country Belorussia, conducting interviews with veterans of the Soviet-Afghan War, and mothers and widows of those who had died during the war. She went to Afghanistan during the Soviet-Afghan War to interview Soviet personnel deployed there to collect additional material for the book.

The book presents the narratives of these interviewees who reflect on their lived experiences, focussing on what it felt like for them, and how it had an impact on their lives. As such, the collection of narratives does not have the purpose to present data in a historical sense, but rather to reflect on what it was like to be there, and the emotional impact that the war had on the lives and ideologies of

its participants and their families. These polyphonic voices present a vivid first-hand emotional portrayal of the impact that the war had on the *Afghantsi*.

In reading the anthology of narratives, I was not only impressed by eyewitness accounts, but by the raw, honest presentation of the facts of the war. Repetitive reason that is used in reflecting their disillusion with their ideological existence due to their involvement in the Soviet-Afghan War, runs in an undercurrent through the work. Whilst the narratives are identifiable individual constructs of lived experiences, there is a sense of argumentative coherence and overlap in the meaning that these stories communicate in authentic voices that offer characterological coherence. In reading the texts, I was perturbed by these graphically disturbing life-stories which left me pondering the question *what is it that these voices are really saying?* They are not merely venting frustration, but they are communicating a message. This is what I set out to find. What are the arguments that these voices are making to the world at large?

The result indicates that this is a moral and existentialist crisis for these individuals. It is moral because it involves life and death. It is existentialist because it involves one's sense and understanding of *Dasein*, of Being. It is an argument that is no longer only reflecting the troubles of individuals, but it is both an issue and epiphany that is debated in the public sphere, for the distress of these individuals, like a virus, has spread and contaminated the Soviet public, which was disavowing their fellow Soviets who, to them, have become despicable beings, murderers. They are existentially confused by a government that had concealed the war from them, thereby sowing Soviet distrust in the ideology of socialism as a preferred mode of existence.

9.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

As indicated in Chapter 5 of this thesis, the study was designed around the narrative turn in the interpretivist paradigm, following a qualitative research

methodology. The planned research design followed a sequence of steps to enable the identification and description of the public moral argument in the anthology of *Zinky Boys*. The text of *Zinky Boys* reads at surface level like a collection of essays of eyewitness accounts of incidents in the Soviet-Afghan War. However, the text raises ideological and existentialist questions that I wanted to understand and investigate, in order to uncover the message that these narratives are communicating. The message is the public moral argument that was brought to the attention of the public sphere, where it still is debated and evaluated when readings of the text occur and are discussed. The public moral argument is of importance because of the dismantling of the Soviet Union in 1991, which ushered in a new era of democratisation for former Soviet countries in the Soviet Union.

The research design made allowance for a study of previously published literature associated with the Soviet-Afghan War. In Chapter 2 of the study, background information on the country Afghanistan is provided, as well as a critical discussion that positions the war in the context of the Cold War, and demonstrates the importance of Afghanistan to both the East and the West.

This is followed by a survey of literature that was published on the war, which was coded and themed and presented in Chapter 3. The research design enabled an emic taxonomy of themes to emerge from the published literature. These were themed into the following emergent themes, which impacted positively in triangulating the intertext and public moral argument that arose from the analysis of the text of *Zinky Boys*. The themes in Chapter 3 included the reasons for engagement in the war, drivers of the conflict, which included the notion of ideology and agency, perceptions of the war, the withdrawal and dissolution of the USSR, and veterans and women as victims of the conflict.

The development of a conceptual-theoretical framework was needed to ground the methodology of the research paper. The conceptual framework provides the

theoretical canvas against which I interpret the text. Two main tenets of this framework were identified. Firstly, Fisher's Narrative Paradigm (1984), which includes the fidelity and probability tests to validate the data studied for inclusion as a coherent social reality, which provide compelling good reasons for the reader to believe. Secondly, Habermas' Public Sphere Theory proved to be important to provide a framework in which to evaluate the public moral argument that was advanced through the data analysis.

The guiding research questions and methodology that guided the research, are discussed in Chapter 5. In essence, it required the development of background information on the research topic, a review of published literature and relevant theories, followed by the coding, theming, analysis, extraction of the thematic intertext, and postulation of the public moral argument.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 include the analysis of the data studied, as well as the thematic intertext for each theme that was discussed. In Chapter 8, the analysis concludes with the identification and discussion of the public moral argument that is advanced in the text of *Zinky Boys*.

9.3 SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The analysis of *Zinky Boys* resulted in four themes emerging from the anthology of narratives. The first of these themes focus on the violent nature of the war that was waged in Afghanistan, which is portrayed as a *Gewaltraum*, the second on Soviet agency in Afghanistan, the third on Soviet victims of Afghanistan, and, the final theme on Afghanistan in the public sphere.

The first theme probed the violent nature of the Soviet-Afghan War by analysing the conditions that the Soviets had to face in Afghanistan, as well as the different forms of violence that they encountered. The horror of the war and the emotional strain that had to be endured by the Soviets and their families

rounded off the first theme. The emergent thematic intertext revealed that the Soviets in Afghanistan faced adverse conditions not only in the terrain and climate of Afghanistan, which resulted in them having to make major psychological changes in both attitude and behaviour to survive. This made reintegration into the Soviet Union difficult for returning veterans. The narratives further demonstrate that they were inadequately trained, equipped, and supported for the violent type of warfare that was conducted. This revelation is important as it was the first of its kind to emerge in print in book form that contested the accepted propagated view of the Soviet involvement offered by the Soviet Union through the lived experiences and personal testimonies of Soviets who went to Afghanistan.

The second emergent theme revealed the nature of Soviet agency in Afghanistan. The data studied revealed the depth and extent of the practice of *Dedovschina* (hazing) by own forces, the abuse of alcohol and drugs, the prevalence of corruption and bribery in the Soviet military, the abuse of women by officers and prostitution, as well as the deep-seated hatred and anger that fuelled the military aggression of Soviets. The importance of this revelation lies in demystifying the romantic views that Soviets had of the conduct of the Red Army during war. The first war that the Soviet Union engaged in after WWII showed the Soviet soldier to be driven by hatred, anger, and retaliation, which shocked the Soviet public as it provided an anti-heroic view of the Red Army.

The next emergent theme, which focussed on the fate of the Soviet veterans of the war and the mothers whose sons were killed in the war, found them to be victims of institutional violence. The veterans were not accorded their full veteran status as the Soviet Union up to 1986 denied its involvement in the war through its media campaign of disinformation. It was further found that, for the same reason, the mothers of deceased soldiers could not claim full compensation and were angered at the deaths of their children in conditions of war that the Soviet government did not want to admit to. This finding

demonstrated that the Soviet Union's agenda in the international arena was focussed outwardly and not inwardly to the wellbeing of its citizens in its socialist states.

The fourth and final theme that emerged, focussed on the portrayal of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in the public sphere. The data exposed the Soviet media campaign of disinformation, and how the denial of the Soviet involvement in the war adversely impacted on the Soviet sense of duty and patriotism. The theme closes with the revelation of the sense of abandonment of the Soviet ideology for individuals and the futility of the war. The importance of this finding lies therein that the campaign of disinformation in the international arena similarly meant a campaign of large scale deception was practiced to deceive its citizens, which damaged Soviet solidarity in socialism as ideology.

The research implications are that this thesis demonstrates, in terms of the four themes that emerged from the data, that an intertextual narrative was reconstructed which is presented in a public moral argument that contains a cumulative representative view of the Soviet experience in Afghanistan. As a published work in Russian (1989) and translated into English (1992), the significance and contribution of *Zinky Boys* lies in its collection of polyphonic voices that expose the previously unknown atrocities of the Soviet engagement in Afghanistan, prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and more importantly, the response of the Soviets who served there, and those who had lost sons in the war. Several academic articles have been written and published about the Soviet experience in the years that followed after the war, which mostly drew on external sources, and to a limited extent, interviews with survivors of the war as is demonstrated in Chapter 3 of this thesis. However, this thesis demonstrates that the public moral argument emerging from *Zinky Boys* functions as an authentic *parrhesiastes*, or truth speaker, which is offered by the narrators who reflected upon their lived experiences in Afghanistan, to

produce an authentic subaltern voice at the end of the 1980s against the Soviet Union's narrative concerning Afghanistan.

The contribution of this study is that it demonstrates the presence of, and extracts the public moral argument from the collected narratives of the Soviet survivors and family members, which contains a strong voice of protest against the Soviet Union's attempt to Sovietise Afghanistan. While the atrocities that are associated with this war have been covered in subsequent publications about the Soviet-Afghan War, this thesis shows how this anthology of narratives uses the lived experiences of individuals to reveal these viewpoints and protest against this war in the public sphere before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and before the body of literature surveyed in Chapter 3 were published.

Alexievich (1992) reports on the vociferous responses which condemned both her and her publication after excerpts of her book had been published in newspapers and magazines. The overwhelming response, as revealed by Alexievich particularly from pages 187 to 195 in *Zinky Boys*, is one of shock, denial, anger, and amazement at the counter narrative that emerged to the published views that were predominantly propagated prior to *glasnost*. As quoted from an excerpt from a letter to her published in her book, there was an awareness about the war by those directly affected:

Everyone could see parents opening their doors to those zinc coffins or having their sons returned to them broken and crippled. Such things weren't mentioned on radio or television, of course, or in the newspapers (until you [Alexievich] recently dared to), but it was plain for all to see. (Alexievich, 1992:185-186). [My insertion].

The extract above proves the concerted effort by the Soviet Union not to report factual details about their involvement in Afghanistan, especially the deaths that were inflicted on the Soviet Limited Contingent. The public moral argument that is contained in *Zinky Boys* contains a subaltern narrative which contrasts with

the official published narrative, and reveals the violent nature of the Soviet engagement in Afghanistan. In addition, the agency of the Soviet Limited Contingent in Afghanistan is portrayed as particularly un-heroic, which conflicts with the popularised ideals and propaganda that were associated with the image of heroic soldiers of the Motherland. Further, the neglect and unwillingness of the Soviet Union to recognise and support its veterans who have returned from the war is exposed.

The themes that have emerged from the analysis of the work are further supported in the literature study conducted in Chapter 3 of this thesis, as can be seen in the following paragraphs. The references that are cited in Chapter 3 have all been written a number of years after the Soviet engagement in Afghanistan had completed. As such, these sources proved to be valuable in adding additional information that firstly served as preparing a canvas of background information against which the *Zinky Boys* was interpreted, and secondly, in supporting the findings of this thesis. However, it is important to see *Zinky Boys* as a complete work that contains a public moral argument that was voiced in the closing years of the war and its immediate aftermath. This research interpreted and reported the public moral argument as extracted directly from *Zinky Boys* as a singular source, thereby making a contribution in verifying the presence of a public moral argument during the closing years of the war.

In contextualising the analysis of the first theme of the study, the conditions in Afghanistan as revealed through the lived experiences in the narratives in *Zinky Boys* are presented in the first theme in Chapter 6, (cf. Sections 2.1 and 2.2). By cross-referencing with Chapter 3, I found that the violent habitat of Afghanistan during the *durée* of the war is aptly described by Behrends (2015a:173) as a *Gewaltraum* which fed on itself by generating more violence through the agency of the Soviets deployed there.

The data studied revealed that the violence encountered by Soviet soldiers permeated every aspect of life, not only on the battlefield, but also in the barracks and everyday encounters with civilians, to such an extent that it affected and changed their Referenzrahmen (frame of reference) (cf. Chapter 3, Section 3.2; Chapter 6, Section 2; and Narrator 23: Major Propaganda Section Artillery Regiment). Thus, with their behavioural norms transformed, these soldiers were capable of extreme acts of violence in most any situation (Van Bladel, 2004).

The data emerging from *Zinky Boys* show that in preparing the Soviets for deployment to Afghanistan, the Soviet Union used standard methods of transforming individuals through a process of total institutionalism, (cf. Chapter 6, Sections 2.1 and 2.2; and Chapter 8, Section 2.3) as advanced by Goffman in his *Asylums* (1968). The data additionally shows that the troops were not adequately trained for their deployment in Afghanistan, partially due to the propagandistic tactic of disinformation about the war effort as a whole (cf. extracts from the Chernyaev Diary in Chapter 3 Section 5, Chapter 6, Section 2.3, and Narrator 27: A Mother). Further, the troops had difficulty in adjusting to the climactic challenges offered by Afghanistan which had a different climate to that experienced in the Soviet Union (cf. Chapter 2, Section 2.3). Many troops suffered from tropical diseases and heat exhaustion (cf. Chapter 6, Section 2.1; and Narrator 44: Private Artillery Regiment).

With regard to the second theme of Soviet agency, the results show that chief among the thematic discussions of agentic behaviour in the literature lies the triad of *Dedovshchina*, violence, and drug use and trafficking, which emerged as focal points of discussion. As identified by Belkin (2004), the practice of *Dedovshchina* had put the Russian society and the military at odds with one another. Its violent nature is illuminated by the contributions of Maklak, (2015); Behrends, (2015a); Belkin, (2004) and Bannikov (2004). Chapter 7, Section 2.1 analyses the sub theme of *Dedovshchina* in the context of *Zinky Boys*, which

permeated the training and operational deployment of the Soviets in Afghanistan. Whilst *Dedovschina* was initially kept out of the public sphere, it did find prominence in the public agenda later in the 1980s (Maklak, 2015; van Bladel). From the analysis of *Zinky Boys* it appears that *Dedovshchina* is not merely a form of enculturation into the military, or a rite of passage into becoming a *veteran* or *dembel*, but it constitutes a practice of violence against conscripts by their own forces. The recursive nature of *Dedovshchina* can be said to constitute “social practices ordered across space and time” as postulated by Giddens (2010:2). In order to comport to their military ‘state of being’ (Heidegger, 1927), the re-enactment of these forms of behaviour echo the hermeneutic concept contained in structuration theory in that there is a sense of familiarity shown with the military form of life as conveyed in the actions of these soldiers that further assist them to define their character. In terms of purposiveness in the context of structuration theory these soldiers become products of the institutionalised system, and are behaving in a contextualised manner, within the *durée* of the *Gewaltraum* of Afghanistan. With reference to Giddens’ stratification model, the rationalisation and motivation of action is provided by the narrators in *Zinky Boys* as their stories unfold, not only in terms of individual responsibility, but also in terms of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan as a whole.

In continuation of this theme, the addiction of the armed forces to drugs is revealed by Behrends (2015a); Kadykalo (2015); Astapenia (2013); Macdonald (2007); Borovik (2001); Iltis (1996) and Reuveny and Prakash (1999). The use of drugs appear to be ubiquitous as a coping mechanism by those confronted with the violent nature of the war in Afghanistan. The sub theme of alcohol and drug dependency that emerge from *Zinky Boys* is discussed in Chapter 7 Section 2.2, which underscores the ubiquitous use of drugs by Soviet personnel in Afghanistan. The addiction to and need of these stimulants prompted soldiers to engage actions that they would not ordinarily have considered or attempted (cf. Narrator 21: Artillery Captain; Narrator 05: Nurse; and Chapter 7, Section

2.3). Several acts of bribery and corruption are reflected in *Zinky Boys* (cf. Narrator 21: Artillery Captain; Narrator 03: Private Grenadier Battalion; and Chapter 3, Section 4.3).

With regard to the third theme that emerged pertaining to the victimisation of veterans and mothers of deceased Soviets, support emerged from the literature study as is reflected in Chapter 3 Section 7. In particular, the writing of Behrends, (2015a); Astapenia, (2013), and Sieca-Kozlowski, (2011 and 2013) focus on the plight of the veterans. Danilova (2007) portrays the impact that the non-declaration of the war has on suppressing the rights of and access to benefits of the veterans. Ducloux (2016) focuses on the plight of women who are marginalised because of their former involvement in the war. The case of the mothers of soldiers who were killed in action is put under the spotlight by Tamarov (2001) and Kalinovsky (2011) who detail the challenges that mothers faced upon learning of the death of their sons. As Narrator 23: Major Propaganda Section Artillery states: *It is a mother's war, they were the ones who did the fighting*. In as much as *Zinky Boys* portrays the fate of the Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan, it also puts the desperate plight of their mothers who were fighting against forms of institutional violence against their government under the spotlight.

The classification of violence offered by Sieca-Kozlowski (2013) is particularly relevant in pointing to the symbolical and institutional dimensions of violence that caused suffering to veterans and their families. The symbolical violence manifests in the acceptance of the legitimacy of the command structures in the Soviet army and the Soviet Union, which had deployed the limited contingent to Afghanistan. This view further holds true for the aspect of obedience to authority (OtA) and the agentic state of these combatants as proposed by Milgram (1974), (Cf. Narrator 28: 1st Lieutenant Battery Commander; and Chapter 6, Section 2.2). The value of Milgram's research lies in the idea that OtA proposes that agents do not have as much free will as they think they have, and our

decisions are not so much personal decisions as they are results of our social situation. The narrators make it clear that the conditions for such obedience were deemed by them to be legitimately in place (Cf. Narrator 06, Private, Driver). In addition to having suffered physical violence, combatants were subjected to institutional violence by following their instructions, which included the use of excessive force and killing of civilians (Cf. Narrator 30: Private Gunlayer). Upon returning to the Soviet Union, the veterans were shown to be exposed to social and institutional violence in that they were marginalised as veterans of a dishonourable war, and were not granted all of their rights and privileges as veterans (Cf. Narrator 3: Private Grenadier Battalion; and Chapter 3, Section 7).

Finally, the literature dealing with the perceptions of the war and the war in the public sphere reveal the causal effect of the destabilisation of the traditional socio-cultural landscape of Afghanistan as the result of the efforts of overzealous Afghani leaders who were pro-Marxist (Chernyaev, 2004; Lyakhovskiy; 2007; Trueman, 2015). In particular, the perception is established that there was divided Soviet opinion on the matter, contributing to a strong public opinion in opposition to the war (Markowitz, 2009). This perception of the war as an unwelcome intervention provided the seedbed for the public interest and later discussion of the public moral argument within the public sphere. Section 5.1 of Chapter 3 in particular; reveals the extent of media disinformation and the suppression of factual information during the early stages of the war, which later identify as unfavourable factors in the perception that the Soviet Union was not justified in its invasion of Afghanistan (Cf. Narrator 44: Private Artillery Regiment). In addition, the influence of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in catapulting the discussion of the war into the public sphere are revealed as important causal factors in the emergence of the discussion about the Soviet-Afghan War in the public sphere (Cf. Narrator 13: Private Signals Corps, and Narrator 37: 1st Lieutenant Interpreter).

From an ideological perspective the literature surveyed in Chapter 3 provides the summarised arguments offered by the Soviet Union for involving itself by sending its troops to Afghanistan, which primarily dealt with political and economic reasons that were presented as reasons for engagement in the war. Noorzoy (1985), for example, presents the argument that the Cold War strategy to counter and lessen dependency upon Western countries was used as a reason for the Soviet Union's engagement in the war. Similarly, Tadman (2012) and Baker (2019) point to the attempted modernisation of Afghanistan by its leadership through forging relations with the West, which, caused concern in Soviet circles. Coupled with the destabilising effect that the PDPA had on internal relations by moving too quickly with land reform and cultural changes in Afghanistan (Collins, 2011), I interpret these factors as having contributed to a power vacuum that was developing in Afghanistan at the time. This vacuum opened up an opportunity for the PDPA to place itself and its cause of modernising Afghanistan, under the protection of the Soviet Union, as it knew that the Soviet Union would be compelled to intervene to support the Sovietisation of Afghanistan. The dream of establishing a socialist society by putting an end to the feudal practices in Afghanistan is borne out by the text of *Zinky Boys* (Cf. Narrator 05: Nurse and Narrator 19: Civilian Employee).

The Soviet Union's response to this situation, despite their initial reluctance to involve themselves from a military perspective, was to intervene in order to halt the worsening situation in Afghanistan, and strengthen the Soviet influence there (Baev, 2012; Gompert (2014); Kalinovsky, 2010; Malay, 2010). However, as pointed out by Gompert, Binnendijk and Lin (2014:130) the Soviet Union in not taking cognisance of the difficult realities of Afghanistan, undermined the nature and efficacy of their intervention which is reported in *Zinky Boys* (cf. Narrator 13: Private Signals Corps). These realities impacted strongly as opposing forces in countering the intention of the intervention as is evidenced by the literature studied, and which additionally identifies the importance of ideology and religion as drivers of the conflict (Ackermann and Galbas, 2015;

Burrowes, 2016; Donnelly *et al.*, 2017 and Robinson, 2015). The literature further suggests that threats to the existing cultural aspects in Afghanistan (cf. Narrator 08: A Military Adviser) fuelled a lot of resistance to Soviet influence (Baev, 2012; Markowitz, 2009; and Steele, 2011a). It can be said, that the war was lost not so much on the battlefields of Afghanistan, but rather in the hearts and minds of the Afghani population as the modernisation and Sovietisation of Afghanistan was not something that was desired by the majority of the population who did not count as the nation's elite. Similarly, as indicated by the thematic analysis, the Soviet public, upon realising the deceptive practices employed by the Soviet Union, became disillusioned with socialist ideology and opposed the military engagement in Afghanistan.

9.4 CONCLUSIONS

The research objectives that were formulated for this study set out to firstly document a contextualised overview of the Soviet involvement in the Soviet-Afghan War during the period 1979 to 1989. This objective resulted in a contextualised discussion of the war in Chapter 2, and in a presentation of a thematic analysis of the relevant literature written about the war in Chapter 3. The literature showed a sufficient quantity of articles and book chapters that cover the Soviet involvement in the war in Afghanistan.

The second research objective was to examine the value judgements made by the survivors of the war in their narratives. This objective required that I follow a process of textual analysis in which the exemplars selected from the narratives were analysed in detail, the results of which are presented in chapters 6, 7 and 8.

As a third objective, the interpretation of the intertextual narrative generated through the stories told by survivors and the views that they hold, resulted in my generating a thematic intertext following each of the four thematic discussions.

Generating the thematic intertext for each theme involved a process of extracting the value judgements made by the narrators and interpreting them as factual statements that constitute the social reality that is endured by the narrators in *Zinky Boys*.

Finally, the contribution of this study is the public moral argument that is presented and explained from the phenomenological viewpoint of the narrators in Chapter 8. The public moral argument constitutes a new text in which the reflections of individuals on their experiences are reflected as a collective argument in the public sphere. The anthology of voices in *Zinky Boys* is therefore not merely a collection of individual memories of their experiences during the war in Afghanistan, but contains a specific argument meant for public consumption. This public moral argument authentically shows that the Soviets deployed to Afghanistan suffered greatly in the *Gewaltraum* of Afghanistan, underwent psychological change, and experienced difficulty in reintegrating into a Soviet society that was crumbling under the influence of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. In addition, the veterans were exposed to institutional violence by the Soviet Union, which disavowed them by not according them appropriate veteran status.

9.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research to investigate and analyse the remembered experiences of military conscripts who had been engaged in war, and their attempts at reintegrating back into civilian life, should be undertaken where similar socio-political conditions exist. Here, I think of a mirror-example to the Soviet war in Afghanistan, namely, the South-African war in the seventies and eighties in Angola. There are, from my personal experience, interesting and opposing parallels to be found. Consider the following conditions:

- i. The Apartheid South-African government through its influence in society, schools and government, conditioned South-Africans into accepting a capitalist existence based on minority rule. Whereas the Soviet Union was socialist and communist, South-Africa was capitalist and individualist.
- ii. Much like the Soviet Union attempted to stop Western capitalist encroachment on its southern border in Asia; South-Africa, through its government, perceived a danger in the form of communist-socialist encroachment on the northern borders of the then, South-West Africa (Namibia) through Angola.
- iii. Both the Soviet Union and Apartheid South-Africa used a compulsory 2-year drafting system which did not allow individuals the freedom of choice not to participate in the war.
- iv. The involvement of third-parties who rendered support *in-situ* in the country of conflict occurred in both instances. In Angola, Cuba and the Soviet Union provided military advisers, equipment and combatants. In Afghanistan, China, America and Pakistan are mentioned as countries opposing the Soviet Union's war efforts.
- v. Both Apartheid South-African and Soviet conscripts who had faced the horror of war were sent back home without proper psychological defusing or trauma counselling, and experienced difficulties in reintegrating into society, and some suffered broken marriages and families.
- vi. The Soviet Union dissolved in 1991 and the Apartheid South-African government in 1994. This effectively leaves the conscripts as disavowed individuals who were fighting in illegal wars that were not officially declared, sanctioned, or supported by the broader civilian base in each country.

I contend, therefore, that it would be interesting to do a similar study on the narratives of South-African conscripts, which abound in the veteran support groups on social media, such as Facebook. It is even possible to do a

comparative analysis of the existentialist challenges faced by conscripts on both sides.

The socio-economic contribution of such a study lies therein that veterans who served in a limited capacity as conscripts of their governments are not career soldiers, and were not afforded proper debriefing and psychological counselling following exposure to violence in war zones. In the case of the Soviet veterans, as in the case of the South African veterans, there are grave concerns about the legitimacy of the military engagements in which they participated. Additionally, in both instances, their governments had dissolved and are no longer committed to achieving the same ideological goal. This puts these veterans into a unique situation in that there are issues of self-doubt and institutional violence that need to be described and addressed before appropriate remedies can be suggested.

9.6 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study, which identifies the public moral argument of Soviet survivors in the Soviet-Afghan War, contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the Soviet-Afghan War, by providing insight into the human condition of the survivors of the war.

This study makes a contribution to the discipline of Communication Studies by offering a comprehensive and refined contribution of the understanding of a conflict situation, which offers important insights into journalism globally and locally. In studying and analysing the anthology of interviews recorded by Svetlana Alexievich in *Zinky Boys*, it highlights the interdisciplinary nature of Communication Studies in general, and journalism in particular. The study further adds to the corpus of Communication Studies through its method and findings on the public moral argument.

In addition, the study contributes as commentary on the narratives studied, and by so doing, adds to the body of literature on the work of Alexievich through its commentary on the author and assessment of her work. It achieves this in particular through its analysis of the discourse on the violence of the war, agency of its participants, and the representation of Afghanistan at the time.

The use of Fisher's fidelity and probability tests in narratives that are presented as phenomenological or remembered, lived experiences, contributes rigour by providing a high level of confidence in the analysed data. This is further advanced through the extraction of an intertext, which further serves to interpret the individual experiences of the narrators, and generalises them where similar experiences are reported and validated through Fisher's fidelity and probability tests, to generalised statements valid in the context of the text of *Zinky Boys* through providing compelling good reasons for their acceptance.

In terms of the pragmatic advancement of qualitative research, the methodology employed in this thesis could be replicated where collected experiences are narrated as individual stories. Broadly speaking, where individual narratives provide personal viewpoints of historical or well-demarcated events, using this methodology, narratives are first analysed for fidelity and probability as proposed by Fisher (1987), before being presented as thematised analyses. Secondly, they are then evaluated for their value statements that contribute to the re-storying of the incident, or in generating an intertext of the incident. In the case of this study, the themed intertexts were used as material from which the public moral argument was extracted. However, not all analyses using this methodology need to result in a public moral argument, it may be sufficient to verify the fidelity and probability of narratives offered, followed by a restorying of the common or grand narrative that emerges from the collection of polyphonic voices.

However, the thematic intertexts are by themselves valuable contributions in that they shed light on the *Gewaltraum* of Afghanistan and the conditions under which these individuals had to execute their responsibilities. It further provides a window on the agency practiced by these conscripts while in Afghanistan, strengthening and adding to existing knowledge on *Dedovshchina*, alcohol and drug dependency, corruption and bribery, women for money, and hatred and anger. It further contributes by showing how the veterans are suffering agency and see themselves as victims of the State, which exercised institutional violence against not only them, but also the mothers of the deceased Soviets who perished in combat. In addition, the thematic intertext on media control by the state and the emotive impact of duty and patriotism as motivators that drove them to agency, is extracted from the narratives provided. These, culminate in a representation of their shattered ideology and sense of futility of the war when they are confronted with the reality of war.

In this study I advance the concept of a compound epiphany (cf. Section 8.4.4): I propose that these individuals experienced their epiphanic moments at the compound level, which is a level that I coin to explain my understanding. At the compound level, the average individual has been exposed to a major epiphany, and perhaps so on cumulative occasions, which are relived in their memory. This means that these veterans are not simply dealing with a major epiphany, they are dealing with cumulative epiphanic moments, which are constantly relived in their memories wherein they go back to confront those moments of epiphany. In my advancing the suggestion of a compound epiphany, I position those moments as life-threatening to the well-being of the individual's ontological sense of Being, as they have not received psychological help in coming to terms with their phenomenological experiences.

The public moral argument that is extracted from the thematic intertexts is my personal understanding of how Soviet conscripts had to endure unbearable levels of violence in an unjustified war, and were compelled to abandon their

existentialist selves to do deeds they would ordinarily not do. Finally, the study reveals that these veterans and mothers of the deceased bring the argument into the public sphere that they are victims of the Soviet Union's untenable socialist doctrine.

9.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In addition to the recommendations already made in this chapter, and the identification of areas for further research, it should be noted that there had been constraints in accessing sources on the topic of this particular war. The reasons for this are legion, resulting in the inclusion of literary texts, news items and commentary originating from the English-speaking world. The publication of the events during the period under study are constrained by the then existing media censorship and control in the Soviet Union. The texts generated in original languages are further only partly available in English. Because of the unpopularity of the war, it received diminishing attention in post-Soviet Russia, resulting in a decrease in accessibility to the full spectrum of media and social commentary on the war during the intervening years.

The study is limited because it is not value-free from bias. While it follows a clearly set-out replicable research design, other researchers who have a different frame of reference may interpret the literature studied in a different manner. For example, as researcher, I bring into my reading of *Zinky Boys*, my own experience as a veteran of the South-African-Angolan War. I read with a sympathetic eye as I have personally experienced the deception of a government that blinded its citizens with a media-manipulated ideology from a selected viewpoint, while underreporting the war effort as a whole.

A researcher with no combat experience or war-experience, or even somebody from a different religious orientation may read and interpret the text differently. An additional example could be that of a mother who has lost a child in death,

who could read and interpret the narratives at a level, which I could not hope to equal.

9.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In bringing matters of a sensitive nature such as war and ideology into the public sphere, an opportunity is created to generate understanding. It has always been my personal conviction that where there is understanding there cannot be hatred. In the case of the Soviet-Afghan War, my overriding concern is that the Soviet citizenry should not disavow their fellow Soviets who, while ideologically blinded, were positioned in a situation in which they had experienced low agency and did their best to survive and get back home alive.

The public moral argument as described in this thesis, points to the existentialist crisis that manifests for individuals who are uncritically faithful to the ideological propositions and promises made by their governments. Where such ideologies and propositions are shown to be unsuitable or misapplied, or at the extreme of the continuum, where the government collapses, the individuals who were unquestioning followers, are set adrift and question their sense of Being. In addition, where such experiences are shared experiences, individuals turn to one another to authenticate their understanding of their past agency and purpose and to find meaning in authentic existentialist relations in society as proposed by Heidegger (1962). This means, that for individuals in this condition, there has to be both private and public spheres which generate meaning for them in their existence. The exclusion of admission to either one of these spheres, especially the public sphere, endangers their sense of Being.

The thesis further suggests that there was a culture-centric thinking by the Soviet Union, which believed that through the use of force, it could induce a cultural turn to socialism among the Afghan population who, to them, had become fossilised in a feudal existence. In this context, Haslam and Reicher's

(2017:72) description of the conduct of WWII Nazis is particularly apt in this context, in that the Soviets could be regarded as “motivated instruments of a collective cause” in which they see themselves as, and believe themselves to be agents who are doing good.

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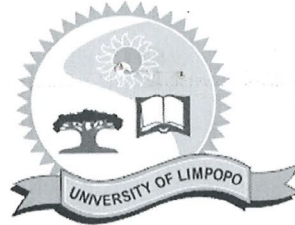
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL BY FACULTY



University of Limpopo
Faculty of Humanities
Executive Dean

Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 4895, Fax: (015) 268 3425, Email: richard.madadzhe@ul.ac.za

DATE: 25 January 2017

NAME OF STUDENT: NAGEL, PS
STUDENT NUMBER: [200465416]
DEPARTMENT: PhD – Communication Studies
SCHOOL: LANGCOM

Dear Student

FACULTY APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL (PROPOSAL NO. FHDC2016/3699)

I have pleasure in informing you that your MA proposal served at the Faculty Higher Degrees Meeting on 28 October 2016 and your title was approved as follows:

TITLE: COMMUNICATING A PUBLIC MORAL ARGUMENT: A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF SVETLANA ALEXIEVICH'S ZINKY BOYS: SOVIET VOICES FROM THE AFGHANISTAN WAR

Note the following:

Ethical Clearance	Tick One
Requires no ethical clearance Proceed with the study	√
Requires ethical clearance (Human) (TREC) (apply online) Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate	
Requires ethical clearance (Animal) (AREC) Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate	

Yours faithfully

Prof RN Madadzhe,
Executive Dean: Faculty of Humanities

Director: Dr JR Rammala

Supervisor: Dr I Saunderson

Co-supervisor: Dr RV McCabe

Prof RN Madadzhe

Finding solutions for Africa

APPENDIX B: CODEBOOK CHAPTER 3 ARTICLES

Name	Description	References
Dedovshchina	Direct references to hazing, bullying	16
Dissolution of USSR	References to Afghanistan and dissolution of USSR	5
Drugs	Taking up smoking, drugs. References to alcohol	10
Ideology	Statements about the ideology of Sovietisation etc.	26
Journalism	References to journalism or journalists	21
Nation Building	Statements relating establishing a Soviet ideal state or nation	10
Perceptions of War	Statements that relate to how the war was perceived	38
Reasons engagement in war	Reasons advanced why USSR became involved in Afghanistan	41
Religion	Thoughts / emotions relating to religion including Islam	25
Veterans	Difficulties experienced by veterans, often psychologically, in adapting back to normal life in the Soviet Union	28
Violence	General references to acts of violence, death associated with war, Afghanistan as Gewaltraum, acts of violence, violent nature of war	10

Name	Description	References
Western Support	Evidence that the west is supplying arms and equipment or allowing mercenaries, Western technology or goods brought back.	20
Withdrawal	Withdrawal of USSR from Afghanistan.	42
Women and Gender	References to women in Afghanistan, volunteering, abuse.	22

APPENDIX C: CODE BOOK ZINKY BOYS

Node	Description	Cases	References
AGENCY IN AFGHANISTAN			
01: Agency Dedovschina	Direct references to hazing, bullying	6	9
Buying Western goods not avail in Soviet Union	Any reference to buying western technology such as jeans, tape recorders etc.	10	11
Corruption Bribery	References to acts of bribery to secure transport home, not to be called up to Afghan or have those orders changed, or any bribe of any nature	5	5
Avoiding call-up to Afghanistan		10	12
Bartering weapons equipment	References to soldiers or Soviet contingent bartering or selling either weapons or any equipment for money or alcohol or western goods	6	6
Friendly Fire	Killed by friendly fire or deliberately targeting somebody of your own forces (acts of revenge)	3	3
Hatred and Anger	References to hatred or anger, emotions	9	10

Node	Description	Cases	References
Honouring the dead	Acts to honour those who have passed, writing letters to their parents, etc.	6	6
Looting	References to looting either corpses or villages	2	4
Officers abusing women, Women selling themselves	References to sleeping with officers or others, references of sexual nature	6	11
Smoking Alcohol Drugs	Taking up smoking, drugs. References to alcohol	11	15
Suicide	References to actual suicide or threatening to commit suicide	10	12
GEWALTRAUM AFGHANISTAN			
02: Conditions	References relating to the general conditions and practices either in Afghanistan or in training in the Soviet Union	8	14
Army Life and Training	General remarks about life in the army either in Afghanistan or during training in Soviet Union	12	18
Emotional strain, crazed	Reference to severe experience of emotion	9	9
Crying, crying for	General reference to crying, mothers crying, Soldiers, often wounded or	28	61

Node	Description	Cases	References
mothers	dying, crying specifically for their mothers		
Humour Jokes	Jokes told to relieve the tension among troops, part of the army culture	4	6
Mutilation Torture Guerrilla	Afghanis mutilating the bodies of Soviets or killing them through mutilation, often limbs and heads chopped off.	6	9
Gewaltraum, Violence, violence against civilians	Afghanistan as Gewaltraum, acts of violence, violent nature of war	12	18
Casualties	References to fellow soldiers being killed or casualties of war	7	8
Civil violence, mutilation violence against soldiers	Reference to Afghan population killing soldiers or mujahedeen disguised as civilians killing soldiers, mutilation of corpses, torture	7	7
Horror of war and death	General references to acts of violence, death associated with war	29	41
Killing Children	Specific references to killing Afghan children	5	5
Killing Prisoners	Killing prisoners of war	2	2

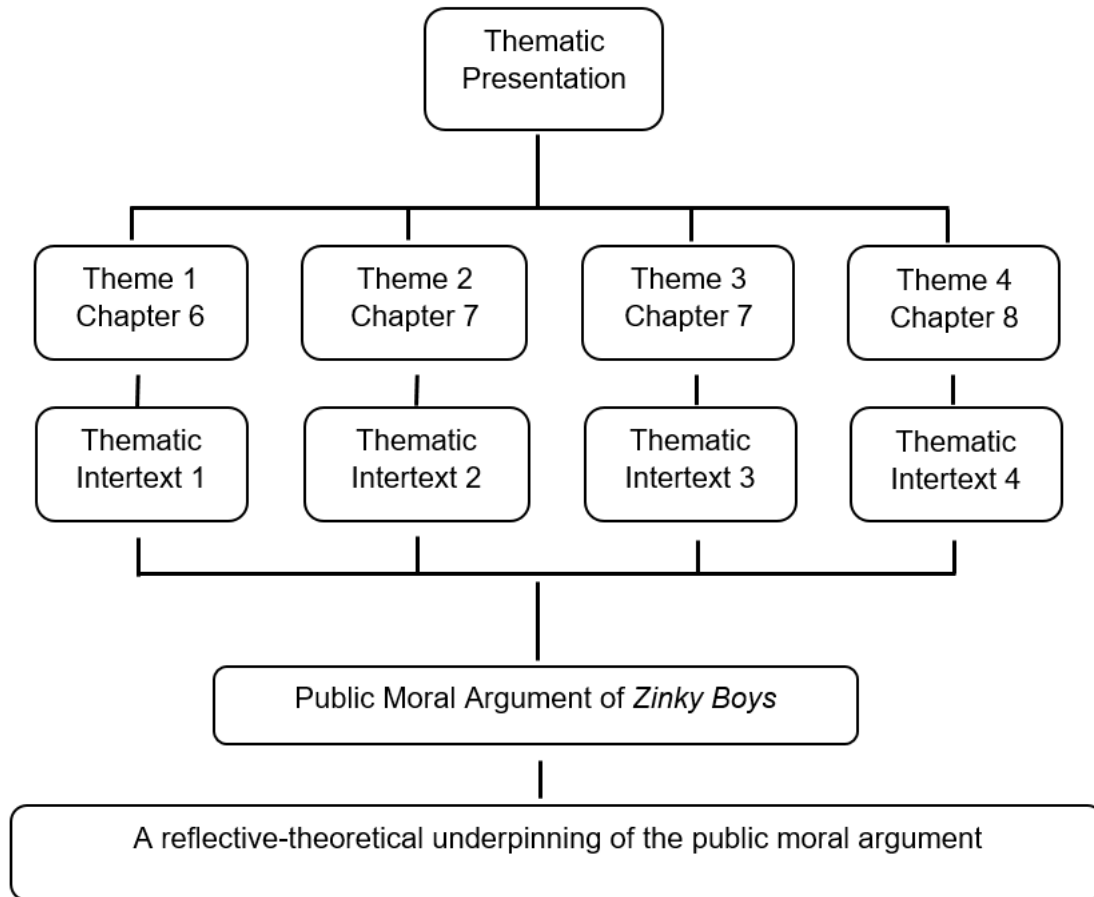
Node	Description	Cases	References
Lack of equipment, food, state of	Any reference to a lack of equipment or food or medical goods etc.	8	14
SOVIETISATION OF AFGHANISTAN			
03 Drivers of conflict, Hearts and minds	Winning over the local population or rendering aid / providing supplies to local population. Any associated act that would perpetuate the conditions or existence of war	8	8
Confession	References to confessing to wrongful deeds or being wrong or any form of admission to something that is not acceptable	3	3
International duty Patriotism Obedience	References to doing your international duty or patriotism, doing duty, etc. because of political conviction	23	29
Volunteer	Soviets (men and women) volunteering for duty in Afghan	10	11
Western Support	Evidence that the west is supplying arms and equipment or allowing mercenaries	4	7
PUBLIC SPHERE AFGHANISTAN			
04: Public Sphere Press Propaganda	References to newspapers, tv, radio, any acts of propaganda happening in the public sphere	22	38

Node	Description	Cases	References
Factual denial of war	Soviet deception about the real nature of its involvement in Afghanistan	6	10
Shattered Ideology, view of war, a mistake	Disillusion about the ideology of Sovietisation etc.	31	54
Uncertainty of purpose, Futility	Questioning the war in Afghanistan or the futility of war	13	19
SOVIET VICTIMS OF AFGHANISTAN			
05a: Victims Mothers reaction to death of son	Mothers (widows) responding to the news of their deceased	11	14
Mothers devotion	Devotion of mothers to their sons	11	17
Zink Coffin & Funeral	References to the coffin of funeral or cemetery	26	50
05b: Victims Veterans adjustment	Difficulties experienced by veterans, often psychologically, in adapting back to normal life in the Soviet Union	22	32
Change in Being, Psychological ontological	Psychological afflictions or change in personality (their ontological sense of Being) or any trauma inflicted or experienced that caused an altered worldview	27	39
Compensation	References to compensation for participation in the war	7	10

Node	Description	Cases	References
Fear of remembering and Dreaming	Acts of remembering, references to dreams, fear of or being haunted by memories about Afghanistan or people who went there such as one's child	19	26
Fear of dying Wanting to die	Any reference to "I want to live" seen as a fear of dying, or being wounded and wanting to die to avoid the suffering foreseen or to save others so that wounded would not slow the patrol down	15	24
Going Home	References to act of going home, often with difficulty	7	7
Items brought back	Western technology or goods brought back	5	5
Self-absorption with war	References implying that the war or thoughts, memories about the war is dominating a person's sense of being	3	3

Total number of references in the nodes : 737

APPENDIX D: THEMATIC DATA PRESENTATION CHAPTERS 6-8



APPENDIX E: PAGE NUMBERS IN *ZINKY BOYS* TO EACH CASE

CASE Narrator	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NUMBERS
01	Introduction and translator's preface	vii-xvii
02	Notes from my Diary	1-12
02.5	The First Day	13-14
03	Private Grenadier Battalion	14-20
04	Private motorised infantry unit	20-21
05	Nurse	21-27
06	Private Driver	27-28
07	A Mother	28-32
08	A Military Adviser	32-36
09	Private Artillery Regiment	36-38
10	Civilian Employee	39-43
11	Sergeant Major medical instructor in a reconnaissance unit	43-52
12	A Mother	52-53
13	Private Signals Corps	54-57
14	Private Gunner	57-59
15	Army Doctor	59-61
16	A Mother	61-66
17	Helicopter Pilot Captain	66-67
17.5	The Second Day	69-70
18	Sergeant infantry platoon leader	70-72
19	Civilian Employee	73-76
20	Private grenadier regiment	76-78
21	Artillery Captain	78-82
22	A Mother	83-87
23	Major propaganda section artillery regiment	88-94
24	1st Lieutenant in charge mortar platoon	94-99

CASE Narrator	DESCRIPTION	PAGE NUMBERS
25	Doctor Bacteriologist	99-103
26	A Widow	103-106
27	A Mother	106-109
28	1st Lieutenant Battery Commander	110-113
29	Civilian Employee	113-115
30	Private Gunlayer	115-121
31	A Mother	122-125
32	Private Tank Crew	125-127
33	A Soldier	127-130
33.5	The Third Day	131-132
34	Major commanding a Mountain Infantry Company	132-133
35	A Nurse	134-139
36	A Mother	139-140
37	1st Lieutenant Interpreter	140-144
38	Private	144-147
39	NCO in the Security Service	147-149
40	Private	149-150
41	A Mother	151-155
42	Sergeant Intelligence Corps	155-157
43	Major Battalion Commander	157-160
44	Private Artillery Regiment	160-161
45	A Mother	162-163
46	A Widow	163-168
47	Private Intelligence Corps	168-173
48	A Mother	173-180
49	Postscript Notes from my Diary	181-197

APPENDIX F: LETTER FROM THE LANGUAGE EDITOR

RMC LANGUAGE PRACTITIONER
117 OOSTVALLEI VILLAGE
657 COLEY STREET
GARSFONTEIN
PRETORIA 0081

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that I have proofread and edited the PhD thesis entitled:
**COMMUNICATING A PUBLIC MORAL ARGUMENT: A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS
OF SVETLANA ALEXIEVICH'S ZINKY BOYS: SOVIET VOICES FROM THE
AFGHANISTAN WAR** by P.S. Nagel

I applied Microsoft Office Word track changes to the document and have suggested certain changes and corrections to language usage, syntax, and general style which I trust will be effected to make it suitable for examination.

Signed:



Date: 09 December 2020

Dr RV McCabe
MA in Applied Linguistics (NWU)
MPPS - Masters in Public Policy Studies (UP)
PhD in English Language Studies (NWU)

- CELLPHONE: 0827730282
- EMAIL: rvmccabe@oostvallei.co.za

APPENDIX G: TURNITIN REPORT

PhD			
ORIGINALITY REPORT			
8%	6%	2%	4%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
PRIMARY SOURCES			
1	www.militaryphotos.net Internet Source		1%
2	Submitted to Leiden University Student Paper		1%
3	Submitted to Glendale Community College Student Paper		<1%
4	www.tandfonline.com Internet Source		<1%
5	www.goodreads.com Internet Source		<1%
6	www.red-alliance.net Internet Source		<1%
7	Submitted to CSU, Fullerton Student Paper		<1%
8	Jeffrey W. Jones. " Mothers, prostitutes, and the collapse of the USSR: the representation of women in Svetlana Aleksievich's ", Canadian Slavonic Papers, 2017 Publication		<1%