

# THE FOUR HORSEMEN RIDE TOGETHER: War, Civil Disorder and Poverty in SSA

## (Annotated Lecture Outline)

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### I. Introduction - War and Poverty in SSA

- War is **largest single cause of poverty**
- True whether consumption headcount, access to basic services, malnutrition, premature death and/or GDP is criterion
- Therefore treatment as noises offstage or a distant cause acting through standard mechanisms is intellectually and operationally unsound.

### II. War, Civil Disorder → Poverty: Some Mechanisms

- Loss of **output** - destroyed/isolated.
- Loss of **livelihood** - output/input/transport/market contraction.
- Loss of **basic services** - access for users/suppliers, access to finance.
- Loss of **safety nets** - transport gaps and fiscal erosion.
- Loss of **investment** and, therefore, **present and future output** (largest cost in broad/long-lasting war).
- Loss of **life** - direct combatant casualties, bystanders, targeted civilians, losers of health-water-food access, displaced persons, victims of genocide.

- Not limited to war zones at any one time nor exempting unaffected zones (general fiscal and economic malaise and loss of markets and inputs e.g. Maputo).
- **Varies** with scope, length of war and strategies/instruments used - terrorising rural residents into flight while targeting basic services, transport, safety nets (RENAMO) or isolating cities to starve out by seeding fields and access routes with mines (UNITA) particularly damaging. Levels of distrust and of attempts by left out or losers to reverse mediated or military settlement (e.g. Angola, Sierra Leone, Rwanda) affect speed and degree of poverty decline and of rebuilding social and political structures and links to sustain it.
- Violent conflicts in specific, bounded areas (e.g. Burnt Valley in Kenya, eastern portion Ghana's Northern Region) or at levels short of war (South African townships over 1988-92) can have costs to those directly affected analogous to war.
- Military expenditure for deterrent (e.g. Tanzania army on Western Borders, Botswana forces to 1992) or regional security (e.g. Zimbabwe/Tanzania in Mozambique 1980's; Botswana in Lesotho) do have poverty price via opportunity cost to basic services and infrastructure spending. In time of actual war on home soil direct military costs are absolutely and relative to budget larger, but are secondary to output, livelihood, access, safety net elements in overall impact.

### **III. War - Society - State: Debilitation and Resurgence**

- "Failed states" often precede (as opposed to flowing from) war e.g. Liberia, Sierra Leone, Zaire. In these cases they are an "early warning" and, to some degree, a cause.
- War does not necessarily cause state failure in government controlled zones - e.g. Mozambique, Angola, (Derg) Ethiopia, Southwest Africa/Namibia, Rhodesia. When it does, it is a not so early warning that "the end is nigh" for that state/regime (e.g. Zaire, Somalia the Doughboy's Liberia) unless rescued by

external forces (e.g. ECOMOG in Sierra Leone) linked to some real domestic base (e.g. the 'National Guard' i.e. Kamajors).

- **Most wars debilitate and cripple the state** - especially in respect to articulated institutional capacity, coverage and operational ability though sometimes less so in relation to strategy and conceptualisation. The same is normally true of social organisations and of linkages among them. The exceptions are **wars perceived** (especially by 'winners') as **national liberation struggles** (e.g. Somaliland, Eritrea, South Africa, Namibia, to a degree Mozambique and Ethiopia for Tigrean - Oromo - Somali Ethiopians) which can have net positive state and society building impact.

#### IV. What Is To Be Done?

- Comprehend and Master Conflict Basic but largely beyond scope of this lecture. **Poverty as such rarely key cause of war.** Resource scarcity (e.g. land, water) related to poverty may be.
- Alleviate (**Safety Net**) consumption and service access poverty for war effected **during war.**
- Preserve ability to produce/habit of earning livelihood of displaced, refugees to maximum degree possible **during war** (cuts against whole thrust of official refugee practice and against using large displaced person camps or locating in cities). Such efforts (including work for food employment) are analogous to "trampoline" type safety nets during drought to preserve capacity to bounce back when rain (or in this case peace) returns.
- **Reconstruction** (social), **Reconciliation** (political), (**Rehabilitation** economic) **after peace** in all or most of country with specific attention to gaps/losses created by war (e.g. in Rwanda genocidal conflagration left human and institutional gaps plus specific poverty groups - widows, orphans, disabled - rather than massive destruction of physical infrastructure/director production fixed capital).

## V. How Feasible? How Economic?

- **War period** safety nets, trampolines are accepted. Execution hard and finance scarce (especially for displaced or pauperised in place as contrasted with refugees). Problem is devising ways to implement (and doing so) and in convening donors (or Treasury) to finance. Mozambique small, rural displaced camp or 'resettlement' approach shows possibilities/limitations.
- **R-R-R** is no less demanding of new thinking and priorities domestically than wartime predecessor, but also no harder to design, operate than overall broad (personal consumption/service access/oppression avoidance/vulnerability reduction/safety net) strategies. **But** macro economists are not used to treating conflict derived poverty and its reversal as a **core economic element**, while **donors**, to date, are still less inclined to do so. Further, refugee support and calamity relief funds are usually redeployed elsewhere not transferred - at least for an interim period - to R-R-R. The World Bank and UNHCR (by following traditional analytical and operational approaches which for post war, war pauperised people are "dusty roads to death") bear a heavy responsibility for this generic blindness. The example of Mozambique which over 1990-94 sought to float an R-R-R focused post-war economic strategy but found it was ignored (not even debated and rejected) is instructive. In a positive sense it (and experience in Somaliland) do demonstrate the macroeconomic importance of R-R-R and the potential value of backing market access and security led poverty reduction with specific infrastructure, basic service and (perhaps) selective capital access measures.

[The title's allusion is to the traditional Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse - War, Pestilence, Famine and Death. A Southern African analogue - but specifically drought related - is the Lower Limpopo Valley saying "When the Great River runs dry the end of the world is at hand." In 1992 the Lower Limpopo did run dry and until dearth relief began to deliver the end of the world was a real danger for the valley dwellers.]