

POPULATION OF KABUL, 2004: 3 MILLION
 ESTIMATED POPULATION OF KABUL, 2011: 4 MILLION
 MEDIAN AGE OF AFGHANS: 18.2
 DURATION OF WAR IN AFGHANISTAN: 33 YEARS



LIFE DURING WARTIME

Photographs by **BENJAMIN LOWY**

It happens every day, though it rarely makes the news. Families picnicking on the rocky banks of Lake Qargha; couples pedaling fiberglass swan-boats over the reflected Paghman Mountains; old men in shalwar kameez bumping volleyballs in Shar-e Naw Park; teenagers smoking hookahs in Karte Seh; children skipping school to play video games in the Old City's illicit arcades or constructing intricate dioramas from scavenged detritus or paying out paper kites — almost as high as the tethered blimp that surveils Kabul — from the barren terraces of Nadir Khan Hill; early-Friday-morning dogfights and bird fights; fathers and sons feeding pigeons outside the Mosque of the King of Two Swords; raucous dance parties at neon-lighted wedding halls; soccer and cricket in trash-strewn lots. After more than 30 years of war, Afghanistan's special tragedy — its wonder — is that the obstinate violence no longer represents an assault on daily life. Rather, life, in its obstinacy, represents a daily assault on the violence. **LUKE MOGELSON**

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