

Globalisation and Civil War

Globalization means war. It also means civil war. Anti-state insurgencies in a number of third world countries have been transformed into brutal civil strifes by the merchants of death. And it is nowhere so blatant as in Africa where globalisation has its dirty game of fomenting civil war to further the interests of global capital. Globalisation in Africa cannot be explained in its entirety without looking into the presence, on African soil, of armed forces or military personnel belonging to the world's hegemon, the US, or to former European colonial powers. One may also look into the way the structural adjustment policies of WB-IMF have contributed towards the outbreak of war., in particular in Ivory Coast and other West African countries. It is equally important to look into the methods for war financing, precisely because contemporary African civil and/or internationalised wars are so intimately related to Africa's inte-gration into the world economy, through the export of the continent's rich natural resources. What is characteristic of the financing of most military campaigns in Africa, is that these occur through an international exchange mechanism, i.e. via parallel exports and imports, i.e. via the exchange of raw materials exported from the African continent, against arms imported into the continent.

This exchange mechanism may be termed disparate exchange. The term disparate exchange is linked to that of unequal exchange, - a term which became common currency among progressive academicians and activists in the fifties and sixties of the previous century, when economic researchers discovered that Southern countries faced a problem of deteriorating terms of international trade, meaning that the prices of the goods they sold at the international market were deteriorating in comparison with the prices of the goods exported to the South by countries of the North. 'Disparate exchange' refers to a different, interrelated, and even more problematic form of trade, being the parallel trade between goods which represent Southern wealth on the one hand - and goods which represent social waste, being the arms and armament systems exported by countries located in the North on the other hand.

This trade mechanism has terrible consequences for Southern economies. Under this mechanism the countries where the arms are manufactured belong to the privileged part of the world economy - whereas the countries where the arms are used, 'consumed', in particular African countries, are marginalised economies. In consequence of the given division between producer and consumer nations of arms, the destructive impact of the use of the arms is not reaped by countries where manufacturing takes place, but by others. The differentiation allows the producer nations to be completely indifferent towards the consequences of their arms manufacturing, and to reap profits in a manner which can only be termed callous, ruthless. Meanwhile, the nations where the arms are 'consumed' suffer twice, they suffer both because they surrender precious natural resources in order to procure arms internationally, and they also suffer the destructive impact caused by domestic war campaigns, - a destructive impact in terms of human lives lost, economic structures demolished or damaged, and environmental damages. In short, one can only expose all these unjust implications of the given trade, if this indeed be called disparate Exchange.

In the 1970s Middle Eastern and other Southern countries producing and exporting oil successfully waged their struggle to raise the international price of oil, and to bring down the level of economic exploitation of their oil wealth by countries of the North. The

battle of OPEC at that time was celebrated, it was seen as an effective show of strength by countries of the South. What was not generally noted amidst the euphoria, was that America approved of the price rises enforced by OPEC, with the aim of instituting a new and even more unjust trading mechanism than the one that had prevailed before. For the US calculated that, once the oil rich countries would have a larger taxation income at hand, - this could and would be channelled towards the importation of armament systems. The US's arms manufacturers and the arms' manufacturers of other Northern states would then be its prime beneficiaries! And indeed - as Sipri's annual reports on international arms trade confirm - by the late 1970s the new trading mechanism was in place; Saudi Arabia and Iran by then headed the South's list of arms importers.

Nearer home one may wonder about the way Naga insurgency is fighting Kuki insurgency or for that matter Manipuris are fighting Nagas. In many ways North East India resembles African civil war scenario. No doubt the merchants of death are active in India's north-east sector too. But mainstream parties and not- so mainstream parties have no time to think over how globalisation produces civil strife and endangers social stability.□