

Linda Polman, *War Games: The Story of Aid and War in Modern Times*, (London: Penguin Books, 2010), pp. 218

In the world of today where terrorism has become epidemic, and War against terrorism is used more as a vaccine than a steroid, this book, *War Games*, written by a daring and outspoken journalist, Linda Polman, gives us an insight into the world described by the US as an Important part of their combat team a ‘Force Multiplier’ the NGOs, or more precisely, the Aid Industry.

In this witty Penguin group publication book, the author takes us on a journey of a lifetime. The book opens with a very simple yet almost impossible to answer question, “If you are a humanitarian aid worker, and you are to deliver aid supplies to a war torn region. You are aware that the supplies you will be delivering almost half of them would be used by army, militia, bureaucrats, and politicians, and not victims, to prolong the war you are saving people from. What would you do? Deliver the supplies or stop?” And in this journey through the book, the author forces you to seek the answer by taking the tour into the world of Humanitarian Aid with her.

She introduces us to the corporate world of Humanitarian Aid Industry, to their Donor darling, their media campaigns, to the contract fever they all suffer from, to the politicians, rebels, and bureaucrats of the war stricken areas. She also introduces us to the believers of Only-You-Can-Do-This, the self-styled one man NGOs, given the name of MONGOs (My Own NGO), which prove to be more disastrous than helpful for the victims and the professional Humanitarian Aid organizations working in the affected area.

She takes us to the tropical lands of Africa, to the Great Lakes region where the river of human corpse flow; in the camp in Goma where Hutus after slaughtering their compatriots Tutsis’ lived, nourished, armed, and organized as victims. She takes us behind the scenes of aid and media industrial oligarchy, and how it led to first African World War.

Continuing this journey we visit the brutalities done to people of Sierra Leone, Biafra, Ethiopia, and Sudan by their politicians, armies, militia, and rebels. The deals made, the bargains cut, and bribes paid by aid industry to these groups to help the victims while fueling the war economy simultaneously. We get acquainted with modern war tactics utilized by tyrannical regimes like Hunger weapon, which is used as a bait to lure the aid, which in turn is used for their political ambitions.

The journey is not limited to the wild side of Africa, but continues to the mountainous and mysterious terrains of Afghanistan. Where aid industry is used as a tool of winning the war against terrorism; but rather than serving its purpose, it ends up doing the exact opposite. By jeopardizing the fundamental principles of International Humanitarian Aid, that is, Impartiality, Neutrality, and Independence, the war industry puts lives of thousands of civilians and aid workers at risk in the war zone.

The book is superbly written and Linda Polman has done a wonderful job in penning down the decades of her life experiences as journalist in Africa and Afghanistan. She manages to capture the vivid picture of relief camp life in Goma, the Amputee camps in Sierra Leone, and Peace villages in Sudan; of the negotiations that take place between the aid organizations and political and rebellious regimes; and of the silent truce and understanding between journalists and aid industry.

In the world of today where philanthropists and INGOs have transcend international borders, and humanitarian work is exceedingly becoming the part of New World Order, *War Games* provides a very heart rendering and enlightening insight in this aid world and the kind of a world we are heading towards as a result of it. The humor, satire, and simplicity with which she has portrayed the human nature; sufferings; selling of human dignity for corporate gains; the images of starving and amputated children in pursuit of foreign aid; the indifference and ambitions of politicians; the brutality of rebels; and the blind sidedness and self justified censorship of aid and media industry would keep you glued to the book till the very last page. The book primarily focuses only on the inside world of aid industry and how its corporate part effect its

decision making. While barely touching upon the donor government pressures and ambitions involved in supplying aid, by the end of the book, author somehow manages to answer the question with which the book starts. The book is a must read for everyone living in the world of today, whether you are a Humanitarian Aid worker, a politician, a bureaucrat, an everyday worker, a MONGO, a victim, or an innocent by-stander.

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