

# War, Globalization, and Reproduction

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First came the foreign bankers eager to lend at extortionate rates; then the financial controllers to see that the interest was paid; then the thousands of foreign advisors taking their cut. Finally, when the country was bankrupt and helpless, it was time for the foreign troops to 'rescue' the ruler from his 'rebellious' people. One last gulp and the country had gone.

(Pakenham 1991: 126)

You who hunger, who shall feed you?

Come to us, we too are starving.

Only hungry ones can feed you.

B. Brecht, All or Nothing

## Introduction

As the proliferation of conflicts in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, and the zest of the US for military intervention throughout the 1980s and 1990s demonstrate (1), war is on the global agenda. In what follows I argue that this is because the new phase of capitalist expansionism that we are witnessing requires the destruction of any economic activity not subordinated to the logic of accumulation, and this is necessarily a violent process. Corporate capital cannot extend its reach over the planet's resources --from the seas to the forests to people's labour, to our very genetic pools-- without generating an intense resistance worldwide. Moreover, it is in the nature of the present capitalist crisis

that no mediations are possible, and that development planning in the Third World give way to war. (2)

That the connection between integration in the global economy and warfare is not generally recognized is due to the fact that globalization today, while in essence continuing the late nineteenth-century colonial project, presents itself primarily as an economic programme. Its first and most visible weapons are structural adjustment programmes, trade liberalization, privatization, and intellectual property rights. All these policies are responsible for an immense transfer of wealth from the Third World to the metropolises, but they do not require territorial conquest, and thus are assumed to work by purely peaceful means.(3)

Military intervention too is taking new forms, often appearing under the guise of benevolent initiatives, such as "food aid" and "humanitarian relief", or, in Latin America, the "war against drugs". A further reason why the marriage between war and globalization--the form that imperialism takes today-- is not more evident is that most of the new "globalization wars" have been fought on the African continent, whose current history is systematically distorted by the media, which blame every crisis in it on the Africans' alleged "backwardness", "tribalism", and incapacity to achieve democratic institutions.

### **Africa, War and Structural Adjustment**

In reality, the situation in Africa shows the coincidence between the implementation of the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) introduced in the 1980s by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to facilitate the advance of multinational capital in the region, and the development of a state of constant warfare. It shows that structural adjustment generates war, and war, in turn, completes the work of structural adjustment, as it makes the countries affected dependent on international capital, and the powers that represent it, beginning with the US, the European Union

(EU) and the UN. In other words, to paraphrase Clausewitz, "structural adjustment is war by other means."

There are many ways in which "structural adjustment" promotes war. This type of programme was imposed by the World Bank and the IMF on most African countries starting in the early 1980s, presumably to spur economic recovery and help the African governments pay for the debts which they had contracted during the previous decade in order to finance development projects. Among the reforms it prescribes are land privatization (beginning with the abolition of communal land tenure), trade liberalization (the elimination of tariffs on imported goods), the deregulation of currency transactions, the downsizing of the public sector, the defunding of social services, and a system of controls that effectively transfers economic planning from the African governments to the World Bank and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).(4)

This economic restructuring was presumably meant to boost productivity, eliminate inefficiency, and increase Africa's "competitive edge" on the global market. But the opposite has occurred. More than a decade after its adoption, local economies have collapsed, foreign investment has not materialized, and the only productive activities in place in most African countries are once again, as in the colonial period, mineral extraction and export-oriented agriculture, that contributes to the gluts in the global market, while Africans do not have enough food to eat.

In this context of generalized economic bankruptcy, violent rivalries have exploded everywhere among different factions of the African ruling class, who, unable to enrich themselves through the exploitation of labour, are now fighting for access to state power as the key condition for the accumulation of wealth. State power, in fact, is the key to the appropriation and sale on the international market of either the national assets and resources (land, gold, diamonds, oil, timber), or the assets possessed by rival or weaker groups.(5) Thus, war has become the necessary underbelly of a new mercantile economy, or (according to some) an "economy of plunder" (Bayart *et al.* 1999), thriving with the

complicity of foreign companies and international agencies, who (for all their complaints about "corruption") benefit from it.

As in Russia, the World Bank's insistence that everything be privatized has weakened the state, and accelerated this process. In the same way, the deregulation of banking activities and currency transactions (also demanded by the World Bank) has helped the spread of the drug trade which, since the 1980s, has been playing a major role in Africa's political economy, contributing to the formation of private armies (Bayart et al. 1999; Williams 1998).

A further source of warfare in Africa has been the brutal impoverishment into which structural adjustment has plunged the majority of the population. While intensifying social protest, this, over the years, has torn the social fabric as millions of people have been forced to leave their villages and go abroad in search of new sources of livelihood; and the struggle for survival has laid the ground-work for the fomenting and manipulation of local antagonisms and the recruitment of the unemployed (particularly the youth), by warring parties. Many "tribal" and religious conflicts in Africa (no less than the "ethnic" conflicts in Yugoslavia) have been rooted in these processes. From the mass expulsions of immigrants and religious riots in Nigeria in the early and mid-1980s, to the "clan" wars in Somalia in the early 1990s (Chossudovsky 1998), to the bloody wars between the state and the fundamentalists in Algeria (Stone 1997), in the background of most contemporary African conflicts there have been the World Bank's and the IMF's "conditionalities," that have wrecked peoples' lives and undermined the conditions for social solidarity.

There is no doubt, for instance, that the youths who have been fighting the numerous African wars of recent years are the same who two decades ago could have been in school, and could have hoped to make a living through trade or a job in the public sector, and could have looked at the future with the hope of being able to contribute to their families' well-being. Similarly, the appearance of child-soldiers in the 1980s and

1990s would never have been possible if, in many countries, the extended family had not been undermined by financial hardships, and millions of children were not without a place to go except for the street and had someone to provide for their needs (Human Rights Watch 1995).

War has not only been a consequence of economic change; it has also been a means to produce it. Two objectives stand out when we consider the prevailing patterns of war in Africa, and the way in which warfare intersects with globalization. First, war forces people off the land, i.e. it separates the producers from the means of production, a condition for the expansion of the global labor market. War also reclaims the land for capitalist use, boosting the production of cash crops and export-oriented agriculture. Particularly in Africa, where communal land tenure is still widespread, this has been a major goal of the World Bank, whose *raison d'etre* as an institution has been the capitalization of agriculture.(6) Thus, it is hard today to see millions of refugees or famine victims fleeing their localities without thinking of the satisfaction this must bring to World Bank officers as well as agribusiness companies, who surely see the hand of progress working through it.

War also undermines people's opposition to "market reforms" by reshaping the territory and disrupting the social networks that provide the basis for resistance. Significant here is the correlation--frequent in contemporary Africa--between anti-IMF protest and conflict (Federici 1992). This is most visible perhaps in Algeria, when the rise of anti-government Islamic fundamentalism dates from the anti-IMF uprising of 1988, when thousands of young people took over the streets of the capital for several days in the most intense and widespread protest since the heyday of the anti-colonial struggle.(7)

External intervention--often seizing local struggles and turning them into global conflicts--has played a major role in this context. This can be seen even in the case of military interventions by the US that are usually read through the prism of "geo-politics" and the Cold War, such as the support given by the Reagan Administration to the

governments of Sudan and Somalia, and to UNITA in Angola. Both in the Sudan and Somalia SAPs were underway since the early 1980s when both countries were among the major recipients of US military aid. In the Sudan, US military assistance strengthened the Neimeri regime's hand against the coalition of forces that were opposing the cuts demanded by the IMF; even though, in the end, it could not stem the uprising that in 1985 was to depose him. In Somalia, US military aid helped Siad Barre's attack on the Isaaks, an episode in the ongoing war waged by national and international agencies over the last decade against Africa's pastoralist groups (Africa Watch 1990).(8)

In Angola too, US military aid to UNITA served to force the government not just to renounce socialism and the help of Cuban troops, but to negotiate with the IMF, and it undoubtedly strengthened the bargaining power of the oil companies operating in the country (Sogge 1994: 105).

### **Food Aid as Stealth Warfare**

In many cases, what arms could not accomplish was achieved through "food aid" provided by the US, the UN and various NGOs to the refugees and the victims of the famines which the wars had produced. Often delivered to both sides of the conflict (as in the Sudan, Ethiopia, and Angola), food aid has become a major component of the contemporary neo-colonial war-machine, and the war-economy generated by it. First, it has entitled international organizations other than the Red Cross to claim the right to intervene in areas of conflict in the name of providing relief (in 1988 the UN passed a resolution asserting the right of donors to deliver aid) (Macrae and Zwi 1994a: 11-12).(9) It is on this basis that the US/UN military intervention in Somalia in 1992-1993 ("Operation Restore Hope" ) was justified.

But even when it is not accompanied by troops, the delivery of food aid in a conflict situation is always a form of political and military intervention as it prolongs the war by feeding the contending armies (often more than the civilian population), it shapes

military strategy, and helps the stronger party--the one best equipped to take advantage of food distributions--to win (Duffield 1994: 60-63). This is exactly what took place in the Sudan and Ethiopia in the 1980s, where, by providing food aid, the US, the UN and NGOs like CARE became major protagonists in the wars fought in these countries.(10)

In addition, food aid contributes to the displacement and the relocation of rural communities, by setting up feeding centers organized around the needs of the NGOs; it undermines local agriculture by causing the prices of locally marketed produce to collapse; and it introduces a new source of warfare, since the prospect of appropriating the large food supplies and selling them locally or internationally, provides a new motive for conflict, indeed, the creation of a war-economy, especially in countries that have been radically impoverished (Duffield 1994).

So questionable has food assistance been in its effects, so dubious its ability to guarantee people's livelihood (which would have been better served by the distribution of agricultural tools and seeds and, first of all, by the end of hostilities), that one has to ask whether the true purpose of this initiative was not the phasing out of subsistence farming, and the creation of a long-term dependence on imported food--both center-pieces of World Bank reform, and conditions for the integration of African countries into the global economy. This question is all the more legitimate considering that the negative effects of food aid have been well-known since the 1960s, when it became the object of much protest and research throughout the Third World. Since then, it has been almost an axiom that "you don't help people by giving them food, but by giving them the tools to feed themselves," and that even under famine conditions, what people need most to survive is to preserve their ability to farm. How the UN and the World Bank could have forgotten this lesson is indeed unexplainable, unless we presume that the appearance of food aid in contemporary war-related operations in Africa has had as one of its major objectives the commercialization of land and agriculture and the take-over of the African food markets by international agribusiness.

It must be added that "relief operations," relying on the intervention of foreign NGOs and aid organizations have further marginalised the victims of conflicts and famines, who have been denied the right to control the relief activities, while being portrayed all along in the international media by the same NGOs as helpless beings unable to care of themselves. Indeed, as Macrae and Zwi point out, the only right that has been recognized has been the right of the "donors" to deliver assistance, which, as we have seen, has been used (in Somalia in 1992-3) to call for military intervention (Macrae and Zwi (a), 1994).

### **Mozambique: A Paradigm Case of Contemporary War**

How war first, and then humanitarian relief can be used to recolonize a country, bring it to the market, and break its resistance to economic and political dependence is best seen in the case of Mozambique (Hanlon 1991, 1996). Indeed, the war that the Mozambique National Resistance or Renamo (a proxy of apartheid South Africa and the US) waged against this country for almost a decade (1981-1990) contains all the key elements of today's new globalization wars:

i. *The destruction of the country's physical and social (re)productive infrastructure to provoke a reproduction crisis and enforce economic and political subordination.*

This Renamo achieved through (a) the use of systematic terror against the population (massacres, enslavement, the infliction of horrendous mutilations) that forced people off their land, and turned them into refugees (more than 1 million people were killed in this war); (b) the demolition of roads, bridges, hospitals, schools, and above all the destruction of all agricultural activities and assets--the basic means of subsistence for a population of farmers. (The case of Mozambique shows the strategic significance of "low-intensity warfare", beginning with the use of land-mines, as a means to prevent



people from going out to farm, and thereby creating a famine situation requiring external help.)

ii. *The use of "food aid" delivered to displaced people and victims of famine to ensure compliance with economic conditionalities, create long-term food dependency, and undermine a country's ability to control its economic and political future.* It must not be forgotten that food aid is a great boost to US agribusiness, which profits from it twice, first by being relieved of its huge surpluses and, later, by profiting from the helped country's dependence on imported food.

iii. *The transfer of decision-making from the state to international organizations and NGOs.* So thorough was the attack on Mozambican sovereignty that, once it was forced to ask for aid, Mozambique had to accept that the NGOs be given the green light in the management of relief operations, including the right to enter any part of its territory, and distribute food directly to the population, at places of their choice. As Joseph Hanlon has shown in *Mozambique: Who calls the shots?*, the government was hard put to protest the NGOs' politics, even in the case of right-wing NGOs, like World Vision, that used the relief distributions for political and religious propaganda; or NGOs like CARE that were suspected of collaborating with the CIA.

iv. *The imposition of impossible peace conditions*, such as "reconciliation" and power-sharing with Renamo (the Mozambican government's and population's most irreconcilable enemy, responsible for many atrocities and the massacre of more than 1 million people) which created the potential for permanent destabilization. This "reconciliation" policy, now cynically and widely imposed, from Haiti to South Africa, as a "peace-condition" --the political equivalent of the practice of feeding both parties in a conflict context--is one of the most telling expressions of the present recolonization drive, as it proclaims that people in the Third World should never have the right to have peace, and to protect themselves from proven enemies. It also proclaims that not every country

has the same rights, since the US, or any country of the EU, would never dream of accepting such a foul proposition.

#### Conclusion: From Africa to Yugoslavia and Beyond

The case of Mozambique is not unique. Not only are most African countries practically run by US-supported agencies and NGOs; the sequence--destruction of infrastructure, imposition of market-reforms, forced reconciliation with murderous, 'irreconcilable' enemies, destabilization--is found, in different degrees and combinations, everywhere in Africa today, to such a point that several countries, like Angola and Sudan, are in a state of permanent emergency, where their viability as political entities is now in question.

It is through this combination of financial and military warfare that the African people's resistance against globalization has so far been held in check, in the same way as it has in Central America (El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Panama) where throughout the 1980s open US military intervention has been the rule.

The difference is that, in Africa, the right of the US/UN to send troops has generally been justified in the name of "peacekeeping," "peacemaking" and "humanitarian intervention," possibly because under any other condition, a landing of the marines (of the type we have seen in Panama and Grenada), would not have been internationally accepted. These interventions, however, are the new faces of colonialism, and not in Africa alone. This is a colonialism that aims at controlling policies and resources rather than gaining territorial possession, in political terms, a "philanthropic," "humanitarian," "foot-loose" colonialism that aims at "governance" rather than "government," for the latter involves a commitment to a specific institutional and economic set up, whereas modern-day free enterprise imperialism wants to maintain its freedom to always choose the institutional set up, the economic forms, and the locations best suited to its needs.(11) However, as in the colonialism of old, soldiers and merchants

are not far apart, as the marriage of food-aid distributions and military intervention today again demonstrates.

What is the significance of this scenario for the anti-war movement, and the claim made by this article that war is still on the global agenda?

First, that we can expect the situation that has developed in post-adjustment Africa--with its mixture of economic and military warfare and the sequencing of structural adjustment-conflict-intervention--to be reproduced over and over in the coming years throughout the Third World. We can also expect to see more wars develop in the former socialist countries, for the institutions and forces that are pushing the globalization process find state-owned industry and other remnants of socialism as much of an obstacle to "free enterprise" as African communalism.

In this sense, NATO's war against Yugoslavia is likely to be the first example (after that of Bosnia) of what is to come, as the end of state-socialism is being replaced by liberalization and the free market, NATO's advance to the East providing "the security framework." So close is the relation between NATO's "humanitarian intervention" in Yugoslavia and "humanitarian intervention" in Africa that relief workers --the ground troops of the contemporary war-machine--were brought from Africa to Kosovo, where they have already had the opportunity to assess the relative value of African and European lives in the eyes of international organizations, measured by the quality and quantity of the resources provided to the refugees.

We should also see that the situation we confront is very different from the imperialism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. For the imperialist powers of those days were tied to, and responsible for specific, and territorially-defined social, political and infrastructural arrangements. Thus, in the imperialist era of the gun-boat and the machine-gun, which could kill thousands of people from afar, responsibility for massacres, famines and other forms of mass killing, could always be identified. We know, for instance, that it was King Leopold of Belgium who had a personal

responsibility for the killing of millions of people in the Congo (Hochschild 1998). By contrast, today, millions of Africans are dying every year because of the consequences of structural adjustment, but no one is held responsible for it. On the contrary, the social causes of death in Africa are increasingly becoming as invisible as the invisible hand of the capitalist market (Walton and Seddon 1994).

Finally, we have to realize that we cannot mobilize against the bombings alone, nor demand that bombing stops and call that "peace". We know from the post-war scenario in Iraq, that the destruction of a country's infrastructure produces more deaths than the bombs themselves. What we need to learn is that death, hunger, disease and destruction are presently a daily reality for most people across the planet. More than that, structural adjustment-- the most universal program in the Third World today, the one that, in all its forms (including the African Growth and Opportunity Act), represents the contemporary face of capitalism and colonialism --is war. Thus, the program of the anti-war movement must include the elimination of structural adjustment in all of its many forms, if war and the imperialistic project it embodies is to finally come to an end.

## **End Notes**

(1) By a recent count there were 75 countries experiencing some form of war in 1999 (Effe 1999); 33 of them are to be found in Africa's 43 continental nations. This is the "Fourth World War" against the world's poor that Subcomandante Marcos often writes about.

(2) For a description of this new phase of capitalism that emphasizes the disappearance of interclass mediations see Federici (1999) and Midnight Notes (1992). The phrase "new enclosures" is used in these articles to indicate that the thrust of contemporary capitalism

is to annihilate any guarantees of subsistence that were recognized by socialist, post-colonial or Keynesian states in the 1950s and 1960s. This process must be violent in order to succeed.

(3) The immense existing literature on structural adjustment, globalization and neoliberalism has amply described this transfer of wealth. See: (Brecher and Costello 1994), (Bello 1994), (Barnet and Cavanagh 1994), and (Federici 1999).

(4) The literature on structural adjustment in Africa is also immense. Since the mid-1980s, NGOs (both international and domestic) have become essential to the implementation of structural adjustment programmes, as they have taken over the areas of social reproduction that the state is forced to defund when it is structurally adjusted. As Alex de Waal writes: "...the combination of neo-liberalism and advocacy of a 'human face' has created a new role for international NGOs as subcontractors in the large-scale delivery of basic services such as health, agricultural extension and food rations.... Often, the larger service-delivery NGOs (CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Save the Children Fund) have been drawn in when there has been a crisis such as famine or institutional collapse, and have stayed on afterwards. In other cases, NGOs have placed advisers in ministries (health is the favourite) and occasionally they have even taken over responsibility for entire services. The basic drug supply for clinics in the capital of Sudan, primary health care in rural Uganda and almost all TB and leprosy programmes in Tanzania are just three of the 'national' health programmes largely directed by international NGOs using funds from Euro-American institutional donors" (de Waal 1997: 53).

(5) A good example of this plundering of weaker groups is to be found in the Sudan, where, in late 1980s, the Sudanese government gave the Murahaliin militia, drawn from

the Baggara Arabs, the right to plunder the cattle wealth of the Dinka. "Their raids were frequent, widespread and devastating. The raiders stole livestock, destroyed villages, poisoned wells and killed indiscriminately. They were also implicated in enslaving captives. Displaced survivors fled to garrison towns, where they were forced to sell their cattle and other assets cheaply" (de Waal 1997: 94). For more on this process see (Duffield 1994: 54-57).

(6) For an analysis of World Bank policies promoting the capitalization of agriculture in Africa see (Caffentzis 1995).

(7) The actual warfare between the government and the Islamic fundamentalists began with the government's refusal to recognize the electoral gains of the fundamentalists in early 1992. But the roots of the conflict are to be found in the government's harsh response to the 1988 anti-IMF riots. See (Stone 1997).

(8) In 1987, Oxfam reported that a European Commission official responded to its request to aid pastoralists in Southern Sudan with a self-fulfilling prophesy: "In his view, pastoralism was, in any case, non-viable and in decline all over the region". Oxfam went on to comment: "It is important to note that USAID, UNICEF, and EEC have all recently expressed similar views concerning pastoralism in the South; that it is on the way out and in twenty years would have disappeared anyway" (Keen and Wilson 1994: 214).

(9) As de Waal writes: "...the first negotiated agreement on access to a war zone (was) Operation Lifeline in Sudan April 1989...(this was) followed in 1991-2 with the concept of 'cross-mandate' operations, for example in eastern Ethiopia, where UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP assisted refugees, displaced people and impoverished residents without

discrimination. The cross-mandate approach was further developed in the former Yugoslavia" (de Waal 1997: 69).

(10) One of the most egregious examples of this transformation of aid providers into military protagonists is the assistance given by the US and UN in the Ethiopian government's war against the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in the 1980s. The famous "We are the Children" famine of 1984-5 was not caused by drought, overpopulation, or improper land use as claimed at the time. Its true cause was the Ethiopian government's many offensives against the EPLF and TPLF as well as its resettlement program which forcibly moved hundreds of thousands of people from the north to the south of the country (during which 50,000 people died). Food relief provided by the US, the UN and various NGOs (which totaled almost three billion dollars between 1985 and 1988) was essential for the continuation of the Ethiopian government's war effort as well as its resettlement scheme. So thorough was the cooperation and complicity between the US, UN and NGO personnel with the Ethiopian government that they hid the causes of the famine; they hid the diversion of food aid to the military (at most 15% of the aid went to civilians, the rest went to the army), they hid the human costs of the resettlement scheme, they accompanied the Ethiopian Army "to gain access to the famine areas" and, on top of it, they loudly complained that their humanitarian efforts were being hindered when the EPLF or the TPLF recaptured territory! Alex de Waal, a co-director of African Rights, has provided us with an in-depth, eye opening account of this travesty (de Waal 1997: 115-127) which is especially valuable since he was directly involved in the events he reports on.

(11) This is similar to the "new slavery" discussed in Bales (1999) where contemporary slave owners in Thailand and Brazil avoid responsibility for their slaves, so that they are "disposable" when they become unprofitable.

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