

## **Down and Out in Globality: The Violence of Poverty, The Violence of Capital**

By Ian Gibson<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

This paper will focus on the continuing conditions of poverty within globality and poverty's interrelation with violence and inequitable usages of capital. These conditions are both supported and maintained by systems contained within globality. Elite classes in the North and South (arguably the helm of globality) who control movements of capital, dissemble concern towards issues of poverty while maintaining systems that ensure both poverty and violence will continue, the most prominent systems being global capitalism and war (whether selling arms for, or fanning the flames of). This *global overclass* (see Rorty, 1999) responsible for major global economic decisions has subsumed nation-state politics and law resulting in political inaction that rarely contributes to any significant reductions in global poverty or global violence. However citizen-driven action and here 'citizen' refers specifically to those whose defining purpose is to make the world better than they found it (see Reardon 2001, Singer 2002 & Bauman 2006) has kept both the issues of poverty and violence against the unrepresented on governmental and international agendas, consistently demanding that the root causes of poverty and violence be tackled, and that a sustainable rights-driven agenda be adopted, one that correctly identifies poverty as violence against the unrepresented.

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## **Introduction**

Non-Religious grievances, such as issues of social identity and meaningful participation in communal life, once expressed in Marxist or nationalist vocabularies, tend nowadays to be translated into the language of religious revival: “Secular ideological expressions of rebellion have been replaced by ideological formulations that are religious. Yet the grievances – the sense of alienation, marginalization, and social frustration – are often much the same” (Bauman after Juergensmeyer, 2006:112).

The transformation of the modern imperialist geography of the globe and the realization of the world market signal a passage within the capitalist mode of production. Most significant, the spatial divisions of the three Worlds (First, Second, and Third) have been scrambled so that we continually find the First World in the Third, the Third in the First, and the Second almost nowhere at all. Capital seems to be faced with a smooth world – or really, a world defined by new and complex regimes of differentiation and homogenization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization (Hardt & Negri, 2000:xiii).

In defining poverty we discover that it is a difficult concept to convey in words; the meaning may be attempted in detail but often this is expressed inadequately and imprecisely. It is probably fair to say that in order to clearly comprehend poverty (or violence for that matter) they must unfortunately be experienced first hand. Pictures can depict images on TV or in other media but these are transitory, fleetingly digested with

the dinner and soon forgotten. To live in poverty is to live in another world, a parallel world to the one of images portrayed in advertising for example – kitchens full of food, baths full of warm water and rooms full of furniture, books and light. Poverty is numb and brutal. Primo Levi and Alexander Solzhenitsyn both described poverty arising from political dictates when captives in 20<sup>th</sup> Century totalitarian state prison camps on opposing sides (but interestingly sharing many similarities) of the political spectrum – Levi in the Nazi death camp Auschwitz, Solzhenitsyn in the Soviet Gulag. Their experiences recounted survival and brutality on a base level and vividly demonstrated the absence of any recourse to human rights – rights, which are still denied to many living in the South and to many in the North. George Orwell also documented his personal poverty when ‘Down and Out’ in the cities of Paris and London between the wars, and in details that led to T.S. Eliot of Faber and Faber reportedly refusing to publish Orwell’s book. As great and compassionate writers their words come nearest to conveying the true state of poverty in its myriad forms, a desperate existence, constantly beset by violence.

For many citizens living in the South and the North poverty is still this brutal omnipresent evil. Their situation is seemingly unthinkable and untenable given the amounts of capital that are transported around the globe daily in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, amounts that could certainly be used to alleviate this condition (Hastings’s comment further on in this paper illustrates one reason why this condition continues). However, for a second year in a row, according to an Oxfam press release of 4<sup>th</sup> April 2008, ‘rich countries have failed to deliver on their historical commitment made in 2005 to increase

aid to fight extreme poverty'. Oxfam documents aid figures that show 'the total overseas aid provided in 2007 was \$104 billion; in real terms an 8.4% drop' ([www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org)). Oxfam Policy Advisor Max Lawson was quoted in this report as saying, 'this failure to deliver on aid promises means millions of children denied a place in school, and mothers and children condemned to die' (ibid.) emotive words for a world seemingly bathing in brave new globality, shining technology and governments willing to bail out mortgage lenders to the tune of £40 -50 billion (see the recent case of Northern Rock in the UK).

### **Capital Forces of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries**

The past century produced many great innovations to assist life but conversely many innovations to take life away in wars driven by forces of capital and the spiraling quest for resources. The result was millions of dead and homeless, conditions that continue even now, Darfur being just one example. The result of capital forces proved the 20<sup>th</sup> Century as being one of the most violent one hundred years on record and these capital forces were directly responsible for creating conditions of poverty and violence. The wars, which framed Orwell's novel, were just (just?) two examples of how inequitable capital forces destroy lives and planetary resources. South African Pali Lehohla noted in an address to the United Nations Statistical Commission in New York 26 February 2007 that 'historians attribute the causes of the two World Wars to the crisis of capitalist accumulation and imperialism with its inherent expansionist tendencies to capture markets'. Imperialism with its attitude and action gutted South America, Asia and Africa in the first millennium and resource expansionism was one of the core causes for both

world wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The First World War as well as being the first war to be fought on a global scale was also the first industrialized war, where the deployment of machine gun and heavy artillery amounted to terrible military casualties in the battles of Ypres, The Somme and Passchendaele. Factories produced these killing machines on an unprecedented scale (prompting Stanley Baldwin's observation on violent capital in the House of Commons after the 1918 election – 'A lot of hard-faced men who look as if they had done very well out of the war') and production still continues unabated. Whilst largely the poor fought in the trenches in the 14-18 War the elite remained at home to capitalize (history hardly changes, Vietnam and now Iraq appear to be a continuation of this trend). The Second World War continued the 'evolution' of warfare by planning and developing large-scale aerial warfare, which deliberately targeted non-combatants (a depressing strategy involving on the allies' side people like Robert McNamara, stationed in the Marianas. who as a future US Secretary of Defence also oversaw the policy of slash and burn bombing in the Vietnam War). Aerial bombardment inflicted huge civilian casualties on urban populations in cities like Dresden, Berlin, Tokyo and Coventry and culminated with the A-bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki edging the world into the nuclear age and the Cold War. President Eisenhower, who served as Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe in the Second World War, a person who clearly understood the nature of war and its terrible effects, reflected on war and capital in his speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors on April 16<sup>th</sup> 1953 – 'Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed'

([www.eisenhowermemorial.org](http://www.eisenhowermemorial.org)). Eisenhower continued with analogies to the cost of aircraft and warships and how equivalent spending on education or housing or food could produce so much to aid society. This speech was a telling and measured example of the waste of capital on the war machine and its indiscriminate results, made all the more credible and powerful in its impact by the identity of the person delivering the words.

### **Governments and Capital**

The philosopher and socialist politician Tony Benn who is on record as naming the above speech as one of his defining tenets of life (see [www.tonybenn.com](http://www.tonybenn.com): 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb 2002) succinctly noted that all wars are a failure of diplomacy and are thus evitable. Benn [a long time human rights activist and advocate of peace, justice and internationalism] is particularly critical of governments who have consistently kowtowed to capital and traded in double standards regarding poverty and justice for the people, particularly the government of Margaret Thatcher and to a lesser extent that of Tony Blair; Thatcher because she wrested social welfare away from the people and hid it under a banner of supposed choice for the 'people' (resulting in anything but) and Blair (despite his developmental policies, see below) for his support of the US administration in the Iraq War, and the subsequent (and to some) unjustifiable and unlawful attack on the lives of many poverty stricken Iraqi civilians. The result of which plunged Iraq, an oil rich country, into the mire of a failed state. Thatcher was very effective in underlining the 'greed is good' maxim of the '80s with her strong adherence to free market policies (let the market decide). She shared a strong alliance and ideology with her US counterpart

Reagan, a kindred spirit whose policies in Central America and the resultant Iran-Contra affair showed duplicity on a grand scale. Blair, an architect of 'New Labour' continued this duplicity by also being party to questionable armament sales – supplying 'countries of concern,' i.e. those with problematic human rights records, such as Saudi Arabia, Israel, Columbia, China and Russia (see *Guardian Unlimited*, July 25<sup>th</sup> 2007). Blair was an interesting paradox in government because while supporting arms trades that inflicted casualties on many in the South (so far so government) his government also adopted a development, human rights and poverty reduction approach to policy together with his government's claim while President of the EU in 2005 to follow a pro-development strategy within the DDA. This highlights the constraints that capital often puts on systems. On the one hand governments pledge poverty development programs and on the other the promise of capital from weapon's sales leads governments to engage in violent conflict and wars as a default for diplomacy and support a dubious trade in weapons, the results of which kill and maim and destroy infrastructures that totally undermine these programs. Or is that too simplistic? possibly so.

However this paper maintains that the sale of armaments is a particularly insidious process, which needs to be rendered more transparent, more controlled and more accountable both with countries that supply and countries that demand if there is to be any concern for the future of human life and the planet in this century and beyond. As an example of this insidious process arms once purchased are often deployed against the people that governments purport to protect – people in Sudan, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia,

Burma, China, Somalia and Indonesia have all been party to this. The United Nation's Security Council, responsible 'for the maintenance of international peace and security' ([www.un.org](http://www.un.org)) has (with the exclusion of China) four permanent members—France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States— who together sell 78% of global exports of conventional weapons. Germany, although not a permanent member of the Security Council, is another major contributor and is responsible for another 5% of conventional weapon sales. It is estimated that about two-thirds of these exports go to developing countries (Figures taken from *Commission of Human Security Final Report*, 2003:134). In terms of 'peace and security' one might inquire at to what kind of security is this council purporting to deal in and who is this security for? Citizens in the UK clearly felt alarmed at the duplicity of its government's involvement in arm sales. *The Observer* in 2005 reported that in the UK alone, 'Analysis of official figures shows] annual weapons sales almost quadrupled between 1999 and 2004.' These figures sparked immediate anger amongst campaigners and MPs who attacked these weapon sales and called this massive increase 'obscene' and 'unacceptable' during a time when the government was putting 'so much political capital into relieving poverty in Africa' ([www.observer.guardian.co.uk](http://www.observer.guardian.co.uk)). Among the countries supplied by the UK were Malawi, one of the least developed nations in the world, as well as Eritrea, Ethiopia, Algeria, Sudan, Zambia, Uganda, Namibia and Somalia (Ibid.).

### **Armament Sales versus Social Welfare**

One could well inquire further as to why the policy makers in these countries, among the



poorest nations in the world, would spend such amounts on weapons rather than on infrastructure, health, welfare care or education, (are the ruling elites in these countries indifferent to poverty? surely not) or why the UK one of the richest and arguably democratically progressive countries in the world would support let alone supply such sales in terms of its media touted poverty and development programs (or is capital or indifference speaking here too?). Developing countries often cite the need to build strong security in order to support development but the concept of effective security needs to be reinterpreted. This is a continuing challenge for many, among them peace theorists and peace activists who recognize that armed security tends to merely perpetuate insecurity and that any state policy that continues to reinforce armed security leads to divisive interpretation both within and beyond that state. Military spending may underpin communities that are employed in this trade in the North and develop certain economic growth in both the North and the South but at the loss of far more important societal concerns, for example to the social welfare of a country. In one US world politics text the authors Rourke and Boyer (echoing Eisenhower's speech) estimate that the capital spending the US administration uses in its defence budget for one B-1 bomber would be equal in capital terms to give scholarships for 61,631 students at a private college or 196,998 students at a state university (Rourke & Boyer, 2008:7). This rather suggests a misuse of resources and could even be construed as highly wasteful or morally reprehensible expenditure in social terms, one warplane against many educated. The argument given again supporting this approach to security is that arms spending strengthens a nation's security and development as a competitive power both in the North

and South. The downside is that arms spending also detracts from social welfare spending, incurring great gaps in infrastructure, education, medical spending and loss in competition with societies that are not burdened with defense costs, North Korea being one example. It may be problematic and indeed possibly churlish to posit that all arm sales are questionable offset against security needs but this paper suggests that effective security need not come from the barrel of a gun. Recent emerging ideas like Human Security pay more attention to wider downside risks to people's security and by (for example) implementing universal norms effectively through education this would go a long way to undermine the root causes of violence and violent conflict. Reckless spending, the waste in resources incurred for arms building together with the destruction of resources from arms usage also needs to be fully questioned. In the essay by William James *The Moral Equivalent of War* James does just this by challenging attitudes regarding the military and the power of men to adjudicate their selfish will in deploying such unfocussed military might. He addresses historical attitudes to patriarchal 'heroes' such as Alexander, whose career he deems, 'piracy pure and simple, nothing but an orgy of power and plunder, made romantic by the character of the hero.' (2004:177).

The Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is the culmination of citizen action together with NGO campaigns to address the global poverty and violent conflict. This agenda offers a far-reaching manifesto for a more equitable world and echoes James, noting that 'the allocation of resources is seriously distorted, many of today's conflicts are fueled by economic greed and the grab for raw materials, while billions are spent on

the arms trade and other forms of militarization' (1999:7). At the Hague Appeal, a Global Action Plan to prevent war was instigated by the Institute for Defense and Disarmament Studies, Union of Concerned Scientists and World Order Models Project, 'a comprehensive, multi-stage program for moving towards a world in which armed conflict is rare' (ibid.11). Citizen actions like these attempt to correct the failure of 'world's governments... to fulfill their responsibility to prevent conflict, protect civilians, end war, eradicate colonialism, guarantee human rights and create the conditions of permanent peace' (ibid.3). Actions that were endorsed by among others The Dalai Lama, Kofi Annan, Jimmy Carter, Nelson Mandela, Anisia K. Achieng and Archbishop Desmond M. Tutu.

### **Social Justice Within Democracies**

Social justice is supposedly foremost in a democracy, and democracies tend to encourage others to follow and develop systems to support citizenry. This hasn't been the case in many mature democracies. In terms of traditional security that squanders huge amounts of spending on arms and directs capital away from addressing poverty or development concerns, both directly and indirectly, democracies such as those who form part of the membership of the UN Security Council have been culpable in perpetuating a spiral of violence. They have been willing parties to selling weapons to questionable ruling elites in countries with severe absences of rights and severe absences of social welfare resources for their citizens. This paper asserts that in any country in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century it should be the citizens who decide the spending priority of a country (taxation without

representation?) and mature democracies like the UK, France and the US as well as seeing to the needs of their citizens' wishes ought to be doing far more to encourage these processes in countries that suffer an absence of these rights.

Amartya Sen in a paper presented to Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan, in 2003, focusing on Democracy and Social Justice, ruminated that of the many notable things that happened in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century 'perhaps the most important political change in the twentieth century has been the rise of democracy' (Sen, 2003:1). Sen argued in this paper that a country has to become fit *through* democracy in order for it to realize its true potential; that is through 'the "public reason" aspect of democracy, to have the freedom to criticize public policies... to suggest reforms and change' (ibid.3). India, comments Sen has been very successful in persuading its governments to eliminate the 'violation of certain recognized rights (the rapid elimination of incidence of famines is one example of this) [but] it has not been able to make the violation of other rights sufficiently 'political' (ibid. 5). This has meant that government offices in India as well as other institutional offices around the world have 'failed to place adequately effective emphasis on prioritizing the ways and means of fulfilling certain elementary rights' (ibid.). Citizen members of democracies are in the enviable position of being able to vote for policies that they believe in and vote for implementers of these policies, namely elected representatives responsible for effective democratic change in areas of economic equity, addressing poverty and the holding of rights. They are empowered by their rights and so are able to express their hard won rights in demands for change. And yet as Sen says this

continues to be elusive. Democracy may grant the vote but it does not necessarily grant the requisite political action, especially if mature democracies such as the US, the UK and France persist in supporting and supplying the sale of armaments to suspect nations and thus continue the process of selling violence to the global marketplace.

### **Citizen Responses to Conditions of Poverty**

Fortunately as the Hague Agenda illustrates, the 20<sup>th</sup> Century also saw the rise of many citizen forums commonly referred to as non-governmental organizations. These independent think tanks comprised of concerned citizenry who saw the failure (or indifference) of governmental departments to target poverty or violence as a call to arms to take responsibility for these issues. Organizations, along with the aforementioned citizens who initiated the Hague Agenda, such as Oxfam and Christian Aid targeted poverty in Africa while Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International highlighted human rights abuses around the globe (much to the rancor, denial and then indifference of many of the ruling elites). These groups were able to pressure governments and IPOs to take action and put issues onto agendas that were often contentious and had caused governmental vacillation. 'Across the entire global agenda, on issues from the ecological to the ecumenical, NGOs and transnational movements give expression to the concerns and interests of an emerging civil society' (Held & McGrew, 2002:68). Many governments however are still unable to adhere to a rights driven government policy although they may have signed rights documents within the UN, as the following case

study shows:

Milan Kanti Chakma, Upali Chakma, Syamal Kanti Chakma, Dipankar Chakma and Bimalendu Chakma were among a group of villagers of Poapara village, in Kauhali Upazilla, Chittagong Hill Tracts, who, on 20 March 1992, were summoned to the Kashkhali army camp. Once there they were interrogated and subjected to various forms of torture. They were reportedly hung from trees upside down, beaten severely, given electric shocks and water was forced through their nostrils until they lost their hearing and became unconscious. Bangladesh (www.unhchr.ch).

Sen notes that democracy can provide opportunities to pressure political institutions to 'pursue the identified objectives, but there is no automatic guarantee that the complex dynamism of political processes will invariably and immediately lead to the complete satisfaction of these rights' (Sen, 2003:4). Donnelly concurs when discussing The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 'The Universal Declaration, like any list of human rights, specifies minimum conditions for a dignified life, a life worthy of a human being. Even wealthy and powerful countries regularly fall short of these requirements' (Donnelly, 2003:15).

Hence the need for active citizenry to respond to the challenges within Globality – the emerging and interconnected marketplace or as Shaw views it:

The breaking down of spatial limits... the tendency of social relations to achieve global reach or scope, together with the intensification of such global interconnections due to the compression of relations of time and space (Giddens, 1990; McGrew, 1992: 23). These tendencies are also connected to the increased understanding of the world as a common human environment. Ecological globalists represent human life as part of the planetary system of our globular Earth (Shaw, 1999:61)

### **Globality and Poverty**

Globality implies interconnectedness but our globe is often anything but. Fractured nation states broken into pockets of ethnic groups, refugees, civil wars and currently a war costing the lives of citizens as well as billions to the American taxpayer in Iraq further fuelling unrest in the Middle East are just some of the insurmountable problems facing the human race. While violence surrounds the poor, Globality favors the rich:

The haves' most powerful weapon is globalism. Once one passes a certain corporate threshold, taxation becomes voluntary, as Rupert Murdoch's accountants can testify. Confronted with any fiscal or even physical threat, it is easy to move cash or oneself elsewhere. Recognising this, few national governments have the stomach to risk alienating wealth-creators by attacking their bank accounts... For the foreseeable future, only a meltdown of the financial

system on an unprecedented scale could threaten the security of the rich.

(Hastings, 2005).

In terms of poverty, Davis sees the world as a 'Planet of Slums' noting that there are 'probably more than 200,000 slums on earth, ranging in population from a few hundred to more than a million people' (Davis, 2006:26). Globalization may have seeded capital successes in China and India notes Davis but slums are the fallout as people migrate to city areas in search of jobs, 'half of Bangalore's population lacks piped water, much less cappuccino, and there are more ragpickers and street children (90,000) than software geeks (about 60,000)' (ibid.172). Poverty is arguably most widely felt in Africa where 'rates of malnutrition are far greater in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Central Africa almost 60 percent of the population is malnourished, with rates of about 40 percent of the population in eastern and southern China' (Kerbo, 2006:35). Davis convincingly argues that these slums rose out of imperialism and are now paradoxically the concern of post imperialist military strategists in places like Washington who see these slums as fostering future fighters who will take part in future asymmetrical warfare against the post imperialists (Davis, 2006:205).

For now however, the checks and balances of Globality arguably rest with the United Nations, specifically the peoples that support and direct the altruistic departments within this institution. The UN has consistently since its inception during the horrors of the Second World War tried to establish treaties, and resolutions and further



recommendations for the protection of the peoples of the world. The opening words of the UN charter set out its mission statement: ‘to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person’ (www.un.org). The dreadful casualties of the Second World War (the Soviet Union alone lost an estimated twenty million people) coming just twenty-one years after the end of the First World War reaffirmed how impotent nation states were in avoiding war and how no effective international mechanisms were in place to limit the advances of rogue nations, in this case the rise of the National Socialists in Germany. The United Nations, however flawed it may be regarded by some (and the above example of the arms sales of the Security Council is one such point) is still Globality’s watchdog and continues to further citizen aims of peace and justice because the citizenry demand this and many of the citizenry are involved in decision making within the various departments of the United Nations. An exemplary example of this is the continually evolving United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, whose policy manifesto is:

To build peace in the minds of men [and women]... UNESCO is working to create the conditions for genuine dialogue based upon respect for shared values and the dignity of each civilization and culture. This role is critical, particularly in the face of terrorism, which constitutes an attack against humanity. The world urgently requires global visions of sustainable development based upon observance of

human rights, mutual respect and the alleviation of poverty, all of which lie at the heart of UNESCO's mission and activities ([www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)).

### **UN Responses to Poverty**

UNESCO has encouraged, relied on the support of, and most importantly learnt from NGOs and IGOs to pursue these goals. UNESCO has been instrumental in initialing education programs; natural science projects, environmental programs and cultural projects that emphasize shared ethical principles between cooperating parties. In response to citizen movements such as Jubilee 2000 and in order to establish effective means to combat the insidious problem of global poverty UNESCO launched the Millennium Development Goals to:

Halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty in developing countries by 2015, achieve universal primary education in all countries by 2015, eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005, help countries implement a national strategy for sustainable development by 2005 and to reverse current trends in the loss of environmental resources by 2015 (ibid.).

This ambitious project was the realization of a vision for the future where poverty would be seen as a form of harm that could be overcome. In the foreword to the *Millennium Development Goals Report 2006*, José Antonio Ocampo, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs declared this vision as, 'a world with less poverty,

hunger and disease, greater survival prospects for mothers and their infants, better educated children, equal opportunities for women, and a healthier environment: a world in which developed and developing countries worked in partnership for the betterment of all' (UNESCO, 2006:1). Ocampo notes that some progress was made with the MDG but notes there 'is still a long way to go to keep our promises to current and future generations' (ibid.).

The findings of the report in 2006 reported many successes but also found many continuing areas of concern: The number of people living in extreme poverty increased by 140 million, the number of people going hungry is increasing. While net enrolment ratios have increased to 86 percent in primary education, in countries like Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali and Niger, less than half of primary school age children are enrolled in school, and an educational gender gap continues – more than one in five girls compared to about one in six boys are not in school. Although women represent the world's labor force in over a third in all regions of the world except Southern and Western Asia and Northern Africa their rights are disadvantaged in terms of unequal pay, employment and segregation of occupations and their political representation remains low. 10.5 million children still died before their fifth birthday in 2004 – mostly from preventable causes, with survival rates for children whose mothers had at least a secondary education twice as high against those children with less educated mothers and although measles vaccination of three quarters of the world's children had proven extremely cost effective as a health intervention program, the disease killed 454,000

children in 2004 leaving others blind or deaf. Maternal mortality had not changed in problem areas (sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia while HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases were still growing. Environmental sustainability proves elusive, deforestation continues, and carbon dioxide emissions continue to rise globally, and while the net loss of forests appears to be slowing down, overcrowding in cities is alarmingly high with the highest figures of urban growth recorded in the aforementioned slums. Although aid from developed countries has increased since 1997 only five countries, Luxembourg, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the Netherlands have met the U.N. aid target of 0.7 percent of GNP. Furthermore developing countries continue to have goods, which are strategically important to their economies like clothing and farm products, heavily taxed by developed countries (ibid. 2-24).

### **Continuing 21<sup>st</sup> Century Poverty and Violence**

The Millennium Development Goals although drafted almost fifty years after the UN's beginnings have however always been the core goals of the UN The purposes and principles of the UN outlined in its Charter Article 1 are to establish and maintain international peace and security and to take collective action for the removal of threats to peace and suppress acts of aggression. The UN has also striven to bring the forces of international law and principles of justice to bear on international disputes and acts of aggression and settles these by peaceful means. Other UN goals include the development of friendly relations amongst nations based on the self-determination of peoples and the principle of equal rights and 'to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal

peace' while 'promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion' (www.un.org).

The Millennium Development Goals are therefore a continuum of the purposes and principles of the above and are targeted at achieving full rights to citizens who have been denied their full complement of human dignity. One sentence on page 24 of this report however is of particular concern, 'without sufficient employment opportunities, many young people grow discouraged and feel worthless' (ibid.). 85 percent of the world's youth live in developing countries, with young females encountering the most difficulty in securing work. They are forced to emigrate to find work and often are victims of trafficking and exploited by criminal gangs into coerced labor. Poverty can only be countered with growth of economies, growth that is affected by protectionist policies from the North that impacts against countries seeking to trade in the North, policies driven by the WTO, an 'often closed and bureaucratic' organization (Weidenbaum, 2003:2) that continues to draw criticism for its trade practices (see Singer 2002).

HIV/AIDS has prevented many developing countries from realizing any growth potential while skills development in these countries lags far behind the west in terms of the widening digital divide. A disturbing result of young people from deprived areas feeling worthless is of course that they are prime targets for extremism. Bauman (ibid) writes about young Muslims who are excluded from potential through deprivation and are very susceptible to the teachings of hate. Sartre also observed, 'For at first it is not *their* violence, it is ours which turns back on itself and rends them; and the first action of these

oppressed creatures is to bury deep down that hidden anger which their and our moralities condemn and which is however only the last refuge of their humanity' (Jean-Paul Sartre in Fanon, 1961:16).

Terrorism, a word that is particularly semantically loaded, is in the form discussed above, a direct result of poverty and feeds on the dispossessed in what has become the *religionization of politics* (Bauman after Juergensmeyer, *ibid*: 112). The cycle of violence and the cycle of poverty interlink because poverty is itself violence against people who for no other reason than the area of the globe they were born into find themselves at the bottom of a heap of plenty and who in turn often resort to violence as a way of venting their feelings of powerlessness. The US administration-led war on terror has been very successful in perpetuating violence, spreading fear above and beyond reason, and at the same time reducing civil liberties and human rights – a sure way to eternize and sustain the power of global elites. The bandying about of the word 'terrorist' is particularly suspect, as to quote Tony Benn on a recent BBC radio program, 'the word terrorist is a term of abuse used to describe those with whom you disagree. According to Mrs. Thatcher the ANC are terrorists.' (BBC Radio 4, 26<sup>th</sup> July 2007). Democracy suffers a similar semantic ambiguity. As a democracy under its present administration, the US has been anything but in its treatment of prisoners, as the prisons of Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib show. There has been no adherence to international treaties like the Geneva Convention by the authorities, no access to the outside world for the prisoners as well as no recourse to law, whether national or international. This merely perpetuates resentment

and reinforces attacks against the ‘The Great Satan’ as certain groups of religious fundamentalists like to term those that aren’t members of that particular ideology – the result being according to Bauman is that, ‘All sides today seem to be fighting for eternal, universal and absolute values’ (Bauman, 2006:114).

Fighting fueled by armaments, fueled by hatred, fueled by injustice, fueled by all the factors that feed the ‘Culture of Violence’ – ‘education that glorifies and prepares for war; globalization that has widened the gap between rich and poor: an environment damaged by over-consumption and military destruction: colonialism and neocolonialism; racial, religious, ethnic and gender intolerance; discrimination against women; abuse of children and youth; lack of democracy and just global governance; and cultural, communal and local violence’ (Reardon, 2002). This culture of violence has continued down the ages alienating the voiceless in the South particularly those victims of imperialism and colonialization. Colonizers like Britain and France who bled countries of their resources and continue to exploit the South with processes of neocolonialism – arms sales and inequitable trading practices. It is no wonder that violence returns again and again to these countries. Take for example France’s colonial war with Algiers, which led to Frantz Fanon to expose the economic and psychological degradation of imperialism in his book *The Wretched of The Earth* and write:

‘What it (the South) expects from those who for centuries have kept it in slavery is that they will help it to rehabilitate mankind, and make man victorious everywhere,

once and for all.’ . . . . ‘To achieve this, the European peoples must first decide to wake up and shake themselves, use their brains, and stop playing the stupid game of the Sleeping Beauty.’ (Fanon, 1961:84).

Fanon saw violence as necessary to a goal of socialism for all and the desperate, as we have seen, will resort to violence because culturally it is an accepted form of protest. However violence only leads to an escalation of violence and has not proven a viable solution to any of Globality’s ills, unless one is an arms trader or a country that deals in the arms trade, in that case it’s capital as usual. Securitized any nation these days involves more and more surveillance materials backed up by weapons to ‘combat’ violence and this is huge business whether in weapons sales or in personnel to keep these methods of security operational. These are the accepted norms for security which usually involves keeping the citizenry in a state of fear and mistrustful of elites that continue to chip away at the rights of these citizens. No wonder that violence continues to spiral.

### **A Counter Against Violence as an Inevitable**

Violence is not inevitable however, despite how it continues to be justified. Elites use it as a power of rule, international relations’ scholars accept it as a Hobbes’ endorsed theory and other compliant systems within globality (economic, political, media-driven) use it to defend capital against any form of critical resistance, be it protests against the privatization of water in some countries or the annexing of land for oil exploration in others. Violence nonetheless depends on how we are socialized and educated and as seen



in a close study of the culture of violence it is not biologically driven but socially driven.

There is an assumption that people are inherently violent (Hobbes challenged by Rousseau) and that violence is the most effective option for any source of conflict when in fact it is a very limited and highly contemptible option. *The Seville Statement on Violence*, completed by twenty leading scientists, on 16 May 1986, Seville, Spain, was drafted to challenge the ‘biological pessimism that is so frequently used to explain or even to justify war and violence’ (Adams, 1989:113). In the first proposition the scientists stated that:

The fact that warfare has changed so radically over time indicates that it is a product of culture. Its biological connection is primarily through language, which makes possible the co-ordination of groups, the transmission of technology, and the use of tools. War is biologically possible, but it is not inevitable, as evidenced by its variation in occurrence and nature over time and space. There are cultures which have not engaged in war for centuries, and there are cultures which have engaged in war frequently at some times and not at others. ([www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)).

These scientists (of whom David Adams was one) concluded their statement that ‘biology does not condemn humanity to war, and that humanity can be freed from the bondage of biological pessimism and empowered with confidence to undertake the transformative tasks needed in this International Year of Peace’ (ibid.). The statement acknowledged that system transformation was collective but appealed to the

‘consciousness of individual participants for whom pessimism and optimism are crucial factors’ (ibid.) and closed by recognizing that systemic change was the social responsibility of each and every member of the human race, ‘just as ‘wars begin in the minds of men’, peace also begins in our minds. The same species that invented war is capable of inventing peace. The responsibility lies with each of us’ (ibid.).

The last statement is telling; the responsibility does lie with each of us. Singer recognizes the Millennium Summit as a global responsibility to relieve the plight of the world’s poorest nations and advocates that ‘we should be developing the ethical foundations of the coming era in a single world community’ (Singer, 2002:198) and ‘strengthening institutions for global decision-making and make them more responsible to the people they affect’ (ibid: 199). Singer sees the main tools for dealing with poverty and justice not from present institutions like the WTO, who tend to operate post democratically in a series of secret discussions within power elites, but from institutions like the ILO and the ICC and suggests strengthening these (Weidenbaum makes similar claims for the ILO), a decision that is of course very unpopular with the ruling elites.

### **Engaged Citizenry Challenges to the Precepts of Violence**

However the voices of the dispossessed are increasingly heard these days and are aided by engaged citizens in the North and the South. Globality has melted boundaries, borders and nations, and knowledge and information travel at incredible speed around the globe. Gender perspectives have also ensured a change of focus within Globalism and a voice

that challenges the age-old tenets of patriarchy. Wars and violent conflicts have traditionally begun in the minds of men and these violent processes continue to be driven by the minds of men informed by their (mis) education within their cultures that promotes through textbooks and media the idea of 'hero and warrior' (see back to William James' comments on same). Textbooks are often the starting point of violent processes in the indoctrination of young minds – see the recent Chinese objections to Japanese high school textbooks dealing with the Second World War and some Japanese academics and politicians utilizing deeply troubling euphemisms like the 'Nanking Incident' and 'comfort women'. Regarding the influence of women's voices Featherstone notes, 'The feminine ethic operates on the basis of a more prosaic desire for reciprocity in the love of the other, it accepts the emotional bonding with the other, identification and empathy' (1995:66). Whereas masculinity, informed by culture, has always adhered to the heroic idea (ibid.), resorting to violence as a cure all for any area of conflict is hardly a constructive or intelligent state of affairs and has brought untold misery to millions upon millions of people – and this is how patriarchy continues to operate resulting in the perpetuation of women as cheap commodities in (amongst other things) the manufacture of weaponry in war and men conditioned to fight wars as a result of ill-conceived political decisions. Violence is an unthinking and unevolved process and as Reardon remarked to peace activists in Tokyo in 2007, one of the problems with the present day is that people are not thinking enough and creating viable alternatives. This is not to assert a blanket belief of woman good man bad here, non violent behavior can only be encouraged through meaningful education specifically peace education as formulated by

UNESCO and the EURED teacher training program among others. Of course one reason for Reardon's identification of a stagnation of ideals may be suggested to be that, 'the moment one shows a minimal sign of engaging in political projects that aim seriously to change the existing order', this is challenged as a path to a 'new Gulag' – 'in this way conformist liberal scoundrels can find hypocritical satisfaction in their defense of the existing order: they know there is corruption, exploitation and so on, but every attempt to change things is denounced as ethically dangerous and unacceptable, recalling the ghosts of Gulag or Holocaust...' (Zizek, 2000:127)

Fortunately gender perspectives have ensured a far more conceptual approach to issues of poverty and violence, framing human rights as an engendered concept, proposing multifaceted approaches to existing problems and ensuring that these issues are not backed into a blind alley of empty discourse. Whereas governments are often happy and compliant with systems of capital (instigated by the global overclass who advise, inform, engage lobbyists, and often 'serve' on these governments) to merely tread water when in power and make no radical policy decisions that may affect their standing in the next election, citizens both female and male are taking it upon themselves of 'monitoring governments own compliance with laws and fulfillment of policies' (Reardon, 2001:80) as an active demonstration of the responsibility of democratic citizenship. These actions remind governments of their obligations, 'urging them to make needed changes before it becomes necessary to embark on measures of organized dissent and/or undertake non-violent resistance' (ibid: 81).

International membership organizations like AWID (The Association for Women's Rights in Development) are instrumental in advocating for a rights based approach to poverty and development highlighting facts that women possess roughly 1% of land in the world while producing 80% of the food in the poorest areas of the world; clearly as AWID note women experience poverty differently to men (AWID *facts and issues* 3, 2002:4). AWID acknowledge that the 'primary responsibility' in realizing women's rights and human rights is held by governments but 'their capacity to do so is affected by the policies of other actors. Donors and civil society can work together to focus on getting other institutions to accept their responsibility for protecting rights. Donors, civil society groups, and government ministries could forge alliances in an attempt to integrate the human rights framework into international financial institutions, and trade and investment bodies' (AWID *facts and issues* 2, 2002:6).

Although successes have been achieved particularly in micro-credit where many micro lenders are increasingly aware now of human rights indicators and 'loans are targeted to increase a woman's mobility, food security, freedom from violence and political participation, as opposed to only increasing the size of her loan, her income, or her ability to repay' (ibid.) funding of initiatives for women remain problematic. An AWID report in 2006 on funding for women's rights programs concluded that there had to be better ways of making the case for women's organizations to achieve better development funding to 'harness resources effectively, responsibly, and sustainably in order to increase our

positive impact on the lives of women internationally' (AWID research report, 2006:112).

### **Protecting the Rights of All**

Because rights are universal, non discriminatory and indivisible it is the duty of every country and every country's government to protect and defend the rights of their citizenry, whether by the rule of law or by the monitoring of the citizenry. The *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)* which came into force January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1976, is one of the fundamental mainstays of ensuring civil rights for all, protected by law, and overseen by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the UN. All states that ratify this treaty in Article 2 'undertake to take steps to progressively achieve these rights' while ensuring 'just and favourable conditions of work including fair and equal remuneration in Article 7 with rights for health and standards of living being guaranteed in Articles 11 and 12. Countries ratifying this document are obliged to follow these provisions and are monitored and held accountable by 18 independent experts in the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Again as noted by AWID what contributes to a violation of the rights enumerated in the ICESCR has been problematic 'more so because of a lack of political will on the part of policy-makers and the international community rather than such violations being vague or uncertain' (AWID facts & issues, August 2002:4).

### **Conclusion**

Rights driven policies give the power of voice to the people changing them from passive to active. This gives a moral and ethical impetus for citizen participation to challenge and counter governments and non-state actor's inequitable conduct within globality such as those of the WTO the IMF, the World Bank and private corporations and pressuring these institutions to adopt more transparency and accountability. It is these rights-driven frameworks that substantiate citizen action and present a rallying call against these governments and non-state actors whose own actions remain unchecked. Poverty and its host violence continue to exist primarily because certain conditions within globality continues to erode state power and in turn support systems of capital that are both inequitable and discriminatory. Social justice is now a people's driven issue whether nationally, transnationally or globally. Globality may be entering a post democratic phase in which non-state actors are allowed free reign to further their quest for greed at the expense of the environment or the people but not without the vigilance therein of the citizen whose role it is to guard rights and to protect others from these unfair and unjust processes. To contend poverty and violence is not a simple process. Existing systems of capital uphold these two deeply iniquitous problems and ensure that they continue. If the responsibility of creating peace lies with each of us then it is our duty as responsible citizens to promote respect for people through education, to live in a way that does not encourage greed whether in ourselves or in others, and to be creators and guardians of our own globality – a world which to paraphrase Gandhi is one we want to see, free from violence and the burden of unequal systems.

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