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Joseph W. H. Lough, Damir Arsenijević

TROPES OF WAR—CREATING A MODEL PRECARIOUS LABOURER FOR US MILITARY BASES

In the paper, authors Lough and Arsenijević tackle the phenomenon of precarious labour and the framework that nurtured it into existence while maintaining focus on the conception of the "model precarious labourer" in Bosnia and Herzegovina for US military bases in zones of conflict. The US military's reliance on precarious labour has been shaped by global social, economic, and cultural imperatives and the authors trace its development alongside that of neoliberal capitalism or, more precisely, its authoritarian post-Fordist modality. In the late 1960s, the traditional Fordist modes of regulation started to exhibit increasing signs of weakness and decline which, by the early 1970s, generated enough concern for their reconceptualization to be set in motion, resulting in across-the-board social, legal, cultural, and economic regulatory adjustments referred to as post-Fordism. This comprehensive shift is among the most important factors shaping the meeting between precarious labourers from Bosnia and Herzegovina and US military personnel in Afghanistan as, having weathered the widespread privatization and deregulation of industry and public assets, it was but a small step for Americans to embrace the privatization and deregulation of war. The impact of the US neoliberal post-Fordist policy on former Yugoslavia and, in particular, Bosnia and Herzegovina could not have been more destructive, even going as far as causing its eventual destruction and disintegration. When US military contractors recruited precarious labourers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the wages promised, although entirely unacceptable by US military personnel standards, seemed rather generous to the psychologically traumatized recruits from the most economically depressed nation in the entirety of Europe. Such a labourer—frightened, traumatized, and desperate—stands as the ideal prototypical worker contemplated under the post-Fordist regime of regulation and the authors, drawing on the findings of carried-out interviews, attempt to rationalize his

psychological makeup. More strict enforcement of treaties, laws, and universally recognized human rights, the authors conclude, will have little or no impact on the circumstances of precarious labour so long as the regulatory regime governing conduct in zones of conflict is indistinguishable from the authoritarian post-Fordist regime that regulates conduct elsewhere in the world, war or no war.

KEYWORDS: American Studies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, tropes of war, Bosnia and Herzegovina, precarious labour, Bosnian precarious labourers, Fordism, post-Fordism, authoritarian post-Fordism, neoliberal capitalism, Bosnian workforce and American military bases.

When asked whether they feared for their life entering a war zone, precarious employees from Bosnia and Herzegovina employed by private United States military subcontractors in Iraq and Afghanistan responded almost to a person that they were not afraid. When asked whether they had any feelings, one way or the other, about the US mission in Afghanistan, they again answered that they did not. Was their life in an active war zone preferable to their life in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina? Yes, living in a war zone was preferable. Why? The employment was good. The wages were good. And the working conditions — in a war zone — were better than working conditions in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina.[1] The readiness to enter a war zone without fear may speak to the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder among civilians who lived through or were children of survivors of the Yugoslav wars, 1991-1995. It may also speak to the attraction wages hold for individuals living in a region with upwards of fifty per cent unemployment. Yet, it may also speak to our willingness generally to endure unsafe conditions, low wages, and precarious employment under what University of Chicago sociologist George Steinmetz calls "authoritarian post-Fordism" (Steinmetz 2003).

Tropes of War is the name we have given to our attempt to develop a scalable approach to the complex relationships between war, trauma, and labour we see unfolding from the Baltics down through the Balkans, stretching east to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and western China, and encircling the southern and eastern Mediterranean basin. This paper builds loosely upon a research project entitled 'Tropi rata' [Tropes of War] that was carried out between 2012 and 2013 and was supported by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The

[1] Responses from interview questions within the research project 'Tropi rata'. On a scale of 0-5, where O means that they expressed no feelings about entering a war zone and 5 means that they expressed strong feelings, the mean response was 1.66. When asked whether they feared for their life, yes (1) or no (0), the mean response was .466. When asked why they sought employment in a war zone, where 1=money and 5=experience, the mean response was 2.

overall aim of this paper was to examine the phenomenon of significant numbers of the ranks of the Bosnian labour force accepting highly dangerous jobs, providing services to US military personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan. The research situated this phenomenon in the wider context of the development of neo-liberal capitalism, or more precisely, in its authoritarian post-Fordist modality. Further, the project investigated the extent to which the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1992 and 1995 and the country's simultaneous transition to capitalism have produced and shaped a "model precarious labourer" for the work in US military war zones. The project offers a comparative analysis of how Bosnian and American war imaginaries overlap, and makes use of interviews with Bosnian labourers working in US military basis in Afghanistan in order qualitatively to scrutinise the phenomenon. The data collection was conducted through anonymous semi-structured interviews with persons from various age groups, from both genders, and from different educational backgrounds. In order to reach as wide a range of interviewees as possible, the project has used judgment sampling, convenience sampling and snowball sampling.

This paper draws on the findings of anonymous semi-structured interviews with 15 persons, all of whom worked on US military bases in Afghanistan.

The critical assessment outlined and argued for in this paper takes as its point of departure the recognition that the US military's use of precarious labour in zones of conflict has been shaped by global social, economic, and cultural imperatives over which more rigorous enforcement of treaties, laws, including labour laws, and universally recognized human rights will have little if any impact. This is not to say that more rigorous enforcement of these laws and rights is of no value at all. Enforcement might at least improve the lives of individuals and communities whose rights have been violated. And, yet, insofar as the social, economic, and cultural imperatives driving US military intervention and the US military's reliance upon precarious labour are not causally related to these rights and their enforcement (or violation), more rigorous enforcement of these laws cannot provide us with the understanding we need to critically assess why US policy makers are projecting US presence ever more persistently into Afro-Eurasia or why it is increasingly likely to use precarious labour in its efforts to do so.

FORCE MULTIPLIERS

Of course, the United States use of "non-nationals" or mercenaries has a long tradition leading all the way back to the use of French, African and Native American soldiers in its

war for independence from Great Britain. So, too, the United States has frequently employed secret "proxy" armies to accomplish strategic goals deemed too politically sensitive or unpopular to win constitutionally required Congressional approval. Still, there is widespread recognition that the deliberate, long-range introduction of precarious labour into strategic US military planning is a novelty no older than 1992, when we first find the Pentagon using the term "force multipliers" (LeRoy 2011).

The novelty of explicit, widespread use of non-nationals in combat zones may seem odd until we recognize how these force multipliers fit into the overall neoliberal reconceptualization of post-Fordism. Post-Fordism is a term economists use to describe across-the-board social, legal, cultural, and economic regulatory adjustments implemented beginning in the 1970s in response to declining rates of profit. Neoliberals reconceptualised these declining rates of profit as consequences of Fordist modes of social, legal, cultural and economic regulation (Harvey 2007).

THE POST-FORDIST MODE OF REGULATION

We can easily grasp how this reconceptualization works if we think, first, of the typical production facility under traditional Fordism. This production facility will enjoy long-term contracts for large quantities of specific goods destined for specific outlets that generate predictable revenue streams for the productive facility. These predictable revenue streams are needed in order to satisfy the conditions of long-term contracts with long-term employees whose representation by a labour union also guarantees them a living wage, a safe working environment, health and education benefits, and a sizeable pension. Of course, such generous wages and benefits are only possible because of the predictable revenue streams generated by the production and sale of products to a steady, stable, and reliable set of outlets.

Equally important are the web of federal, state, and local regulations ensuring compliance with environmental, labour, health, safety, and civil rights laws, which, in spite of the upward pressures placed on production costs, can easily be managed in light of continued upward expansion of production and the reliability and growth of revenue streams.

For reasons that we will identify below, this upward expansion of production and the reliability and growth of revenue streams had already begun to display signs of weakness in the late 1960s (Brenner 2006; Jessop 2002; Harvey 1990). By the early

1970s, these signs of weakness had generated enough concern to warrant radical federal action, most notably President Nixon's elimination of the Gold-Dollar standard that had been the keystone of economic planning in the post-World War II era and, in its wake, the dramatic shift of global assets from domestic to so-called "off-shore" production and the widespread financialisation of formerly fixed assets. By the mid-1970s, neoliberal economic theorists had developed a comprehensive diagnosis of and remedy for the decline in rates of profit that entailed widespread deregulation of private industry, widespread privatization of formerly public assets, and the largest shift of wealth upwards from working families to investing individuals (Harvey 2007). Many of the more dramatic regulatory changes contemplated by neoliberal economists could not be fully implemented until Margaret Thatcher was named British Prime Minister in 1979 and Ronald Reagan was elected President of the United States a year later in 1980.

But, as must be obvious, Mrs Thatcher's and President Reagan's political ascendancy marked more than a mere shift in economic thinking. When British voters cast their ballots for Conservatives or when Americans cast theirs for Republicans they were both reflecting and hoping to facilitate a fundamental cultural, social, and political revolution as well. Regulation theorists are therefore understandably reluctant to reduce the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism to a mere shift in economic regulation. In their view, we should instead treat the transition as a comprehensive shift in an entire regime of social, cultural, and political, as well as economic, regulation and production; a shift that not only liberated capital from the constraints of domestic and international public or quasi-public oversight or that shifted production and investment planning from the long to the short-term. The shift also brought working families to question the benefits of collective bargaining, brought them to challenge the justice of public services, benefits and institutions, and brought them to place more faith in private institutions and private enterprise.

COMPOSING THE PERFECT POST-FORDIST WORKER

When head-hunters showed up in Fiji, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nepal, India, and Bangladesh promising high salaries for jobs to "cooks, cleaners, construction workers, fast food clerks, electricians, and beauticians from the world's poorest countries" (Stillman 2011), these "opportunities" for servicing US military personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan would never have been possible were it not for fundamental shifts in

how both military planners at the Pentagon and economic policy-makers in Washington thought about the business of making war. Having weathered the privatization and their own government and the deregulation of private industry, it was but a small step for Americans to embrace the privatization and deregulation of war. Indeed, these were not, as is sometimes imagined, two steps — first the domestic civilian transition to post-Fordism and then the overseas military transition — but one. The near complete disinterest that Americans displayed over news that high-ranking military officers and members of the President's cabinet, including the President himself, had completely disregarded Congressional laws baring US assistance to anti-government forces in El Salvador and Nicaragua should have been evidence enough that Americans had grown weary of the constitutional minutia surrounding the declaration and prosecution of wars. They had evidently gotten the message that private institutions absent public oversight and regulation operated far more efficiently and effectively than public institutions weighed down by bureaucratic legal wrangling and public debate ever could. And in 1984, voters handed the Republican Party, whose leaders defended this open violation of law, one of their largest victory margins ever.

Our aim, however, is neither to fault the voters who delivered this stunning victory nor the public servants who asked for their votes. Instead our aim is to critically reflect upon the social, economic, and cultural imperatives that brought precarious labourers from Bosnia and Herzegovina to service US military personnel in Afghanistan. And we are suggesting that among the most important factors shaping this meeting on the steppes of Afghanistan was the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism in response to decreasing rates of profit within the investment community beginning in the late 1960s. Not only did this transition lay the groundwork for the widespread use of contingent non-national workers, as distinguished from career US military personnel, to service US military logistics, but it also cultivated a sensibility among both civilians and military personnel for deregulated military operations flying, so to speak, under the official public radar. Once appropriately accustomed to the presumed benefits of privatization, civilians and military personnel simply assumed that these benefits must also hold good for military operations. However, not only the transition itself, but also the historical reasons for the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism are critical to the meeting between Bosnian and Herzegovinian precarious labourers and US soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan.

CREATING AUTHORITARIAN POST-FORDISM

These reasons, which are well known and almost universally acknowledged, need only be reviewed at this point. The late Giovanni Arrighi has produced the most comprehensive account of this transition to date (Arrighi 2010). From the point when it took over world economic and regulatory supremacy from the Dutch in the late 17th century to the first signs of its collapse in the late 19th century, the British created a global economic and legal framework that favoured central Europe and North America. By the late 18th century both Germany and the United States, recently separated from Great Britain, showed faint signs of challenging British economic supremacy.

Yet, it was not until the mid 19th century that British investors took notice and began to invest heavily in German and US industry. According to Arrighi, this transition from investment in domestic production to foreign investment always signals the early stages of decline in any global hegemon. British investors did not deliberately choose Great Britain's global economic successor. They simply invested in those financial instruments that offered the highest returns. And these instruments just happened to be in Germany and the United States. Yet, by placing their investments in these instruments there is no question but that British investors helped drive economic growth in the two nations that would most challenge Great Britain's global economic hegemony in the coming century.

This challenge came in the form of two multi-continental world wars, which, when concluded, left the United States as the sole world economic hegemon and successor to British economic hegemony. Still, in order to maintain its hegemony, the United States would have to find markets for its goods, a mission that proved difficult after World War II since the world's other major consuming and producing nations — Great Britain, France, Germany, and Japan — had been reduced to rubble. To remedy this problem, under the cover of a Cold War, the United States set to work rebuilding the economic (and therein the consuming) capacity of its primary economic competitors (Frieden 2006). Put differently, had the United States not paid to rebuild its leading economic competitors, it could not have sustained the economic boom that it launched during World War II and certainly would not have enjoyed the spectacular, unprecedented growth that it experienced from the beginning of the 1950s through to the end of the 1960s.

Yet, something that should have been wholly anticipated, but was not, began to set in toward the end of the 1960s: global economic competition from those very

nations that the United States had set about to rebuild. Normally such competition would have triggered a zero-sum conflict in which investors would have dispassionately assessed the costs and benefits of various asset classes along with the regulatory environments of various political entities and would then simply shift their capital to the geographical or trans-national entities that promised the highest returns. This is what happened when northern Italian investors shifted their capital to the United Provinces in the 17th century; or when Dutch investors shifted their capital to the United Kingdom in the 18th century; or when British investors shifted their capital to the United States and Germany at the end of the 19th and beginning of the twentieth centuries. What was unusual about the global competitive environment that emerged at the end of the 1960s was that it was sinking all ships — British, US, German, and Japanese — simultaneously. Clearly what was needed was not simply the transfer of capital from one set of assets or from one political entity to another. What was needed was a completely new regulatory regime, a regime equipped to take advantage of lower factor and transaction costs. The new regulatory regime, ironically, was notable for its deregulation of financial markets and the loosening or elimination of applicable labour and human rights laws. Such deregulated, privatized global markets were the precondition for the use private US military contractors operating in Iraq and Afghanistan could make of Bosnian and Herzegovinian precarious labourers.

But the appearance and availability of these precarious labourers would not have been forthcoming were it not for the prior intimate financial and strategic relationship forged between successive U.S. administrations and Josip Broz Tito's Yugoslavia (Lampe 1990:147-188). When U.S. policymakers set about deregulating financial markets at the end of the 1970s, the negative impact the new policies had on Yugoslavia could not have been more destructive (Woodward 1995:345-370; Lowinger 2009). For, obviously, these precarious workers' labour was readily available to US military contractors in large measure because of the specific ways that the global economic downturn shaped the former Yugoslavia in general, and Bosnia and Herzegovina in particular, beginning in the late 1970s.

TITO'S YUGOSLAVIA AND POST-FORDISM

Here we must remember that it was in the 1970s that President Nixon took the Dollar off the Dollar-Gold standard, thereby in effect reducing the value of the Dollar relative to other global currencies. This reduction had the effect of making US goods far more

affordable both to domestic and to foreign markets. It provided a much needed, albeit fleeting, boost to US industrial production. The boost was never sufficient, however, to raise interest rates, which would have had a devastating effect on short-term growth and employment. Such low interest rates and liquidity meant that US investors could use their "cheap money" seeking the highest returns on their investments around the globe. United States' investors were flush with low interest dollars to invest around the world; including, it so happened, in the former Yugoslavia. President Tito took advantage of the largesse of western investors and their low interest loans. However, when in 1980 President Reagan decided to put the screws on the US economy by simultaneously raising interest rates and placing downward pressure on wages, creating a devastating recession, Tito's Yugoslavia was among the nations least able to handle the upwardly revised repayment schedules on the "cheap money" Yugoslavia purchased during the prior decade.

As Jacob Lowinger has pointed out (Lowinger 2009), the dire financial straights into which loan repayment and government-forced austerity placed on working families led to increasingly militant and violent labour disputes and strikes throughout the former Yugoslavia. And while these disputes were initially multi-ethnic and focused their wrath on federal legislators in Belgrade, as the decade wore on some labour leaders began to redirect the wrath of their rank and file onto ethnic minorities in their near vicinity. In this sense, the wars against Yugoslavia of the 1990s could be legitimately interpreted as the outgrowth of a conflict between organized labour and neoliberal policy makers in Belgrade in the 1980s.

But it could also be legitimately interpreted as the outgrowth of a failure to satisfactorily resolve the global crisis of diminishing returns on investment the first signs of which appear in the late 1960s.

And when viewed from this vantage point, we can appreciate how the same forces that generated the transition from Fordism to a post-Fordist regime of social, cultural, political, and economic regulation also generated the economic destruction of and subsequent war in the former Yugoslavia. When US military contractors recruited precarious labourers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, they must have been aware that the wages they were promising these recruits, which by the already reduced standards of entry level US military personnel proved entirely unacceptable, would seem generous to psychologically traumatized recruits from the most economically depressed nation in all of Europe.

A CONVERGING PATH: THE US AND BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

This, it seems clear, is already a far more comprehensive picture of precarious labour than the picture offered by those who rightly want US authorities to enforce human and civil rights laws and environmental, health and safety, and labour laws and regulations among contingent workers in Iraq and Afghanistan. Our objection is not that these expectations are illegitimate or even that they are unrealistic. Our objection is that, even assuming that there were sufficient political will and judicial weight to bring existing law to bear on the contingent workforce in Iraq and Afghanistan — an assumption that is problematic — since they understand the problem as essentially legal and ethical in nature, these exposés fail to account for the systemic nature of the causal mechanisms that have given rise to the relationship of convenience between US military contractors and Bosnia and Herzegovina's precarious work force.

Ours offers a more comprehensive account, but it too is insufficient. And it is insufficient both because it fails to adequately account for the social and psychological pathologies that have prepared Bosnia and Herzegovina's work force to service US military contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also because it fails to account for a more general social and historical trajectory that promises more, not less need, want, human degradation, and unfreedom in the future. The workforce that US military contractors have selected after all — frightened, traumatized, depressed, discouraged, needy, and desperate, yet highly skilled and intelligent boys, men and women — is an ideal-typical instance of the prototypical worker contemplated under the post-Fordist mode of regulation. More specifically, when neoliberal economists began contemplating how to resolve the crisis of diminishing returns on investment, they were not thinking about how or even whether their way of resolving this crisis might shape or reshape actual human bodies or minds in ways they might desire; they did not contemplate how their way of resolving this crisis might both attract and foster traumatized and brutalized individuals ready to perform almost any task, no matter how dangerous or damaging, for almost any wage.

IS IT SUSTAINABLE?

Consideration of how sustainable the neoliberal resolution to the crisis of declining returns on investment drives to the heart of the use of precarious labour by US military contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan. For when planners at the Pentagon identify these

labourers as “force multipliers,” they inevitably invite a series of relevant questions: what are precarious labourers multiplying? If we intend precarious labourers to generate efficiencies, then what is the shape of the marginal utility curve generated by more or fewer precarious labourers? And, assuming that Fijian, or Bosnian, or Nepalese, or Indian, and Bangladeshi precarious labourers multiply the force of US military personnel, in what does their additional value consist? Does it consist only in the relatively lower cost of their labour relative to their skill? Or are we not also interested in a cultural, social and psychological shift displayed among these labourers, a shift that renders them particularly well-suited to the post-Fordist regime of regulation being deployed by the US military in Iraq and Afghanistan?

It was with just such questions in mind that University of Chicago theorist George Steinmetz proposed that researchers attend more carefully to the cultural and social shift won not so much by the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, as by the official US regulatory response to these attacks (Steinmetz 2003). Since the 1950s, the US had vigorously pursued one course of action abroad, a course of action that might be loosely called “authoritarian,” and another, nearly opposite, course of action domestically. At home, under Fordism, under both Republican and Democratic administrations, the US pursued policies and enforced regulations that might be broadly understood as social democratic, meaning that they promoted the expansion of public institutions and social welfare. Abroad, by contrast, also under both Republican and Democratic administrations, the US propped up anti-Communist authoritarian dictatorships and worked aggressively to undermine popular social democratic regimes. When the Cold War ended in 1989, the *raison d’etre* for US authoritarianism abroad came under careful scrutiny. Many theorists, in fact, felt that there was no longer a reason for the US to maintain the largest garrisoned community of soldiers abroad of any nation in history, that there would naturally be a “peace dividend” from reductions in America’s military apparatus, and that this dividend could then be used to fulfil America’s still incomplete social contract. Obviously such expectations were terribly naïve, displaying a profound lack of understanding of the long-term strategic goals that had brought the Cold War to a close.

Still, when President Clinton was elected in 1992, it did seem possible that America might cash in on the relatively more porous trade and investment boundaries opened up by the end of the Cold War. And “cash in” it did, yet not under the Fordist regime of social, cultural, and economic regulation that had governed ex ante. President Clinton, it turned out, was a huge proponent of neoliberal economic policy both domestically and abroad. Culturally, however, he proved as liberal and

progressive in his views on race, gender, gender preference, reproductive rights, sexual freedom and religious liberty as any progressive of the past twenty years.

Yet, President Clinton's cultural liberalism proved increasingly out-of-sync with a culture regulated and mediated in a post-Fordist mode. In the end, the US economy humming along happily in its "golden bubble," American voters punished Clinton and his party not for any economic policy failures, but rather for their failure to connect to the now dominant post-Fordist regime of cultural regulation. Perhaps it was for this reason that, although he had lost the popular vote (and, most likely, the Electoral College as well), George W. Bush was nevertheless selected by the Supreme Court to succeed President Clinton.

President Bush's presidency was, at least initially, also punished, though not for his failure to connect culturally, but for the opposite shortcoming. Nearing the close of his first year in office, the President's irrational commitment to deregulation, across-the-board tax breaks, and unlimited military spending had led to unacceptable levels of un- and underemployment, ballooning debt, and overall dissatisfaction with his handling of the economy.

By September 2001, less than nine months into his term, Bush's approval ratings had flattened just above fifty per cent. But then terrorists trained by al Qaeda struck New York's World Trade Centre and Washington's Pentagon and, literally overnight, President Bush's approval ratings shot up over thirty per cent.

It is a common mistake to credit President Bush's rapid military response for his rise in popularity. In November 2001, support for intervention was running at roughly fifty per cent, not the groundswell of support the President was hoping for. However, when we compare this weak support for military intervention to the overwhelming popularity of the Patriot Act, which dramatically reduced or eliminated American citizens' civil rights and civil liberties, we gain a better appreciation for what precisely 9-11 accomplished; or, rather, how President Bush used 9-11 to his own political advantage and to the economic advantage of his financial backers. Even after the Patriot Act passed into law in October 2001, when the Gallup organization asked whether the Patriot Act had gone too far, fully 60 per cent said that it was "about right," with another 25 per cent saying that it had "not gone far enough" in restricting or eliminating American's civil rights and civil liberties. This suggests that President Bush's real accomplishment was not the discovery and destruction of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction — there were none; or the elimination of close to 125,000 Iraqi civilians; or the military defeat of Iraq and the killing of Saddam Hussein and his family. Even without the war, Hussein and Iraq had already been "neutralized."

President Bush's real accomplishment was to implement a comprehensive regime of cultural, social, and economic regulation that George Steinmetz has termed "authoritarian post-Fordism."

DEMAND CREATING ITS OWN SUPPLY

Authoritarian post-Fordism recombines and knits together two pieces of the post-Fordist mode of capital accumulation and regulation formerly divided between a relatively democratic and open domestic mode and an authoritarian and closed foreign imperialist mode. By bringing authoritarianism home, so to speak, US capital is able to rely more confidently on the willing support and even advocacy of the very working families from whose labour it is extracting value. Their willing self-domination and their militant advocacy for the violent domination of others means that capital is now relieved of its so-called "historical role" combatting organized labour. Now that organized labour is no longer organized and now that working families have become some of the most vocal defenders of privatization, deregulation, and the private, quasi-religious mediation of social life, capital's systemic imperatives to drive down production costs and maximize returns on investment can be pursued much more efficiently.

But so too can the drive to capture markets, raw materials, and labour, both at home and abroad. In the 1960s, at the height of the Viet Nam War — which was also not incidentally the height of Fordist prosperity in the United States — dramatic improvements in overall public health, education, and welfare constituted a generation of activists who were militantly opposed to US empire-building, not only in Viet Nam, but in Africa, Asia, and Central and South America as well. When neoliberal policy makers deregulated private enterprise, privatized formerly public institutions, and broke the back of organized labour, they also pulled the plug on an implied social contract that, for the first time in US history, had made health, education, and welfare an entitlement available to all Americans.

Seemingly overnight, the wealth, education and planning behind the domestic movement against US imperialism disappeared. Thus, on the one hand, authoritarian post-Fordism is characterized by an increase in working families in favour of a deregulated, privatized market place and, on the other hand, a public less openly hostile to United States imperialism abroad.

According to Professor Steinmetz:

> September 11 was the shock that allowed an explicitly imperialist and authoritarian rethinking of the mode of regulation to come to the fore. The result, for now, is a process of reconfiguring the mode of regulation. This emergent framework is still post-Fordist with respect to its core model of industrial production, but its state model is domestically authoritarian and geopolitically imperialist (Steinmetz 2003:341).

That was almost fourteen years ago, only two years after 9-11.

The implications these structural changes hold for precarious workers from Bosnia and Herzegovina appear clear enough; but they can be rendered even clearer. By accepting low-interest loans from Western Europe and the United States, Yugoslavia's fate was wedded to a neoliberal, post-Fordist adjustment that in the long run would prove unsustainable. When in the 1980s Mrs Thatcher and President Reagan completely realigned the remaining components of Breton Woods — reduced now to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund — transforming them into missionaries for neoliberal, post-Fordist ideology, post-Tito Yugoslavia was compelled to adopt austerity measures and reduce wages and benefits. These austerity measures and reductions provoked widespread labour in Yugoslavia throughout the middle and late 1980s, unrest that eventually morphed into ethnic conflict and genocide (Lowinger 2009).

Following the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords in December 1995, Bosnia and Herzegovina lay in ruins, desperately in need of international economic assistance and infrastructural support. Under the post-Fordist regulatory regime that was now thoroughly entrenched, the only aid international agents could offer would have to be channelled through private economic actors. Thus, perhaps inadvertently, the World Bank and IMF helped to create overnight an oligarchy of private entrepreneurs who, given their newfound wealth, had no difficulty purchasing and then leveraging Bosnia and Herzegovina's governing institutions to enrich themselves even further. All of this, of course, was sanctioned under the post-Fordist cultural dictum that private agents — even corrupt private agents — would operate far more efficiently and effectively than public agencies ever could or would. Perhaps not surprisingly, once the oligarchy purchased these public agencies, they made certain that they would not run efficiently and effectively, filling all vacancies and even creating new vacancies which, needless to say, they filled with less than fully qualified friends and

family. This virtually ensured that private enterprise would make a killing off of the inefficiencies of the public institutions they now owned and operated by proxy.

This leaves us now to consider the precarious workers themselves, whose war trauma and economic desperation brought them to leap at the opportunity to earn real wages working for US military contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan. Here as elsewhere, post-Fordist modes of cultural, social, and economic regulation create the supply to satisfy their own demand. As residents within what had once been Yugoslavia, under- and unemployed workers in Bosnia and Herzegovina were highly literate and skilled. However, following a decade and a half of economic turbulence and war, they were also desperate and reasonably at peace with the post-Fordist authoritarianism to which they would be subjected working for US military contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Here we must bear in mind how completely contrary Yugoslavia's workers had appeared during labour unrest in the 1980s to the stereotypically docile, obedient and compliant communist factory worker. It was not Communist Party discipline, but war and material deprivation that had driven every last ounce of militant resistance from these post-Fordist job applicants. As the interviews make clear, these precarious labourers no longer showed even passing interest in the causes for war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Nor did they care whether by global standards the wages they would receive were high or low, or whether their working conditions would be safe or dangerous. In this sense, they displayed all of the characteristics most desired in a post-Fordist employee. Equally important, however, is the role these employees play reproducing the authoritarian modes of regulation demanded under post-Fordism. When these precarious workers were interviewed, they displayed no hint of the worker democracy, militancy, organization, or representation for which they were notorious in Tito's Yugoslavia. Their only thoughts are directed toward their pay check. Finally, however, and perhaps most critically, rather than healing the wounds opened up by a decade of war and economic hardship, employment in Iraq and Afghanistan appears instead to have fixed these wounds permanently in their psyches, colouring personal reflections on everything from war and death to home, security, family, wealth and employment.

Yet, in many ways there is nothing particularly remarkable to the answers these employees offered in response to the survey questions. They are the answers we might expect not only from victims of war and chronic under- and unemployment, but from almost anyone working under an authoritarian post-Fordist regime of capital accumulation and social regulation. They are the answers we might expect from a

bagger at Walmart or a fast food employee at McDonald's who have not been subject to a decade of war, but who have nevertheless internalized and now reinforce the authoritarian structures, cultural forms and practices by which this regulatory regime is reproduced. And this perhaps is the most remarkable finding in these interviews; what Hannah Arendt called the "banality" of the answers offered by these precarious labourers. What this suggests, however, is not that war and deprivation have failed to leave their mark, but rather that the mark they have left is difficult to distinguish from the mark left in general on all who live and labour under authoritarian post-Fordism, war or no war.

Indeed, returning briefly to the answers respondents offered to researchers in the initial survey research, what is most remarkable about these answers is how unremarkable they are. Respondents were so desperate to make money, any money, and were so fed up with private oligarchic employers and government officials in Bosnia and Herzegovina, that they were willing, even eager, to risk their lives. But this fails to distinguish them from millions of unemployed minority youth in the US, who, like them, are willing to risk everything for simply the chance to get out. Nor does it distinguish them from the hundreds of millions of desperate un- and underemployed youth who will do anything simply for a job. In our view there is no clear line between the traumatized Bosnian and Herzegovinian who elects to work for a private contractor in Iraq or Afghanistan and the traumatized urban minority in the United States who elects to take a minimum wage job at Wal-Mart. Both are generating huge efficiencies for private entities who are taking advantage of the traumatized conditions of their employees. That is a text-book definition of "authoritarian post-Fordism."

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Autor:
Authors:
Joseph W.H. Lough
International and Area Studies Academic Program
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, CA 94720-2306
United States
joseph_lough@berkeley.edu

Damir Arsenijević
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
University of Tuzla
Dr. Tihomila Markovića 1, Tuzla
damir.arsenijevicd@untz.ba

TROPI RATA—KREIRANJE IDEALNOG PREKARNOG RADNIKA ZA AMERIČKE VOJNE BAZE

SAŽETAK:
U ovom radu, opisujemo i postavljamo teorijske okvire za analizu fenomena želje za prekarnim radom kao i sistema u kojem je ova želja kroz koncept prekarnog rada proizašla na primjeru, kreiranja "idealnog radnika" u Bosni i Hercegovini koji rade u prekarnim uslovima u američkih vojnim bazama u zonama sukoba u Iraku i Afganistanu. Oslanjanje američke vojske na radnike koji su voljni da rade u nesigurnim uvjetima oblikovano je globalnim društvenim, ekonomskim i kulturnim imperativima koje u ovom eseju analiziramo kroz razvoj neoliberalnog kapitalizma ili, tačnije, njegovog autoritarnog post-fordovskog modaliteta. Krajem šezdesetih godina 20. vijeka, tradicionalni fordistički načini regulacije su počeli da ispoljavaju znake slabosti i pad profita koji su, već početkom sedamdesetih, izazvali dovoljno zabrinutosti te time omogućili preispitivanje starih i uvođenje novih opširnih društvenih, pravnih, kulturnih i ekonomskih regulatornih prilagodbi koje danas karakterišemo kao "postfordizam". Ova sveobuhvatna promjena ključni je faktor u kojem se odvija susret bosanskohercegovačkih radnika, koji su voljni da rade u prekarnim i nesigurnim uvjetima, i američkih vojnih lica u Afganistanu i Iraku jer je, nakon masovne privatizacije i deregulacije industrije i prijetvorbe imovine, za Amerikance bio malen korak da privatizuju i deregulraju i ratna dejstva. Uticaj američke neoliberalne post-fordovske politike na bivšu Jugoslaviju, a posebno na Bosnu i Hercegovinu, pokazao se toliko štetnim da se može postulirati kako je upravo ovakva politika jedan od uzroka uništenja i raspada Jugoslavije. Kada su američke privatne kompanije, koje servisiraju američke vojne baze, došle u Bosnu i Hercegovinu, nudile su poslove ljudima koji su bili voljni raditi u nesigurnim uvjetima, a obećane plate, iako posve neprihvatljive za američke standarde za iste poslove, činile su se prilično velikodušnim za traumatizirane ljude u jednoj of ekonomski osiromašenih zemalja u Europi. Takav jedan radnik—prestrašen, traumatiziran i očajan—predstavlja idealnog radnika zamišljenog u post-fordovskom regulatornom režimu, te se u analizi sprovedenih intervjua sa ovim radnicima, u ovom eseju fokusiramo na načine na koje se normalizuje

trauma i nesigurni uvjeti rada. Čak ukoliko bi se i vršila strožija sprovedba međunarodnih sporazuma koji regulišu ljudska prava ovih radnika, to bi imalo vrlo mali uticaj na okolnosti rada u prekarnim i nesigurnim uvjetima. Ono što bi moglo promijeniti prekarne i nesigurne uvjete rada bila bi radikalna promjena regulatornog sistema koji upravlja propisima u zonama sukoba i koji se ne razlikuje od autoritarnog post-fordovskog režima koji reguliše propise drugdje u svijetu, bez obzira da li se radi o ratnim zonama ili ne.

Ključne riječi: američke studije u Bosni i Hercegovini, Bosna i Hercegovina, prekarni rad, bosanski prekarni radnici, fordizam, postfordizam, autoritarni postfordizam, neoliberalni kapitalizam, bosanska radna snaga i američke vojne baze.