

Caught in the crossfire

Thousands are killed daily in wars by weapons supplied by foreign governments for profit or political power

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As I watched my critically wounded friend being bundled onto a makeshift stretcher, my days as a chronicler of war around the world felt like they were coming to an end. Both his arms had been smashed by a volley of high-velocity bullets, and another bullet had torn through our interpreter's throat, leaving him gasping and frothing on the back seat of our bullet-riddled car.

Leaving Afghanistan in a Red Cross ambulance, our adventure was far from over. A gruelling drive through the Khyber Pass and the lawless border area of Pakistan stood between us and a flight home. There was plenty of time to reflect.

Guns have followed me around most of my working life. In Somalia in 1992, I watched a nation tear itself apart with weapons supplied by the United States and Russia – deadly gifts of the Cold War. In Angola, high-tech M-16s and Kalashnikovs were in the hands of inexperienced teenagers. The weapons that ended our visit to Afghanistan were almost certainly Russian or American, but the others I saw die that day had stepped onto a minefield, and those land mines were probably European or Chinese. Few come out of the politics of war with a clear conscience.

The countries I'd visited were different, but the stories had begun to seem the same: victims

Civil war has left Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, in ruins – a bomb-shattered no-man's-land

