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## EDITORIAL

### WARS, HYSTERIAS AND MOBILITIES

#### *Guerras, histerias e mobilidades*

Roberto Marinucci <sup>a</sup> 

After the end of the Second World War, there was a conviction that guided the spirit of every person: “Wars: never again!”. The emergence of UN and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was precisely to prevent new armed conflicts from ravaging the planet and hurting its inhabitants. Above all, there was an awareness that war could no longer be understood as a political instrument for settling disputes in the sense of Clausewitzian logic. After centuries of debates about just or holy wars, people realized that it was not enough to reject “war crimes” because “war is a crime.” The emergence of prophetic figures such as Gandhi, Mandela, Martin Luther King and others strengthened the conviction that there are other ways to resolve conflicts, even in the case of severe forms of oppression and injustice.

Nevertheless, in recent decades amnesia seems to have taken the place of memory. A kind of denial of history revives what seemed to be banished forever. Wars and other armed conflicts are becoming more frequent; the arms race is picking up speed; the spectre of nuclear conflict, which seemed to have been finally overcome, is returning to haunt us. But above all, the resurgence of the idea that war violence can be an ordinary option for resolving disputes and even paving the way for peace and justice is frightening. Let us now offer some reflections on this topic and then focus on the relationship between armed conflict and human mobility, which is the subject of the dossier in issue 68 of REMHU.

#### ***De Bello***

The millennial experiences shows that violence tends to reproduce, to reinforce, the so-called escalation of violence. In the past there were attempts

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to control this process: The barbaric “Law of Talion” (an eye for an eye) was a means to limit and control revenge; even the “duels” themselves were essentially a means to regulate and limit violence, precisely to avoid its escalation. Indeed, violence tends to develop a mimetic dynamic, as Girard (2004) has demonstrated, and it feeds primarily on processes of enmity or demonization of the opponent, through narratives that dehumanize the other. The violence of armies is always preceded by “war propaganda”, that is, the violence of language and symbols (Pace, 2004). The enemy is deprived of his humanity; he loses his rights and can be quietly violated without any qualms of conscience. “Cockroaches”, “infidels”, “communists”, “deicides” and “fundamentalists” can and do deserve to be exterminated. In warlike conflicts, homicide is replaced by “malicide”, that is, by killing the enemy, one kills the evil.

The tragedy is that this dynamic affects everyone involved in conflict. They can all demonize and be demonized and fall into “war hysteria” which in the words of Edgar Morin (2023) is “the conversion of a mental or imaginary symptom into a symptom of reality” (p. 14, translated by the author): The delirium typical of this hysteria implies “the attribution of a collective responsibility and, worse, of a collective criminality” (Morin, 2023, p. 18, translated by the author). In this way, certain perverse characteristics are generically attributed to all members of a nation or an ethnic group: “they are all Nazis”, “all communists”, “all fundamentalists”, etc. This can even go as far as criminalizing the history, religion and culture of the enemy people (an example of this is the recent banning of Russian literature in some countries, as if Dostoevsky or Tolstoy had something to do with the invasion of Ukraine).

If the demonization and criminalization of the enemy aims to eliminate any kind of empathy, there are other weapons of war, such as the education of *blind obedience to the authorities* (Sémelin, 1985), which suppresses responsibility for crimes committed – Nazism *docet* –, the *use of generalized fear* – in the logic of *mors tua, vita mea* –, and above all, the *weapon of the lie*, as recently underlined by Edgar Morin (2023): rarely, at present, does a conflict present itself as a war of aggression or is motivated by economic or geopolitical interests; a “defensive”, “protective”, or “preventive” motivation is always invented to justify the resort to armed violence (the most emblematic case is certainly the second war against Iraq (2003), officially justified by the “non-existent” weapons of mass destruction that Saddam Hussein was allegedly built. More than 100,000 people were killed in that conflict).

However, the severity of warlike conflicts, is primarily related to the *human consequences*, especially for civilians. Recent wars have been characterized by a significant increase in civilian casualties among the population. These are the so-called “collateral victims”. There is evidence, however, that in some cases the killing of civilians is not just a “side effect” but also a “strategic objective” of the

conflict itself. Particularly in contexts where the specific target is small armed groups hiding in urban centers, bombing targets the general population in order to generate hostility toward these groups. The most serious case is undoubtedly “*ethnic cleansing*” and, in particular, systematic rape as an expression of violence and ethnocide, which is perhaps the greatest evidence of the process of dehumanization and demonization.

Moreover, the impact on the civilian population cannot be measured in terms of casualties alone, as the psychophysical, social, economic, political, and demographic effects will affect the population for many years, even generations. Not to mention forced displacement, which we will discuss later, and, in an increasingly connected world, impacts that also affect distant populations: a recent example is the global food supply crisis resulting from the conflict in Ukraine. In fact, *food insecurity* is also used as a “weapon of war”.

When we talk about civilians, however, we must make another distinction. The armed conflicts of the twentieth century – and beyond – have clearly shown that in the vast majority of cases they have a clear class orientation: Those who fight, and die are, in most cases, members of the lowest social strata, forced to harass their opponents from the other army in order to defend something – wealth and land – that they have never possessed and will never possess. As the Italian Lorenzo Milani (1965) denounced: What do poor people defend by serving in the army in wars? The privileges of an oligarchy? The (national) sovereignty of a social class? The territorial integrity of a country whose borders are constantly in flux? It is worth reflecting on this profoundly class-struggle dimension of armed conflict and how human rights such as life, liberty and human rights are often degraded in the name of defending the privileges of oligarchies or the alleged rights of the Fatherland.

Finally, it should be noted that armed conflicts are usually the end point of an escalation of violence. The current war in Ukraine did not begin in 2022 (Chomsky, 2023), just as the armed conflict in Niger did not begin in 2023. All too often, there is an accumulation of violence, hostilities, and abuses that trigger increasingly aggressive violent confrontations, up to and including the use of weapons. My point is that everyday violence, abuses and rights violations in “non-war” times provides fertile ground for the emergence of armed conflict. The struggle for human rights and the rights of peoples, as well as for the rights of the environment, is the most radical way to prevent the outbreak of wars in the future.

### **Wars, mobilities, walls and hysterias**

The REMHU 68 dossier is dedicated to the theme of fleeing armed conflicts. But what is the relationship between mobilities and wars? Let me highlight a few

elements. Foremost, armed conflicts tend to generate the *flight of asylum seekers or internally displaced persons*. This is usually the most immediate consequence of the outbreak of conflict. They are often not only *forced* displacements, but also *unplanned or poorly planned* displacements, especially for the populations directly affected. Massive displacements also entail a set of difficulties for reception and protection actions by countries of arrival or international organizations. People fleeing conflict are often “piled up” in emergency “*refugee camps*” (Bauman, 2004, p. 98). There is a large literature on the positive and negative aspects of these permanently temporary spaces, which guarantee biological survival but rarely a dignified existence and, above all, prospects for the future.

This brings us to a second aspect to underline: the *psychophysical impacts of fleeing armed conflict*. Trauma can be both physical and psychological, involving the migrants themselves or people close to them. If the journeys of any “undocumented” migrant are marked by risks of violence, abuse, and involvement in trafficking in persons (*trafficking*), in the case of unplanned displacement and in war contexts these risks are amplified, especially in the case of women and children. The sudden and chaotic flight also facilitates the disappearance of people, thus multiplying the presence of unaccompanied minors, which adds to the number of conflict orphans. Not infrequently, the flight can also be interpreted as a form of desertion: in such cases, violence may also occur on the part of supposedly friendly or allied groups. Without wishing to “pathologize” flight, there is no doubt that for those fleeing wars and other armed conflicts the risks of psychophysical impacts are very high, which will have consequences for the processes of insertion in the place of arrival and the reconstruction of one’s own existence.

This last reflection leads us to a third element to be highlighted: the *stigmatization of the refugee fleeing conflicts*. It is worth quoting, in this case, a text by Bauman: “Refugees (...) bring the distant sounds of war and the stench of looted homes and burned villages that cannot help but remind us how easy it is to invade or crush the cocoon of their safe and familiar routine (...), and how illusory the security of their position can be” (2004, p. 85, translated by the author). Refugees and internally displaced persons become “harbingers of bad news” (*ibidem*) and therefore an unwanted presence.

Moreover, those fleeing war are often blamed for bringing “problems”, forcing the receiving state to care for their possible psychophysical trauma. In an intersectional logic, these issues overlap with other markers such as xenophobia, ethnocentrism, and racism. Proof of this is the different treatment of refugees from different countries and conflicts. One example is Poland’s unconditional reception of Ukrainian citizens, which is certainly a good thing, while foreigners living in Ukraine were barred entry at the same border. Another terribly embarrassing example is represented by the very recent *memorandum* signed

between the European Union and Tunisia to control the transit of migrants and refugees. Apparently, there is a hierarchy among those fleeing armed conflicts. Some are desirable, others are not. The “selectivity” of migration policies is compounded by the “selectivity” of the reception of those fleeing armed conflicts.

But the stigmatization of people fleeing conflict is also related to various forms of essentialization of their condition: for example, the aforementioned risks of psychophysical trauma can feed a sometimes overly welfarism vision, a generalized pathologization, which does not always correspond to the reality of individual cases. In this perspective, it is always essential to prioritize the agency and autonomy of the subjects, as we will see later.

Finally, one last aspect brings wars and mobilities together: *security migration policies are policies of enmity*. The construction of walls and other barriers, externalization policies, the militarization of borders and administrative detentions and deportations can be interpreted in a warlike perspective, as they aim to defend the country from a foreign invasion and “invent” an invasion and an enemy. It is what Massey, Pren and Durand are not afraid to call an “*anti-immigrant war*” (2009). Using a lexicon of war when dealing with migration issues is a confirmation of this (Manieri, 2009). The message in security policies is clear: those who want to enter the country are enemies of the nation – albeit unarmed enemies, vulnerable, hungry and sometimes underage. Yet they are enemies: communists (in the Cold War); terrorists (after 9/11); job thieves (in times of economic and financial crisis); and disease vectors (during the pandemic). These stigmas impact not only on those who try to enter, but also on non-nationals who are already present and reside in the territory. The war hysteria, of which Morin (2023) speaks, seems present also in the war against migrant and refugee enemies (*anti-immigrant hysteria*), with all the implications – presented above – that this entails. The growing indifference to the deaths, violence and suffering of migrants is perhaps the most striking proof.

### **Against war hysteria**

Today, as in the past, there are serious injustices and violence that require firm responses. People are attacked and raped by armies or paramilitary groups. Sometimes it is necessary to choose the lesser evil. This applies to the choice of ways to resolve armed conflicts and to the negotiation of diplomatic peace agreements. Still, any “violent” response (including building walls) entails war hysteria and feeds the spiral of violence with all the consequences. Some immediate positive results may, in the medium and long term, pave the way for serious harm. When choosing the lesser evil, it is necessary to clarify whether it is a lesser evil and, above all, for whom is it a lesser evil: for the populations involved, for the interests of the oligarchies, for the “homeland” or for “other

homelands”? And above all, we must ask ourselves: do we remain “human” by legitimizing violence or the murder – by action or omission – of other humans?

The option for *non-violence* – not for religious or ideological reasons, but for the historical memory of the perverse dynamics of the spiral of violence – aims to minimize the use of violent resources, keeping the focus of the conflict on the object in dispute and not on the growing antagonism between the opponents (Sémelin, 1985). And, above all, in periods of “non-war”, it is a preventive option for confronting abuses and violations of the rights of individuals, peoples and even the planet earth which, as we have stated, are the fertile ground for the emergence of future armed conflicts.

### **The contributions of the dossier**

The first article of the dossier, written by *Ivana Belén Ruiz-Estramil*, focuses on the immigration policies of the European Union in relation to asylum seekers, specifically focusing on the New Pact on Migration and Asylum and the policy of outsourcing border controls. According to the author, there is a clear tendency to limit access to asylum and refuge, making entry difficult and, above all, outsourcing the responsibility for controlling and containing displacement. It is a policy that affects all asylum seekers, including those fleeing armed conflict or widespread human rights violations. The EU wants to reduce asylum seekers, but without losing the symbolic capital of a region committed to international standards of protection and defense of human rights. In reality, the policies have a clear Euro and ethnocentric bias, downplaying the causes of forced displacement – including the responsibilities of EU countries – and aiming to control the effects with the “co-responsibility” of third countries. It needs to be recognized this is not just an EU policy. But it is symptomatic that the region that historically suffered most from the tragedies of World War II has today erected a veritable fortress against those fleeing armed conflict, at least those fleeing from the Global South.

Always focusing on the theme of migration policies, especially regarding the reception and citizen insertion of refugees, *Diana Ortiz* and *Mauricio Viloria* look at the management and responses to forced migration within the Latin American continent, based on evaluating the Brazil Action Plan (2014-2024), with a specific, but not exclusive, focus on the forced displacement of Colombians. The text highlights the weakness of the gold-plating responses, hampered by the pandemic and the intense Venezuelan displacement. Among the reflections of the text that most contribute to the theme of the dossier, it is worth highlighting the importance of “listening” to the subjects displaced because of armed conflicts: the invisibility of these people “leaves out a fundamental voice in the diagnosis, in the formulation of recommendations and marginalizes their processes in the construction of responses and alternatives” (translated by the author), especially

regarding the complex and multifaceted process of insertion in the new territory, which implies access to education, health, food, housing, work, among others.

Organized civil society can also contribute to the process. The article by *Luan do Nascimento Silva* reflects on the work of *Payasos Sin Fronteras* (PSF), an organization born in Spain and today present in numerous countries with the aim of “offering joy and laughter to alleviate the suffering of all people, especially children, living in crisis areas, including refugee camps, conflict zones and territories in emergency situations”. The text highlights the potential of playfulness, laughter and tragicomedy as ways of rebuilding and strengthening hope, especially when this action is complemented by specific psychotherapeutic paths. Specifically, I would like to highlight the “subversive” potential of the comic, both as a critique of security policies and as a way to “consider” and value children as subjects.

This concern with the agency of people fleeing armed conflicts, already present in the two previous texts, is specifically developed by *Irene Tuzi*, who focuses on an aspect little explored in refugee research: emotional and sexual intimacy, or rather, how forced displacement interferes with the intimacy of fleeing families. The author focuses on research carried out in Lebanon, between 2017 and 2019, with Syrian families. In this specific case, the “space” of intimacy is deeply affected by the extreme precariousness of the Syrian family’s home: a tent, a single environment, five people. The agency of this couple allows, through the modification of the physical space of the tent, the reconstruction, albeit partial, of intimate relationships. The text, in addition to the strategies for overcoming the adversities of refugee subjects, refers us to the difficulty of managing “survival” in refugee camps or other “emergency” spaces.

Staying within the scope of the forced displacement of Syrians, *Gabriela Vió Valle*, *Mariana Bonomo* and *Julia Alves Brasil* focus on the reception and insertion of Syrian refugees in Brazil. The research focuses specifically on interpersonal relationships, work, religion and the experience of discrimination. Among the aspects most related to the dossier is the interruption of family relationships because of the conflict, an interruption only partially mitigated by online contacts. According to the authors, this relational dimension is only partly compensated by the friendship or love relationships built in Brazil. Because they are fleeing a war and are Muslims, Syrian refugees come with stigmas. Paradoxically, people who are victims of war or who have had their own country repeatedly bombed end up “passing” for “suicide bombers”. This is further evidence of the stigmatization suffered by refugees fleeing armed conflict.

*María Margarita Echeverry Buriticá* and *Carolina Morales Arias* analyze and systematize the process of implementation of the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition in Colombia in exile, that is, with

Colombians who fled abroad because of the armed conflict. I would like to highlight three points of the text: the recognition of exile as a violation of human rights and, above all, the recognition of exiled people as victims of the armed conflict, overcoming their invisibility; the creation, through the Commission, of networks of trust and a narrative/testimonial process as a way of repairing the fractures – subjective, interpersonal and social – generated by the conflict; exiled people as subjects and agents of transformation for the peace process in Colombia. The article basically points out the seriousness and persistence of the violations produced by the conflict and the complexity and challenges of a reparative process.

The last article in the dossier focuses on one of the most recent conflicts: the flight of Ukrainians. *Elisa de Carvalho*, *Klarissa Valero Ribeiro Saes* and *Maria Lucia Figueiredo Gomes de Meza* reflect on the Ukrainian Scientists Reception Program, promoted by universities in the state of Paraná, in southern Brazil. The text aims to deepen hosting Ukrainian academics, focusing mainly on the motivations of universities and scientists, as well as the resulting externalizations. Universities gain from hosting by internationalization, diversification of the teaching staff, intercultural dialogue and the formation of partnerships; Ukrainian academics receive security, continuity in their work, knowledge of a new culture and, above all, the possibility of witnessing the drama experienced and thus contributing to the end of the conflict. This deserves to be deepened and repeated in other places and contexts, including the post-war reconstruction of the Ukrainian country.

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In the “Articles” section, the text by *Mohammed ElHajji* and *João Paulo Rossini Teixeira Coelho* examines, from a communication theory perspective, the role of *philia* in the integration of migrants and in the success of their migratory projects. The research was conducted in a language school in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, with migrants who constitute the teaching staff. The study aims, among other aspects, to reconsider the criteria for evaluating integrative processes, taking into account the relational issue, *philia*, intersubjective exchange and intercultural communication.

*Pedro Henrique Conte Gil* and *Adolfo Pizzinato* address the psychosocial experiences of Haitian migration in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. The authors take a perspective that seeks to link race, ethnicity, gender, and age, in order to expand understanding of the psychosocial experiences of migrants. The analysis of the research data highlighted important themes to understand the processes experienced by these migrants. We highlight gender issue and the lack of support networks, especially for women, in addition to experiences of racial xenophobia.

Though the challenges faced by Haitian migrants in Chile, *Cristián Felipe Orrego Rivera* analyzes how religion, in this case voodoo, is used by migrants as a form of protection and as an element capable to promote community relations, despite the stigma and prejudice faced by practitioners. The author provides us with elements to understand voodoo far beyond the religious vision as part of a Haitian cosmology and shows that Haitians in the diaspora can activate Pentecostal networks and voodoo entities to improve their living conditions in the host society.

Based on the analysis of the novel “O Quinze” by the modernist author Raquel de Queiroz, *Mariana Augusto Bandeira* and *Matheus Silva Vieira* have attempted to use critical legal theory to lead a discussion, mixing historical facts and a legal theoretical perspective on the drought that devastated Ceará in the 1930s and the forced migration of the rural poor population to the concentration camps established by the government. The text emphasizes the importance of preserving the memory of these “camps” in Ceará, not only for historical reasons, but specially to understand and question the current establishment of “camps” for migrants and refugees.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated social inequalities, especially among the most vulnerable groups, such as migrants, a population considered in the study by *Mariá Lanzotti Sampaio*, *Alexandra Cristina Gomes de Almeida*, *Cássio Silveira*, *Regina Yoshie Matsue* and *Denise Martin*. This study is the result of a bibliographical survey and shows, through the articles analyzed, that the migrant population faces difficulties in health protection and health care, discrimination and xenophobia, and forced immobility as a result of the closure of borders. The article sought to highlight a possible intersection between the COVID-19 pandemic and the specific condition of being a foreigner, underlining the suffering and structures of violence and the production of inequality.

In their article, *Sylvia Contreras-Salinas* and *Mónica Ramírez-Pavelic* present some insights from migrant women in Chile regarding the education and upbringing of their children. The research lists three tropes that illustrate this knowledge: “that the children learn that things cost”, “know how to behave”, “one raises one’s children so that they do not feel less than anyone else” (translated by the author). Based on these three tropes, the authors analyze the cultural premises that determine the practices of education, creation, and learning, as well as the tensions that these processes generate through the experience of being a migrant.

In the article by *Alex Guedes Brum*, Turkey’s interest in creating policies to connect the emigrant diaspora in the period from 2003 to 2014, during the government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, is addressed. The author analyzes the issue considering a holistic approach that combines national,

transnational and international factors. The article concludes that the coming to power of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) in Turkey has changed the state's perception of the diaspora, which is now seen as an opportunity for growth and lobbying to promote the country's accession to the European Union.

*Lady Junek Vargas León's review of the book, Movilidades extracontinentales. Personas de origen africano y asiático en tránsito por la frontera sur de México, written by Jaime Horacio Cinta Cruz, closes the issue.*

We wish you all a good reading!

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