

Introduction

New Civil Wars at the End of the Twentieth Century

The twentieth century is a century of wars, which never come to a real end but continue in different modes and strategies.¹ From the two World Wars to Cold War, wars in the first half of the twentieth century were mostly conflicts between different military alliances and national blocs that involved a great number of nation-states into battles and resulted in a global tension. But in the second half of the twentieth century, rivalry between blocs and alliances is replaced by widespread massacres and new civil wars. As Herfried Münkler says, “The classical model of war between states, which still largely marked the Cold War scenarios, appears to have been discontinued” (1). After the Cold War period is ended, new wars are mostly internal armed conflicts within a country and are difficult to be intervened by any other countries or supranational organizations like the United Nations or the World Bank.² Most of these new wars are battles between local government and rebels which are either guerrillas or terrorists fought for sovereignty and ideological identifications. Compared with previous inter-state wars, new wars are mainly intra-state wars or the so-called civil wars ongoing in the name of sovereignty and ethnic problems.³ At least 47 states are undergoing civil wars at the end of the twentieth century. They mostly take place in South Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East (Collier 6).⁴ These new civil wars constitute a complicated network and turn themselves into a “permanent field of activity” which involves many new private actors “from local warlords and guerrilla groups through firms of mercenaries operating on a world scale to international terror networks” (Münkler 1). The changes of new warfare therefore require new interpretations and understandings to rethink its operations and context in order to comprehend its complication.

New civil wars are linked to world economy during globalization in the 80s. After collapse of the Soviet bloc and end of the Cold War, world economy was more globalized and the flows of people, information, and goods were more frequent than before.⁵ Such changes in world economy not only result in new war economy but also make the causes of civil wars and participants of wars more complicated than before. Take arms trade as an example, globalization results in transformations of arms business which develops itself to be a global industry and hence results in complication of civil wars. Transformations of arms business are closely connected to global developments:

The arms trade is a product of the arms industry and cannot be understood apart from it...In recent years, however, its role and self-image have been undergoing drastic change...**The simple concept of an arms company disappears into a labyrinth of licensed production, joint venture, conglomerates, strategic partnerships, and Co-operative Armament Programmes. The concept of arms trade becomes equally elusive. When weapons ‘system’ may be designed in one country, manufactured piecemeal in several others and sold both to the collaborating states and to others, what is an export and who is the exporter?** (Wringley 1-2; emphasis added).

Arms trade is a labyrinth because process of weaponry production is changed in the context of globalization. The bullet is produced in one country, the barrel is manufactured in the other country, and the gun is sold to another country. The collaboration becomes complicated and such complication responds flow of goods in global era. Because of acceleration of transportation, process of production can be more easily separated into different countries to save costs and labors, and arms trade is therefore more difficult to be estimated and controlled. Arms business, which develops itself into an international industry, is difficult to be controlled because it is concerned with military confidentiality.⁶ Moreover, arms business becomes so diverse that no organization can transcend national boundaries to calculate total

amount of munitions. The rebels or military units in civil wars are therefore more accessible to resources of weapons when munitions are incalculable. Compared with previous civil wars, civil wars at the end of the twentieth century encounter global developments which not only change production of weaponry but also alter relationships between munitions and warfare.

Globalization changes civil wars at the end of the twentieth century. One of the changes is emergence of arms dealers who sometimes replace role of governmental officials to sell weapons to war zones. The arms dealers would enjoy more mobility than officials in arms trade because they can easily deploy the transportation by transcending national boundaries and moving from one country to the other.⁷ Gideon Burrows comments the role of arms brokers:

Arms brokers are perhaps the most shadowy and murky characters involved in the international arms trade. Operating usually on the very boundaries of legality, if the price is right, they arrange to supply weapons, usually small arms, to the most conflict-prone regions in the world (92).

Arms dealers are invisible men or hands in new civil wars. They manipulate transportation and supplies of weapons, which are very important resources in warfare, and such manipulation influences the warfare itself.

In addition to arms brokers, globalization also empowers the role of media in civil wars. Because of improvements in media technology, the news and information can be quickly delivered to the world. For example, inhabitants in the United States can witness the ongoing warfare in Iraq by watching TV news simultaneously. In global era, civil wars become detectible. Warfare is no longer a violence happening in some countries but will be seen by the whole world on TV.⁸ Civil war is no longer internal conflicts occurring within a country. Media makes civil wars more open by delivering the war news around the world to turn them to be more visible than before.

Besides, globalization creates new war economy in civil wars. Because of frequent flow of commodity, the black markets flourish in war countries. In new civil wars which mostly happen in the poorer and remoter areas in the world, poverty makes the external support very important in the country. As Mary Kaldor claims, “There is very little domestic production, so the war effort is heavily dependent on local predation and external support” (90). The “external support” which is more about the global flow of commodity plays an important role in war economy. The flow of goods will enhance development of black markets in civil wars and help to supply military resources: “external support to ordinary people, in the form of remittances and humanitarian assistance, is recycled via various forms of asset transfer and black-market trading into military resource” (104). These external remittances and assistances will also turn civil wars into a way of life in war countries: “In many of the worlds’ most intractable conflicts, waging war has become a way of life—a way to generate income...” (Hartung 79). Unlike previous wars, civil wars at the end of the twentieth century experience many changes and transformations because of globalization. These changes are so complicated and closely connected to each other that turn civil wars into a perplexity.

New civil wars are such a complicated issue that even supranational organizations, especially the United Nations, are unable to deal with it. During two World Wars, the UN was established to keep the world order between nation-states. As a supranational organization, the UN was commissioned to take charge of negotiations, interventions, and investigations of wars between nation-states to avoid any further world wars.⁹ But the role of the UN is challenged in global era when nation-states are under transformations. Globalization gives birth to transnational corporations which try to get rid of governance of nation-states and develop their own authority and influences, and drives nation-states into a difficult situation.

Globalization also blurs boundaries between nation-states and challenges their ruling authority. Contemplating on the “end of the nations,” Étienne Balibar mentions such transformations of nation-states and addresses the results of blurred national boundaries (14). Indeed, when nation-states do not function like what they had before, the United Nations which helps to deal with wars between countries also suffer from the same challenges. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire* appeals to a supranational sovereign power that can help to deal with dilemma of nation-states and supranational organizations like the United Nations. The two authors consider that such a supranational sovereign power constituted by “a serious of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule” will be able to “manage the hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges through modulating networks of command” (xii-xiii). However, their expectations towards new power of a supranational sovereignty expose the difficulty of considering and solving war crisis in global era.

At the end of the twentieth century, civil wars not only bring new changes and challenges to economy and politics but also become closer to daily life of civilian population. Among new civil wars in global age, the mortality of civilian population is higher than before. In traditional civil wars, “the battle death count for civil wars includes both military and civilian death” (Gleditsch 234). Indeed, compared with previous wars, the ratio of military to civilian casualties in wars had been 8:1, but this proportion was reversed to be 1:8 in last decades of the twentieth century (Kaldor 8). The mortality of civilians becomes a significant phenomenon in new warfare. Though their involvement in wars has many reasons, including identity problem or war strategy problem, civilians have gradually replaced the role of soldiers to be major victims and experience violence physically and emotionally.¹⁰

The civilian population replaces soldiers to constitute a new subject of war

discourse at the end of the twentieth century. Before the 1980s, war discourse had been mainly composed by soldiers in most of war fictions and movies.¹¹ But after the 1980s, new voices compose alternative discourses suggesting new perspectives of the ongoing wars and transformations at the end of the twentieth century. They are voices of “those of enemies, victims, women, children, reluctant soldiers, those who refuse to fight, the poor, the marginalized” (Yuknavitch 125). When civilians in war zones suffer from war violence, they also become the ones who are capable to voice their war experiences and war terror. As Lidia Yuknavitch had asked in her book, “In the ‘New War,’ do we get new Icons, or an entirely different kind of representation?...Who fits into contemporary stories of war, and how do we read them?” (125). At the end of the twentieth century, civilians become new icons of civil wars and help us to reconstruct new understandings and interpretations of transformations of civil wars and war terror.

In considering civilians’ engagement in new civil wars, this thesis studies representations of civil wars and connections between civilians and warfare in four texts: Michael Ondaatje’s 2001 fiction *Anil’s Ghost*, Terry George’s 2004 film *Hotel Rwanda*, Raoul Peck’s 2005 film *Sometimes in April*, and Luis Mandoki’s 2004 film *Innocent Voices*. These four texts are the latest texts dealing with issues of new civil wars. In the viewpoint of local inhabitants, these four texts represent civil wars in different areas and various problems brought about by warfare. In Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost*, he describes massacres of civilians in Sri Lankan civil war and war investigation of the Human Rights Organization in Geneva. George’s *Hotel Rwanda* and Peck’s *Sometimes in April* both tell the story of Rwandan genocide in Central Africa and address interventions and withdrawal of the Western countries and the United Nations. Mandoki’s *Innocent Voices* depicts recruitment of child soldiers in El Salvador in Central America and mentions military supply of the United States.

The four texts I choose are to some extent concerned with context of globalization or relationships between new wars and global developments. *Anil's Ghost* is based on war investigation problem of the supranational organization in global era. *Hotel Rwanda* and *Sometimes in April* represent global flows of munitions and goods in a borderless world. *Innocent Voices*, though bases its story under the background of Cold War period, also implies similar global flows by engagement of the United States in civil war.

Chapter one is to deal with representations of Sri Lankan civil war by analyzing images of bodies in *Anil's Ghost*. Focusing on bodies lynched and massacred in civil war, this chapter firstly contemplates the torments of innocent civilians under war violence. The civilians' torments are concerned with transformations of warfare represented in the fiction. The transformations of Sri Lankan civil war are caused by globalization which not only enhances developments of arms business but also increases war terror. Besides, the shifts in mode of war bring the impotence of supranational organization which fails to intervene into war crisis. Studying brutality of civil war in the fiction, this chapter advances to investigate representation of war terror in this text which uses the voice to reveal dilemma of local inhabitants. Taking these sufferings of civilians into account, the discussion will end in power of redemption in a ritual ceremony, the Netra Mangala, which brings the civilians consolation and hope of outlet for the civilians.

Chapter two investigates representations of Rwandan genocide in civil war by investigating disciplinary powers of media and transnational corporations in *Hotel Rwanda* and *Sometimes in April*. Instead of discussing the reasons of genocide and its brutality, this chapter attempts to trace representations of colonial history of Rwanda in both films in the first place and then relates colonial history to relationships between civilians and the West in civil war. Discussing role of the western countries

in genocide, this chapter advanced to examine representations of disciplinary power of the media and transnational corporations to contemplate influences of global developments in Rwanda.

Chapter Three aims to study representations of El Salvador civil war in *Innocent Voices* by looking at liminality of civil war and images of teenagers in the film. This film, which is concerned with child soldiers in warfare, represents war violence in viewpoints from the perspectives of the juveniles.¹² I will discuss dilemma and outlet of teenagers in warfare which is represented firstly as a liminal space in the film. Comparing roles of men with women in civil war, my discussion tries to examine representations of civilians' predicaments in warfare. Then the discussion will focus on life of teenagers, who experience disillusion and awakening in civil war, to indicate the painful existence of civilian population.

Choosing these four texts in this thesis, I rethink civil wars at the end of the twentieth century and attempt to build new war discourses for new warfare. As this thesis' title addresses, "Painful Existence: Representations of Civil Wars in the Global Age," I regard civilians as new icons of civil wars and try to refresh traditional understandings and readings about wars. With this thesis, I hope to draw attentions to war issues which are still ongoing nowadays.

Notes

¹ In a special report of the *U.S. News & World Report*, it categorizes modes of wars in the twentieth century, such as colonial wars, civil wars, the two World Wars, the Cold War, and tribal wars. The colonial wars are happening mostly in southern Africa countries, which fight for ruling of the Britain. Civil wars are mostly driven by struggles over ideology as well as by artificial boundaries drawn by colonial powers. The two World Wars result in at least the mortality of 35 million to 40 million soldiers. The Cold War is oppositions between communism and capitalism. And tribal wars are the tribal warfare driven by the ethnic hatred (48).

² In *Crimes of War: What the Public Should Know*, Steven R. Ratner explains that civil wars are difficult to be intervened because of absence of laws. There are no laws or rules designed to solve civil war problem nowadays. Instead, the International Laws, which mainly deals with international armed conflicts, is usually employed to deal with internal armed conflict but unable to comprehend the conflicts at all.

³ For the list of wars in the twentieth century, see Kristian Skrede Gleditsch's "A Revised List of Wars Between and Within Independent States, 1816-2002."

⁴ Please see Paul Collier's research "Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and Their Implications for Policy."

⁵ Martin Shaw proposes that the Western bloc in the Cold War period has shown some "semi-global functions" and developed itself to be a semi-global world by integrating the economic and political relationships between nation-states with it (Shaw 66). To some extent the Western bloc is the predecessor of the world of globalization at the end of the twentieth century.

⁶ See Christopher Wringley's journal "The Arms Industry."

⁷ In many countries, the traffic of arms only needs permission from the authorities if arms are to actually come in or go out of the country. Arms traffickers can be resident in one state and arrange an arms shipment between two foreign countries without any fear of punishment. In other cases, where laws are slight tighter, arms brokers need only stop into a country with weaker regulations to make their phone calls, have their meetings and arrange the shipments (Burrow 93).

⁸ Susan Sontag analyzes relationships between media, people, and wars in *Regarding the Pain of Others*. She considers that the media has gradually deprived people's attentions towards warfare and reduced significance of war brutality by displaying the news ceaselessly. And she also claims that regarding the pain of others is a typical modern experience that shall be comprehended and reconstructed.

⁹ For information about the role and history of the United Nations, see Kofi A. Annan's *We the People: the Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century*.

¹⁰ See Mary Douglas' *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*.

¹¹ Lidia Yuknavitch appropriates James William Gibson's research to clarify the post-Vietnam understanding of war. People had based their understanding of war on experiences of white male soldier by regarding him as either a hero or a victim. For more details of war discourses, see *Allegories of Violence: Tracing the Writing of War in Late Twentieth-Century Fiction*.

¹² According to statistics, there are at least 300,000 child soldiers in the world. See *A Survey of Programs on the Reintegration of Former Child Soldiers*.