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YOUNG WRITERS FOR WORLD ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

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WATER, POWER, AND PEACE:

**THE GERD AND THE FUTURE
OF NILE DIPLOMACY**

FIGHTING AN INVISIBLE WAR:

**THE TRUTH BURIED
IN OUR
TECHNOLOGY**



**FEATURING STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON DIPLOMACY, TECHNOLOGY,
CONFLICT, RESOURCES AND GLOBAL COOPERATION.**

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PEACE AND POWER: WHAT ANIMAL FARM
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PARLARE DI GUERRA PER PARLARE DI PACE

DI DOMENICO DE VINCENZO

«Si svuotino gli arsenali di guerra, sorgente di morte, si colmino i granai, sorgente di vita»

– Sandro Pertini, Discorso di insediamento alla Presidenza della Repubblica, 1978

"You'd best go home and make them stop this war."

– Hayao Miyazaki, Howl's Moving Castle, 2004

Guerre, conflitti, arene digitali: analizzare le logiche della guerra ci permette di costruire un pensiero di pace.

Talking about war to talk about peace

Wars, conflicts, digital arenas: analyzing the logic of war allows us to build a vision of peace.

Despite the denunciations of renowned artists, such as Bertolt Brecht's play *Mother Courage and Her Children* and Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator*, both exposing the absurdity and brutality of war, and despite the disastrous consequences of the Second World War, the number of wars worldwide continued to rise for four decades after 1946. Only with the end of the Cold War did a temporary decline occur, followed by a renewed and accelerating resurgence of conflicts over the past two decades, reaching historic highs. Contemporary wars suffer from selective visibility: conflicts near Europe, U.S. military interventions, and the Israeli-Palestinian crisis dominate global media, while equally devastating wars in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Myanmar, as well as structural conflicts between multinational corporations and local communities over land and resources (land grabbing), remain largely overlooked. The concept of war extends to the digital sphere, where online hostility and incitement to violence constitute a new and still underexplored battlefield. Peace, in turn, emerges not simply as the absence of war, but as a fragile construct requiring consensus and mutual respect.

Alla vigilia della Seconda Guerra Mondiale, il drammaturgo tedesco Bertolt Brecht scrive *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* (Madre Coraggio e i suoi figli) (1939). Negli stessi anni (1938), Charlie Chaplin scriveva la sceneggiatura del suo film *The Great Dictator* (uscito nelle sale cinematografiche nel 1940).

Queste due opere ci raccontano la drammaticità della guerra alle porte, toccando diversi tasti espressivi. Il dramma di Brecht è una cruda denuncia degli orrori della guerra. Le

vicende si svolgono durante la Guerra dei Trent'anni (1618-1648) e la protagonista è Anna Fierling (chiamata "Madre Coraggio"), una donna che segue gli eserciti, per vendere la propria merce ai soldati, a qualunque fazione essi appartengano. Nonostante Madre Coraggio subisca una tragica sorte, perderà infatti i suoi tre figli a causa della guerra, Brecht condanna il suo comportamento e ricorre a particolari tecniche drammaturgiche per non suscitare empatia nei suoi

confronti, evitando che diventi un antieroe positivo; lo scopo è quello di spingere gli spettatori a provare sdegno per Anna Fierling, uno sdegno in grado di spazzare via le iniquità della guerra (Lupi, 1965, p. 40). Il film di Chaplin adotta invece anche un tono comico per sottolineare la tragicità e i soprusi della guerra, intrapresa per soddisfare il desiderio di diventare l'imperatore del mondo di un vanitoso dittatore (una chiara parodia di Hitler). È diventata iconica la sua danza con la Terra: un palloncino con cui giocare, ma che poi gli scoppia tra le mani [1]. Una serie di avvenimenti fortunosi porterà allo scambio di persona tra il dittatore e un barbiere ebreo (entrambi interpretati da Charlie Chaplin). Il barbiere ebreo, nelle vesti del dittatore, in un accorato discorso alla fine del film, mostrerà l'assurdità della guerra con queste parole: «In this world there is room for everyone [...]. The way of life can be free and beautiful, but we have lost the way. Greed has poisoned men's souls, has barricaded the world with hate, has goose-stepped us into misery and bloodshed. We have developed speed, but we have shut ourselves in. Machinery that gives abundance has left us in want. Our knowledge has made us cynical. Our cleverness, hard and unkind. We think too much and feel too little» [2].

Nonostante la tragica esperienza della Seconda Guerra Mondiale (oltre 60 milioni di morti), dal 1946 il numero di conflitti nel mondo ha ripreso a crescere per 40 anni. È solo dopo la

fine della «Guerra fredda», dal 1990 al 2012, che si registra un'inversione di tendenza (fig. 1). Ciò ha fatto sperare di poter raggiungere il traguardo di un mondo pacificato. Uno dei momenti che, a mio parere, ha rappresentato emblematicamente questa speranza è la Conferenza delle Nazioni Unite sull'Ambiente e lo Sviluppo tenutasi a Rio de Janeiro nel 1992, nota come Rio Earth Summit. In quell'occasione, 172 paesi (e 108 capi di Stato) espressero la volontà di intraprendere un percorso comune sui temi dell'ambiente, della povertà e delle risorse, firmando, tra le altre cose, la UNFCCC (United Nations Convention on Climate Change), che ha permesso di avviare un'azione globale per la mitigazione del cambiamento climatico.

Al contrario, dopo vent'anni da quell'avvenimento, si è registrata una nuova tendenza di crescita dei conflitti che, negli ultimi anni, ha raggiunto un picco storico (Ferrario, 2026).

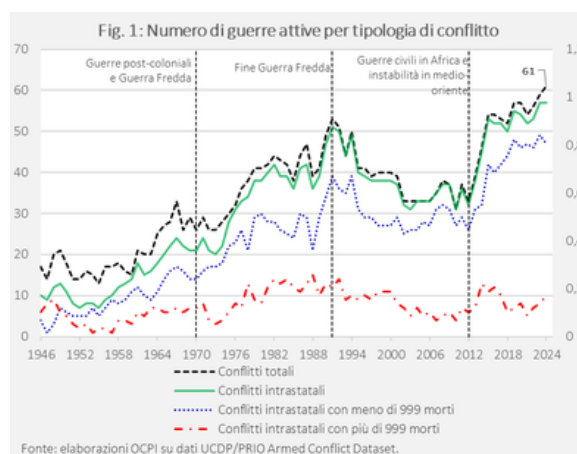


Fig. 1 – Numero di guerre attive per tipologia di conflitto, dal 1946 al 2024 (fonte: Ferrario, 2026)

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJOUOYQMHJ8>

2. «IN QUESTO MONDO C'È POSTO PER TUTTI [...]. LA VITA PUÒ ESSERE LIBERA E MERAVIGLIOSA, MA ABBIAMO SMARRITO LA STRADA. L'AVIDITÀ HA AVVELENATO LE ANIME DEGLI UOMINI, HA BARRICATO IL MONDO CON L'ODIO, CI HA TRASCINATI A PASSO D'OCA NELLA MISERIA E NELLO SPARGIMENTO DI SANGUE. ABBIAMO SVILUPPATO LA VELOCITÀ, MA CI SIAMO CHIUSI IN NOI STESSI. LE MACCHINE CHE DANNO ABBONDANZA CI HANNO LASCIATO NEL BISOGNO. LA NOSTRA CONOSCENZA CI HA RESI CINICI. LA NOSTRA INTELLIGENZA, DURA E CRUDELE. PENSIAMO TROPPO E SENTIAMO POCO».

Ci ritroviamo, quindi, a parlare ancora e ancora di guerra. Sempre più spesso scopriamo “madrì coraggio” che fanno affari con la guerra, pur mandando a morire i propri figli, e “grandi dittatori” che utilizzano la guerra come proiezione del proprio ego e come puntello per mantenere in piedi il proprio potere. E scopriamo che ci sono guerre famose e guerre dimenticate. Una guerra alle porte dell’Europa non può che attrarre l’interesse globale; un inatteso attacco militare degli Stati Uniti non può non catalizzare l’attenzione internazionale; un crudele sterminio di civili in Israele e la cruenta, sproporzionata risposta finiscono sui media di tutto il mondo. Le guerre e guerriglie che si combattono in Sudan, nella Repubblica Democratica del Congo, in Myanmar, al contrario, non le racconta nessuno (Neri, 2026). Come sono in pochi a raccontare i conflitti che nascono tra le multinazionali del petrolio o dell’agribusiness e le popolazioni locali, che vendono private dei loro diritti e della loro terra (land grabbing) per estrarre petrolio o produrre olio di palma (Martinez Allier, 2009; Early, 2025). E poi ci sono le “altre guerre”, come quelle che hanno per arena gli spazi digitali. E non sono solo guerre di

parole, di hater, di “leoni da tastiera” che insultano, minacciano, giudicano dall’alto del loro anonimato. Sono anche produzione di violenza, per istigare alla violenza. Io, personalmente, ho abbandonato tutti i social diversi anni fa. Di tanto in tanto, do un’occhiata a X, lo specchio di questo mondo che sente poco (e pensa poco!), dove i post di tendenza sono quelli di gente che prende a pugni altra gente.

Parlare di guerra, è evidente, resta un modo per parlare di pace, del bisogno di pace. Un mondo che non ha mai smesso di essere lacerato dai conflitti impone una riflessione su di essi. Questi e altri sono i temi emersi dagli articoli di questo primo numero monografico del CLEC Magazine, che trattano di guerre combattute con le armi e di guerre digitali, per il controllo delle risorse o per soddisfare le proprie ambizioni. In questi articoli si intuisce anche che la pace non è semplicemente l’assenza di guerra e che, la pace, se non costruita sul consenso e sul rispetto degli altri, non può che essere fragile.

Ringrazio Eyael, Gianmarco, Giovanni, Niloufar, Nolawit e Yihdego per aver raccolto la proposta della Redazione di CLEC Magazine di scrivere sulla guerra per parlare di pace.

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WATER, POWER, AND PEACE: THE GERD AND THE FUTURE OF NILE DIPLOMACY

BY BEEMNET ADEM YIHDEGO

The Blue Nile, which originates in Ethiopia and contributes 85% of the Nile's total flow, has long been one of Africa's most valued resources. For centuries, downstream nations, particularly Egypt and Sudan, have built their civilizations, agriculture, and national identities around its waters. The completion of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) in 2025 has drastically changed and triggered one of the most consequential geopolitical disputes on the African continent. This article will discuss the inflamed tensions that GERD has created between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt and presents a rare and historic opportunity to build a durable framework for cooperative water governance and lasting regional and continental peace.

A Renaissance dam born from necessity. Ethiopia is a home to over 130 million people, the second most populous nation in Africa. For decades, the country has faced a severe electricity deficit. More than half of its population has historically lacked access to reliable power, constraining economic growth, healthcare, and education. Constructed on the Blue Nile in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region, approximately 700 kilometers northwest of Addis Ababa, the capital city, the Gerd was conceived as a transformative solution. With a generation capacity of 5,150 megawatts and a reservoir holding up to 74 billion cubic meters of water, it is the largest dam ever built, employing over 25,000 workers, 95% of whom were Ethiopian nationals, creating jobs, transferring technical skills, and symbolizing a moment of national self-determination. The dam was formally inaugurated in September 2025, marking the end of



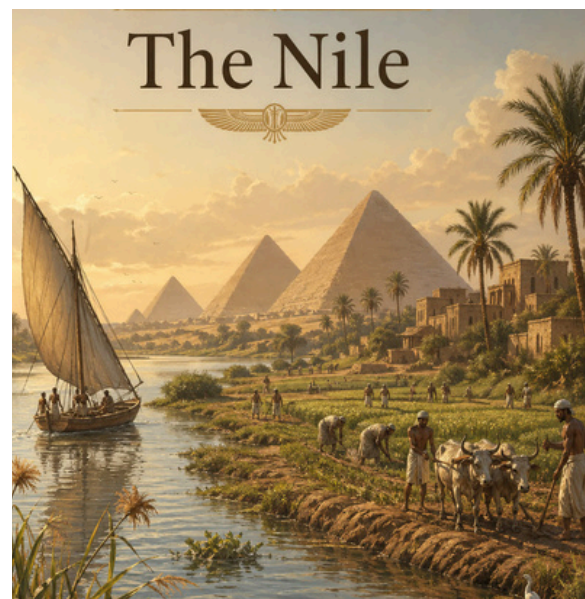
a decade-long construction phase. The geopolitical fault lines. Egypt and Sudan have watched the dam's construction with deep alarm. Egypt, which relies on the Nile for more than 90% of its freshwater supply, considers any reduction in downstream flow an existential threat. Under the 1950 Nile Waters Agreement, a colonial-era treaty that granted Egypt and Sudan exclusive rights to the river's flow while excluding upstream nations entirely.

Egypt receives 55.5 billion cubic meters annually, and Sudan 18.5 billion. Ethiopia, along with the seven other upstream riparian states, received nothing. The GERD directly challenges this legal framework, and Egypt has repeatedly called on the international community, including the United Nations Security Council, to intervene. Sudan's position has been more multifaceted. While Khartoum initially shared Cairo's concerns, Sudanese officials have increasingly acknowledged potential benefits of the dam, which regulates seasonal flooding that has historically devastated Sudanese farmland and could provide Sudan with affordable electricity. This shift in Sudan's policy emphasized that the conflict is not simply bilateral, and that the interests of the three nations, though deeply tied, are not uniformly opposed.

The case for cooperative peace. Ethiopia has consistently maintained that the GERD is not a weapon of water war, but a development project calculated to minimize harm to downstream neighbors. Ethiopian officials have repeatedly stated their commitment to gradually filling the reservoir in a manner that limits disruption to downstream flows and have proposed joint monitoring mechanisms to ensure transparency. The African Union has led multiple rounds of negotiations between the three countries, reflecting a broader continental preference for Africa-led solutions to African disputes.

Scholars of environmental

peacebuilding debate that shared water resources, rather than inevitably producing conflict, can serve as platforms for institutional cooperation. The Nile Basin Initiative, established in 1999 and now encompassing all 11 riparian states, provides an existing framework for negotiation. A successful agreement on the GERD would not only defuse one of Africa's most volatile disputes, but it could also serve as a model for transboundary resource governance across a continent increasingly vulnerable to climate-driven water scarcity.



What peace requires. A reliable resolution will require all three parties to move beyond zero-sum thinking. For Ethiopia, this means accepting binding commitments on filling schedules and drought year protocols, a concession that touches on national sovereignty but is essential for regional trust.

For Egypt, it means accepting that

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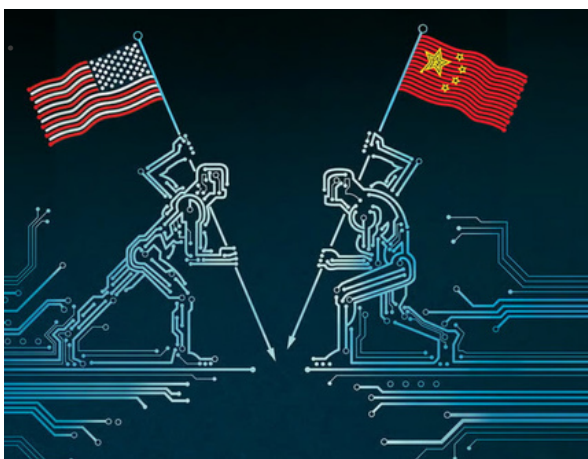
the 1959 treaty is legally and morally untenable in a geopolitical Nile basin, and that Ethiopia's development aspirations are legitimate. For Sudan, it means playing an active mediation role rather than a passive one, leveraging its geographic position between the two primary arguments. Crucially, peace along the Nile also requires investment in water efficiency across the basin. Egypt loses a significant proportion of its Nile allocation to evaporation from the Aswan High Dam reservoir and to inefficient flood irrigation. A regional agreement that pairs GERD governance with water-efficiency programs could expand the effective supply available to all parties, transforming a perceived conflict over scarcity into a collaboration of abundance.

The GERD is simultaneously a feat of African engineering, a source of regional anxiety, and a test of the continent's capacity for diplomacy. The geopolitics of the Nile needs to be a story of inevitable conflict. History offers examples of nations that transformed shared rivers from sources of war into bonds of cooperation, such as the Indus Waters Treaty between India and Pakistan, negotiated amid bitter hostility in 1960, lasting for over six decades. The Nile basin nations have the institutions, the incentives, and ultimately the shared interest in stability to establish a comparable agreement. Whether they seize that opportunity will define not only the future of the Nile, but the credibility of African led peacebuilding for a generation.

GEOPOLITICA DELLE RISORSE: L'ANATOMIA DELLA NUOVA GUERRA FREDDA TECNOLOGICA

DI GIANMARCO BUONO

La sovranità del XXI secolo è al centro di una nuova guerra fredda tecnologica tra Washington e Pechino, combattuta non con eserciti ma attraverso il controllo delle catene di approvvigionamento. Dallo scontro per le terre rare in Groenlandia alla difesa dei microchip di Taiwan, fino al dominio delle infrastrutture sottomarine, l'interdipendenza economica si è trasformata in un'arma strategica. In questo scenario precario, sanzioni e blocchi tecnologici sostituiscono i bombardamenti, rendendo l'autonomia industriale l'unica garanzia di sopravvivenza per evitare che la competizione sulle risorse scateni un conflitto reale.



Non servono trincee per ridisegnare gli equilibri globali: la sovranità del XXI secolo si gioca sul controllo delle materie prime critiche, sulla supremazia dei semiconduttori e sulle infrastrutture sottomarine. Osservando un comune smartphone, raramente percepiamo la complessità geopolitica che esso racchiude. La sua accensione dipende da minerali estratti in miniere remote; l'elaborazione delle informazioni, sfrutta semiconduttori nanometrici di precisione; nella connessione alla rete globale, i suoi dati viaggiano attraverso cavi sottomarini transoceanici. Questo

dispositivo non è un semplice oggetto di consumo, ma la sintesi del conflitto strategico più rilevante del nostro tempo. Viviamo in un'era di "interdipendenza armata", dove la fanno da protagonisti Washington e Pechino che si fronteggiano non sul campo di battaglia, ma attraverso il controllo delle catene di approvvigionamento. Chi domina la tecnologia, infatti, non controlla solo l'economia futura, ma detiene anche le chiavi della stabilità internazionale. Alla base della piramide tecnologica vi sono le Terre rare (Rare Earth Elements), 17 elementi chimici indispensabili per la transizione ecologica e digitale, dai magneti per le turbine eoliche ai sistemi di guida missilistica. Attualmente, la Cina detiene un quasi-monopolio in questo settore, controllando circa il 90% della capacità di raffinazione globale. Pechino ha compreso con decenni di anticipo che trasformarsi nella "miniera del mondo" avrebbe garantito un potere negoziale senza

precedenti: la possibilità di interrompere le forniture vitali per l'industria occidentale. È in questo contesto che emerge un nuovo, inaspettato fronte geopolitico: la Groenlandia. Con lo scioglimento dei ghiacci dovuto al cambiamento climatico, i giacimenti di terre rare tra i più vasti al mondo (come il sito di Kvanefjeld) sono diventati più accessibili. La Groenlandia è diventata così oggetto di una contesa silenziosa: da un lato la Cina, interessata agli investimenti minerari per consolidare il proprio predominio; dall'altro gli Stati Uniti e l'Europa, che vedono nell'Artico l'unica speranza per spezzare la dipendenza strategica dal Dragone e diversificare le forniture.

Se le terre rare costituiscono la materia, i microchip rappresentano l'intelligenza. In questo ambito, la sicurezza globale dipende da un unico "collo di bottiglia": Taiwan. L'isola produce oltre il 90% di quelli più avanzati (sotto i 10 nanometri) grazie alla fonderia TSMC. Taiwan è protetta da quello che gli analisti definiscono "Silicon Shield": la sua indispensabilità rende un'invasione militare cinese estremamente rischiosa, poiché distruggere le fabbriche significherebbe far collassare l'economia globale, inclusa quella cinese.

Tuttavia, la tensione rimane altissima. Infine, vi è la questione dell'infrastruttura fisica della rete. contrariamente all'idea di un internet "etereo", il 99% del traffico dati

globale viaggia su cavi in fibra ottica adagiati sui fondali oceanici. Qui si consuma uno scontro per la "sovranità digitale". In Africa e nel Sud-Est asiatico, assistiamo a una nuova forma di influenza che potremmo definire "colonialismo digitale". Attraverso la "Via della Seta Digitale", aziende cinesi costruiscono e finanziano l'infrastruttura internet dei paesi emergenti, ottenendo in cambio un potenziale accesso ai flussi di dati e un'influenza politica a lungo termine. Parallelamente, le "Big Tech" americane (Google, Meta, Amazon) sono diventate proprietarie dirette di vasti tratti di cavi oceanici, accumulando un potere economico e infrastrutturale superiore a quello di molti stati nazionali. Per un paese in via di sviluppo, affidare le proprie comunicazioni a queste entità significa, di fatto, rinunciare a una parte della propria indipendenza.

In questo scenario frammentato, il concetto stesso di "pace" va ridefinito. Non siamo di fronte a una cooperazione globale, ma a una precaria strategia di deterrenza, in cui le sanzioni commerciali e i blocchi tecnologici sostituiscono i bombardamenti. La stabilità del XXI



secolo si regge su un equilibrio fragilissimo: in un mondo interconnesso, interrompere il flusso di un minerale dalla Groenlandia o di un chip da Taiwan può generare danni paragonabili a quelli di un conflitto l

armato. La vera sfida per il futuro sarà costruire un'autonomia strategica che non si trasformi in isolamento, evitando che la competizione tecnologica diventi l'innescò della prossima guerra reale.

FIGHTING AN INVISIBLE WAR: THE TRUTH BURIED IN OUR TECHNOLOGY

BY NILOUFAR CHERAGHNOORANI

In the past, battles were visible. Soldiers wore armor, carried weapons, and knew who their enemies were. Today, some of the most significant conflicts are far less obvious. They are hidden within the products people use every day, including smartphones that have become essential to modern life. Behind these devices lies a complex story of mineral extraction, dangerous labor conditions, and global supply chains shaped by powerful economic and political interests.

The story begins in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a key source of minerals essential to smartphone production. One of the most important mining sites is the Rubaya coltan mines, which provide a significant share of the world's supply. According to a Reuters investigation, Rubaya produces around 15% of the world's coltan, much of it manually extracted by impoverished local workers who earn only a few dollars per day. The region has also become a focal point of conflict. Reuters reports that the area was seized in April 2024 by M23, a rebel group that the United Nations says has exploited the mine's resources to help finance its insurgency. While these minerals are critical to modern technology, their extraction reveals a far more troubling reality.



The human cost of this industry is particularly severe. Reports have documented children working long hours in hazardous mining conditions, carrying heavy loads for little pay. Investigations indicate that children may work up to 12 hours a day and earn only one or two dollars daily. UNICEF estimates that approximately 40,000 children work in mines across southern DRC. The personal experiences of these children highlight the harsh reality behind these statistics. As one report notes, Paul, a 14-year-old orphan working in a cobalt mine, described spending 24 hours at a time in underground tunnels before emerging the following morning. These conditions demonstrate the devastating consequences associated with the extraction of materials used in modern electronics.

The impact of these mining operations extends beyond labor conditions. Once minerals leave the mines, they enter a global supply chain that is often difficult to trace.

Human rights advocates have long criticized the lack of transparency surrounding the sourcing of raw materials used in advanced technology products. Emmanuel Umpula, executive director of Afreewatch, described this as a major paradox of the digital era, noting that some of the world's most innovative companies can market sophisticated devices without being required to fully disclose the origins of the materials used in their components. This lack of transparency also carries significant geopolitical consequences. United Nations experts have documented how minerals extracted in the DRC are smuggled across borders and mixed with legally exported materials, making their origins difficult to identify. According to UN findings cited by Reuters, armed groups benefit financially from this trade. The report states that M23 was collecting approximately \$800,000 per month from taxes associated with coltan mining in eastern DRC during 2024. As a result, the minerals that power everyday devices are closely connected to regional conflict and provide a source of revenue for armed actors. By the time a smartphone reaches a consumer, it has passed through a network shaped by human labor, armed conflict, and corporate interests. Each device carries a story that extends far beyond its sleek design and technological capabilities. The minerals inside modern electronics reveal the hidden



complexity of global supply chains, the human suffering that can accompany resource extraction, and the geopolitical forces operating behind the screens people use every day.

Understanding these realities does not change the importance of technology in modern life. It does, however, encourage a deeper awareness of the unseen human stories connected to the devices we often take for granted. What appears to be a simple tool of convenience may also be a reminder that some of the world's most significant struggles remain hidden in plain sight.

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THE ILLUSION OF PEACE IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

BY EYAEL NIGUSSU GUDETA

Social media creates an illusion of peace by masking psychological tensions. Rather than fostering understanding, digital platforms promote polarization, comparison, and emotional manipulation, redefining conflict in modern society.

We live in the most connected era in history, where social media allows individuals across the world to communicate instantly and share experiences in real time. This constant connectivity often creates the impression of a more open and peaceful global society, where dialogue and understanding can easily flourish. However, beneath this appearance of harmony, social media frequently increases fear, anger, and division. Rather than reducing conflict, digital platforms often encourage comparison, polarization, and emotional manipulation, shaping how individuals perceive others and themselves. In this sense, conflict has not disappeared but has shifted into psychological and social spaces, raising an important question: can peace truly exist when tension and instability are embedded in our everyday digital interactions?

Social media platforms are not neutral spaces; they are designed to capture attention and influence behavior. From a psychological perspective, they rely heavily on basic human needs such as validation, belonging, and recognition (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Twenge & Campbell, 2019).

Likes, shares, and comments act as

instant feedback mechanisms, encouraging users to seek approval and compare themselves with others. Over time, this constant comparison can lead to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and frustration, even in the absence of any direct confrontation (Vogel et al., 2014). At the same time, emotionally charged content tends to spread more quickly than calm or balanced discussions. Anger, fear, and outrage often receive greater visibility, reinforcing negative emotions and shaping how individuals interpret social and political issues. As users are repeatedly exposed to similar viewpoints, digital echo chambers emerge, limiting open dialogue and strengthening “us versus them” mentalities.



WITNESSING GAZA FROM A DISTANCE: A STUDENT'S REFLECTION ON WAR AND RESPONSIBILITY

BY GIOVANNI PATRIARCA

When I was first asked to write this article about Gaza, I wondered whether it should be informative, descriptive, or empathetic. Ultimately, I opted for a combination of all three approaches. My goal is to analyze the objective realities impacting Gaza through an economic lens, while maintaining an engaging, clear, and measured tone that avoids overly emotional rhetoric.

When reading about Gaza in the news, the immediate focus is almost always on numbers: casualties, displaced families, damaged buildings, and interrupted services; official reports from the United Nations describe a territory where daily life has become completely unstable and unpredictable. Access to basic necessities like water, electricity, and healthcare remains severely limited, forcing many families to relocate multiple times in search of safety: these facts simply outline how complex and fragile the situation is for civilians.

As economics students, we understand that macroeconomic data alone cannot capture the full reality; numbers reveal what is happening, but they cannot convey how it feels to live through it; just like when you look at a country's indicators such as GDP, inflation and/or unemployment rate, but you ignore the standards of living, you only have a relative perspective of how living in that country actually is. While avoiding political bias, it is undeniable that the conflict affects ordinary people in ways that extend far beyond

statistics. Schools have closed, businesses have ceased operations, and families have lost the daily routines that provide societal structure.



From an economic perspective, the long-term impact on infrastructure, employment, and social stability is profound and will shape the region for years to come. The near-total destruction of physical capital—such as factories, commercial hubs, and agricultural fields—has effectively paralyzed local trade and production. This sudden shrink in domestic supply, combined with severe border restrictions, has triggered hyperinflation for basic survival goods, making daily life economically unviable for the average citizen. The abstract nature of the data faded

WITNESSING GAZA FROM A DISTANCE: A STUDENT'S REFLECTION ON WAR AND RESPONSABILITY”

when a Palestinian student shared his experience. He did not speak of politics, but of his family, the immense difficulty of maintaining communication with them, and the anxiety he faces every time he checks the news. His ordinary words made the crisis feel far closer and more tangible than any standard report could.

This conversation bridged naturally into a wider discussion about regional instability. During the seminar, I contributed by widening our focus to the current tensions in the Middle East, specifically concerning Iran. This is a highly relevant topic for our university, given that more than 400 Persian students belong to our community. While the geopolitical contexts of Gaza and Iran differ, the human and economic instability felt by individuals is strikingly similar. Leaving the seminar, I realized how vital it is to approach these

complex issues with balance. An economic analysis does not require dramatic language, but rather relies on clarity, context, and a human perspective. This is especially true when considering our fellow students who, despite knowing their loved ones are living through a crisis, still find the strength to dedicate themselves to their university careers abroad.

Understanding Gaza through official data allows us to grasp the scale of the economic destruction, but listening to personal stories reminds us that behind every statistic is a human life. Together, these two elements create a complete picture: one that is informative without being overwhelming, and empathetic without becoming overly emotional. A balanced article must always remain grounded in the middle, as extremes rarely provide a path to true understanding.



PEACE AND POWER: WHAT ANIMAL FARM TAUGHT ME

BY NOLAWIT BERHANU

This article reflects on how George Orwell's *Animal Farm* connects to peace in today's world. I first read the novel during the COVID-19 lockdown. Years later, while thinking about peace, power, and global issues, I found myself returning to the story. *Animal Farm* taught me that peace is not only about the absence of war. It is also about fairness, freedom, and the way power is used.

It was during the COVID-19 lockdown that I first read *Animal Farm*. The world felt uncertain. Schools were closed, the streets were quiet, and like many students, I had more time to read and think.

At that time, I saw the book as just a story about animals. Interesting, but simple.

Years later, when the topic of peace and global issues was introduced, my mind suddenly went back to that farm. I remembered the animals, their hope, their rebellion, and their disappointment. Looking at the story again, I realized it was not simple at all. Orwell was writing about power, inequality, and how easily people can lose their freedom when they stop questioning those in charge.

Animal Farm begins with a dream. The animals want freedom and equality. They believe that if they remove the human farmer, they can create a fair society where everyone is treated equally. At first, everything seems possible. There is excitement, unity, and hope for a better future. But slowly, something changes. The pigs begin to lead. Then they begin to control. Rules are adjusted.



Words are rewritten. Fear replaces discussion. By the end of the story, the famous statement "All animals are equal" becomes "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

That line stayed with me.

It helped me understand something important: power often changes gradually. It does not always arrive with force. Sometimes it grows through small changes that people accept without noticing where they are leading. When we talk about peace today, we often think about the absence of war. However, *Animal Farm* shows something different. At the end of the book, there is no battle. The farm looks calm. Yet the animals are exhausted, silent, and unequal. The

peace they live in is not real peace. It is a peace built on fear and control.

This idea feels relevant when we look at our world today. Many conflicts are no longer fought only with weapons. Some are not visible or loud, yet they can have effects similar to war. Trade restrictions, financial sanctions, and technological competition between major powers such as the United States and China represent a form of geopolitical struggle that rarely makes headlines the way bombs do, but still reshapes the lives of millions.

One of the most powerful tools the pigs use in *Animal Farm* is language itself. Squealer does not simply lie; he reframes reality. He turns fear into loyalty, confusion into dependence, and memory into doubt. The animals stop trusting what they experienced because the words around them keep shifting.

This dynamic is not limited to fiction. Modern politicians also use language to shape how citizens understand conflict and peace. When a military offensive is called a “special operation,” when economic inequality is framed as “growth,” or when surveillance is presented as “security,” the effect is similar to Squealer’s revisions: people are led to accept a version of reality that serves the powerful.

The challenge today is not finding information, but knowing which information to trust.

We live in a world where information is everywhere.

Animal Farm is also a story about how

inequality slowly becomes normal. As the pigs gain more privileges, the other animals begin to accept a system that is no longer fair. Eventually, they can hardly imagine things being different.

This mirrors the gap between wealthy and developing countries in access to technology, financial systems, and political influence. Some countries find themselves dependent on institutions and rules designed by and for more powerful states. When debt crises strike, commodity prices collapse, or climate disasters hit, the suffering is often concentrated among those with the least political voice. This is a form of inequality that Orwell’s farm would recognize: the rules were written for everyone, but they serve some far more than others. When I reread *Animal Farm*, I understood that it is much more than a story about animals. It is a warning about how power can change, how freedom can disappear, and how inequality can grow when people remain silent. For me, *Animal Farm* is a reminder that peace must be protected. It is not enough to hope for a better world. We must stay informed, think critically, and defend fairness whenever it is threatened. Peace is fragile. It can disappear slowly, one small step at a time. That is what makes Orwell’s message as important today as it was when he first wrote it.

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