CHAPTER 6

FROM STANDARDIZED TESTING TO THE WAR ON LIBYA

The Privatization of U.S. Education in International Context

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the author examines how the current domestic attack on public education flows from a historical (and uneven) international process of capitalist production and accumulation. In particular, he demonstrates how educational privatizations and the U.S. war on Libya are embedded within the same overarching logic. This internationalist analysis links up struggles for education in the United States to resistance struggles abroad, identifying, and establishing potential networks and alliances against global capital.

Understanding Neoliberal Rule in K–12 Schools, pages 95–109

INTRODUCTION

On April 15, 1986, under the orders of U.S. president Ronald Reagan 66 U.S. warplanes began a deadly bombing campaign against the independent and sovereign state of Libya, killing at least 100 civilians, including Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's adopted daughter, Hana. It was the second attack against the nation in as many months: On March 24, U.S. warships and aircraft carriers entered Libyan air and water territories and attacked Libyan patrol boats and ground targets. Both acts of war were unprovoked and, particularly in the second set of strikes (which intended to assassinate the leader of a sovereign head of state), in complete violation of international law. Reagan, of course, attempted to portray at least the April 15 bombing campaign as "retaliatory," although it was soon revealed that the entire campaign had been set in motion nine months earlier. At that time, in July of 1985, Robert MacFarland, Reagan's National Security Advisor, drew up plans for an attack and in October of that year the U.S. military ran an attack simulation. This hostile orientation toward Libya continued for decades, and culminated in a full-scale war in 2011.

Three years earlier, in April of 1983, *A Nation at Risk* was published by Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education. This report embedded the goals and purposes of education within a nationalist framework of economic and technological productivity, called for "rigorous" standards and accountability mechanisms and technologies, and placed teachers in the crosshairs of reform efforts, among other things. The report itself flowed from previous stabs at educational "reform by commission" (Ravitch, 2003). Kate Rousmaniere (1997) provides one example, when she writes that in the 1920s educational reformers sought to translate the economic management principles of Taylorism into schooling. The reports of these educational reformers "unabashedly adopted factory metaphors of scientific management to their curriculum work" (pp. 96–97), and culminated in the institution of rating schemes, which were meant to hold teachers accountable. Yet, it is the 1983 report that in many ways inaugurated the winding path of neoliberal education reform that is currently treading us today, coming as it did just after the 1978–1980 neoliberal turn.

Although separated by time and space, I believe that it is absolutely crucial to understand these two events—the attack on Libya and the publication of *A Nation at Risk*—as part of the same burgeoning global neoliberal agenda, which is to say that both of these assaults shared the same broad underlying logic and overarching goals. Indeed, they both were produced by—and productive of—a protracted war in which we are still engrossed. In this chapter, I draw out some of the explicit lines that link the U.S. war on education to the U.S. war on Libya (and its educational infrastructure). The work done in this chapter—the research surveyed, the connections

established, and the theoretical and political formulations evoked—is not so much groundbreaking as it is necessary, practical, and urgent. In other words, this chapter is directed mostly toward educational scholar-activists in the United States as a proposal for the orientation that we employ as we combat the neoliberal privatization of education on varying scales: in our classrooms and schools, conferences and offices, and in the streets. There *is* a growing and promising movement across varying sectors of society in the United States against these processes and practices, as a result of developments ranging from the imposition of top-down reforms and stifling standardizations to high-stakes testing and attacks on teachers and their unions. There are organized and wildcat boycotts of standardized tests and district-wide teachers' strikes, just to name the most obvious. Yet, this movement has thus far tended to be relatively silent on international issues. One of the primary values of the internationalist analysis that follows is that it links up struggles against the current attacks on public education in the United States to resistance struggles against imperialism abroad. Identifying and establishing these potential networks and alliances, I believe, will be crucial to strengthening global resistance to global capital in the neoliberal era.

For the sake of clarity and rigor this chapter begins by asking precisely what is meant by the term neoliberalism. I delineate two interconnected and concurrent processes of neoliberalism, one is *subjective* and the other is *economic-political*. For the purposes of the current investigation I concentrate on the latter process. After showing how this process has developed out of the capitalist mode of production in general, relying on some work done by David Harvey (2005, 2007), I turn to educational literature on neoliberalism, arguing that the neoliberal attack on public education in the United States represents a form of *internal* capital accumulation. The next part of the chapter focuses on the war on Libya, which I claim represents a form of *external* capital accumulation under the neoliberal order. I seek to situate the war within a broader historical context, which sheds light on what was at stake in the war. After establishing this connection, I conclude by reiterating the need for an internationalist perspective when engaging in the fight against the neoliberal rule in U.S. schools.

What Is This Thing Called Neoliberalism?

In a recent study, Julie Rowlands and Shaun Rawolle (2013) collected data on how the word neoliberalism (and its variants, such as neo-liberal) was utilized in peer-reviewed English-language education journal articles that contained the word neoliberalism in their titles. The purpose of the study was to determine how and, really, *if*, the term is being conceptualized within educational research. What they found was that, out of 110 articles

studied, 29 gave substantive definitions of neoliberalism (at least two paragraphs), 27 gave brief definitions (up to one paragraph), and a staggering 54 gave no definition at all. There was even one article that used "neoliberalism" in the title but nowhere in the text. Rowlands and Rawolle urge critical educational researchers to use "the word 'neoliberal' and its variants consciously (indeed, reflexively) and critically in our research" (p. 270). Taking up their call, then, I want to spend a bit of time at the outset explicitly defining the way that I am using the framework of neoliberalism in this particular essay, although that definition will continue to develop as the essay departs from this section (see also Ford, 2013).

At first blush, the term neoliberalism here refers to an ideology with a broad, evolving, and, at times, contradictory set of *strategies* and *tactics* that have been deployed in and by late industrial-capitalist societies beginning in the 1970s. Uniting these different sets is a generalized push to bring everything under (and, for that matter, beyond and including) the sun under the rule and logic of the market. Whatever was once public must now become private. Broadly speaking, this entails two corresponding processes, one *subjective* and the other *economic-political*. The process of subjectivity transformation under neoliberalism has been richly described in by educational theorists such as Michael Peters (1996; 2007), and tends to rely on the work of Michel Foucault.

Although incredibly important, and only analytically inextricable from the economic-political, it is with the latter, economic-political processes of transformation with which I am currently concerned. To describe this aspect of neoliberalism, I turn to David Harvey (2007), who writes that

> Neoliberalism is a theory of political economic practices proposing that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade. (p. 22)

The role of the state is crucial in organizing and policing the institutional framework that Harvey describes. Additionally, the state is to help *create* markets in areas where they did not formerly exist, such as, for example, in education, social security, health care, and so on. In this sense, neoliberalism is a *stage* of capitalism. Capitalism, as a social and economic system driven by the production and accumulation of (surplus) values, predicated upon the rule of private property, and maintained through the reproduction of the capital-labor relation, already seeks in general to privatize and commodify not only goods but also social relations and subjectivities (hence the inextricability of the two neoliberal processes described above). Neoliberalism is a historically specific stage of this process, meaning that objections to neoliberalism are in and of themselves objections to capitalism.

What were the historical conditions that give rise to neoliberalism? Harvey (2007) will look toward the post-World War II economic drag that culminated in the 1973 economic recession, the shortage of available oil at the time, and the capital-labor "compromise" reached in capitalist countries after 1945. Regarding this last development, Harvey is referring to the fact that, as a result of rising productivity—and capital realization—in the United States and Britain after the war, organized labor (representing primarily White workers) was able to negotiate higher shares of the values produced in the production process. Thus, there was an "*economic* threat to the position of ruling classes [that] was now becoming palpable" (p. 28). Harvey argues convincingly, I believe, that neoliberalism is not so much about capital *accumulation* as it is about *class power*—a class strategy *within* capitalism (see also Duménil & Lévy, 2004; Harvey, 2005). As Curry Mallot, Dave Hill, and Grant Banfield (2013) have demonstrated, neoliberalism did not suffer a setback with the ongoing global economic crisis that began in 2007–2008. They write that

> it is clear that the global Capitalist class has not forsaken neoliberalism as both an ideology and a class strategy of immiseration. In this way, recent financial crises (with the subsequent wholesale rescuing of banking and financial institutions via the massive transference of wealth to Capital) are *part of* the neoliberal class project. (p. 3)

The line of reasoning developed in this article helps bring out a crucial component of neoliberalism, but one that has always accompanied capitalism since its origins, which David Harvey (2005) has termed "accumulation by dispossession." This language refers to Marx's concept of primitive—or, really, *primary*—accumulation, which comprises the last part of the first volume of *Capital*.

Neoliberalism and the Internal Accumulation of (Educational) Capitals

Accumulation by dispossession refers to Marx's concept of primitive—or, really, *primary*—accumulation, which comprises the last part of the first volume of *Capital*. Marx (1967) here is taking up, and criticizing, the bourgeois political economists story of the origins of capital accumulation (hence he titles this part of the book "so-called primitive accumulation"). The "origin" story told by bourgeois political economy is as follows: Once upon a time (when, we are not exactly sure)

> there were two sorts of people: one, the diligent, intelligent, and, above all, frugal elite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in ri-

> otous living . . . Thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth, and the latter sort had at last nothing to sell except their own skins. (p. 667)

In radical contrast to this origin story, Marx demonstrates that it was actually "conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly force" (p. 668) which were the primary mechanisms through which the initial capital—and the conditions necessary for capitalist production—were produced and accumulated. There are three interrelated presuppositions on which capitalist production rests: first, a mass of people (workers) are separated from the means of subsistence (e.g., agricultural producers are expropriated from the land); second, there is a need for commodities (i.e., the creation of the market); third, there is a concentration of resources, raw and ancillary materials, and primary means of production in the hands of one class. These three components are each part of the establishment of the capital–labor class relation/antagonism. Marx here portrays primitive accumulation as something in the past, something that laid the foundation for capitalist production and accumulation and then vanished into history. Several Marxist revolutionaries and scholars, however, have done important work on *ongoing* processes of primitive accumulation. Most notably, Rosa Luxemberg (2003) in her seminar work, *The accumulation of capital*, argues that there is an organic connection between capitalist production/accumulation proper (the production of surplus-value via the exploitation of wage-labor) *and* primitive accumulation (via colonial policy, international loan systems and payments of interest, war, and so on). These represent two distinct forms of exploitation under capitalism.

In an effort to abstract this form of capital accumulation from the temporal confines of pre-capitalism, David Harvey (2005) writes of "accumulation by dispossession" He identifies this type of accumulation as a primary component of neoliberalism, and delineates four comprising features: (a) the privatization and commodification of formerly public goods, assets, and services; (b) the rise of finance capital and the deregulation of financial mechanisms of trade and accumulation; (c) the creation and management of debt crises as levers of accumulation; and (d) redistribution of values via the state (e.g., corporate welfare). In the present inquiry, I am particularly concerned with the first, third, and fourth components. The prominent role that accumulation by dispossession plays in the neoliberal era provides an important framework for linking together the U.S. war on public education and the U.S. war on Libya.

There is ample, but still burgeoning, empirical and theoretical literature describing the history and current state of neoliberal education reforms, and much of it is placed within a global context (e.g., Carr & Porfilio, 2011; McLaren, 2005; Hill, 2003; Hursh, 2007; Stern 2013). David Hursh (2007), for example, analyzes the No Child Left Behind legislation precisely as "part

of a larger shift from social democratic to neoliberal policies" (p. 493). The "social democratic" policies here are the capital–labor "compromise" briefly described in the previous section. Paul Carr and Brad Porfilio (2011) and Mark Stern (2013) turn their attention to the current Race to the Top program enacted by the Obama administration. In general, the connection between the *internal* (domestic) and *external* (international) strategies of capital accumulation are clear; as David Hursh (2007), for example, spells out: "Many of the state and federal education reforms of the past two decades therefore parallel T. [Thomas] Friedman's argument, asserting that globalization requires free market capitalism, including deregulation and privatization" (p. 499). The demands of the international global capitalist economy dictate the necessity of the reorganization of domestic education along privatized (and therefore commodified) lines.

Carr and Porfilio (2011) delineate some of the aspects of Race to the Top that correspond quite neatly with the first component of accumulation by dispossession: privatization and commodification. First, the program facilitates the expansion of charter schools by encouraging states to remove or raise caps on charter schools. The authors note, "New York State passed a law specifically to increase the amount of charter schools in the state, which gave them a better chance to net federal dollars" (p. 11). Charter schools, of course, allow for corporations and wealthy groups of individuals to capture federal and state moneys destined for education through both operating the school and exploiting the labor-power of non-unionized and precarious teachers and staff, but also through the production and purchase of "standardized curricula, textbooks, and test preparation materials" (p. 12). Indeed, the high-stakes test regimes that were in many ways inaugurated in the Reagan administration, and the corresponding move toward common core standards represents a huge sum of money and contracts that are up for grabs.

At this point, it should be fairly easy to see how this process of capital accumulation is heavily managed and facilitated by—and indeed, impossible without—the active intervention of the neoliberal state. Privatization, after all, is a process of legal, economic, and social transfer, and to that extent it must be backed up by an organized legal, economic, and social apparatus—one that has the means to en*force* such a transfer. The privatization process, facilitated by the state, is legitimated largely through the manufactured crisis of public education, again something that is inaugurated with the *A Nation at Risk* report—and indicated in the very title of that report. The notion that "America" is "falling behind" its competitors seems to gain more force each reiteration. This includes the 2012 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) scores that were released in December 2013. These latest PISA results were embedded within this crisis language and communicated to the U.S. public through mass media headlines. Diane

Ravitch (2013, Dec. 3) provided some much-needed historical context to this dissemination of crisis propaganda: "The U.S. has *never* been first in the world, nor even near the top, on international tests." Yet, the effectiveness of this language of crisis for mobilizing populations to accept and consent to neoliberal privatizations is staggering and immensely destructive. In the case of Libya, this language and media coverage was, I would argue, even more effective and far-reaching and, unfortunately, it went remarkably unchallenged, even—and perhaps, particularly—in the "alternative" and "progressive" media.

LIBYA AND THE *EXTERNAL* ACCUMULATION OF CAPITALS

What is problematically referred to as the "Arab Spring" began in December 2010 in Tunisia and spread quickly to Egypt, where the U.S.-client government of Hosni Mubarak was overthrown in February 2011. In light of these uprisings, when protests began in Benghazi, Libya they were greeted with some hesitation by neoliberal forces, and with some encouragement by centrist, liberal, and even purported "anti-war" forces. This leads to why the signifier "Arab Spring" is so problematic: It homogenizes unique and antagonistic movements and places an abstract equal sign between governments and nations without respect to particular social and material conditions. The importance of examining each Arab revolt in its own unique context becomes apparent when we examine the character of the Libyan uprising.

The Libyan revolt, which began in the middle of February 2011, was couched within the script of the Egyptian revolution—a "popular" and "peaceful" rebellion against a "tyrant." By this time, the U.S. government had already betrayed Hosni Mubarak, their former client in Egypt, and was thus also comfortable with this script. But the situation in Libya, they said, was more extreme: There was an impending genocide. This news was communicated almost uniformly across mainstream media outlets from Al-Jazeera to the BBC and CNN. The "brutal" "dictator" Gaddafi was supposedly getting ready to bomb the rebel stronghold of Benghazi. This crisis story laid the groundwork for the first act of war against Libya: the imposition of a "no-fly zone" on March 17. Although this action is sometimes touted as an "alternative" to war, and thus can be embraced by those who purport to be "anti-war," it is unequivocally an act of war that entails bombing and destroying airports and military bases—under the guise of "protecting civilians."

What was happening in Benghazi? Maximilan Forte's (2012) recent book, *Slouching towards Sirte* provides an excellent and comprehensive history of the U.S./NATO war on Libya, detailing in particular the falsified

claims of imperialist forces. To shed light on the actual situation in Benghazi, he quotes Ali Hashem, an Al Jazeera correspondent who was embedded with Libyan rebels: "Actually, in Libya, the beginning of the revolution . . . is when the rebels, or, let's say, the activists, at that time, occupied the barracks in Benghazi, and they went inside and took all the weapons. And then it started" (quoted in Forte, 2012, pp. 245–246). There was no mass movement; there were a series of defections from the army and police, and it was immediately an armed uprising. In fact, throughout the conflict, the largest protests that occurred took place *in support of the government.* Moreover, not only was there no mass movement, there was also no impending massacre.[1] So why were neoliberal forces so quick to jump to the aid of the Libyan "revolutionaries?"

The Historical Context of the War Against Libya

In 1884, a group of 14 emerging and established imperialist powers met in Berlin to determine the fate of Africa. A series of colonial projects were proposed by these powers, and the conference is generally seen as exacerbating the Scramble for Africa. Notably, there was no African representation at the conference. It was a watershed moment in the development of the global political and economic order that was to be struggled over throughout, and beyond, the twentieth century:

> The 1884 Conference of Berlin, more than any other single event, became emblematic of the dynamic transformation of capitalism into a system of global imperialism . . . By 1902, 90 percent of Africa's territory was under European control. African self-governance was wiped off the map in most of the continent. Only Ethiopia remained an independent state. Liberia was technically independent too, but it was in fact under the control of the United States. (Becker, 2011, March 30)

The conference, then, can be viewed as the beginning of the inter-imperialist rivalries of the first and second World Wars. As Lenin (1987) writes in 1916, "For the first time the world is completely shared out, so that in the future *only re-division* is possible; territories can only pass from one 'owner' to another, instead of passing as unknown territory to an 'owner'" (p. 227).

After the World War II, however, the international scene changed dramatically. Not only were several imperialist powers—like France, Britain, Germany, and Japan—devastated, but also the Soviet Union (which played the leading role in defeating fascism, and lost about 27 million people in the process) emerged as a leading power and, for the oppressed peoples of the world, an alternative to imperialism. These two factors contributed immensely to the wave of national liberation and socialist movements of this

time period, including the Al-Fatah revolution in Libya led by Muammar Gaddafi.

Libya suffered under colonial rule until it achieved "formal independence" in 1949. This is most often attributed to an act passed by the United Nations, but it was also no doubt attributable to sustained resistance by the Libyan people. In 1951, a monarchy was established and power was granted (by the United Nations, not Libyans) to King Idris. Britain stepped in as the neo-colonial overseer, and it as well as the United States established and maintained military and air bases in the country; "For Gaddafi and his fellow officers who led the overthrow of King Idris, the monarch had sold out Libya to foreign, imperial powers" (Forte, 2012, p. 37). Thus, within the first year of the liberation period, one of the first acts of the new government was to close all foreign military bases, including the U.S. Wheelus Air Force Base on the outskirts of Tripoli.

Although the new Jamahriya government was not socialist, it existed in antagonism with imperialism and, later, neoliberalism. The government would be defined best as "national-bourgeois," a somewhat contradictory social formation that is progressive in that it defends the formerly colonized country against imperialism and possesses nationalized social systems, but regressive in that it protects a system of class rule. Indeed, Libya under the Jamahriya government was characterized by a high standard of living.[2] As Brian Becker (2011, Aug. 22) notes,

> Because of Libya's economic policies, living standards for the population had jumped dramatically after 1969. Having a small population and substantial income from its oil production, augmented with the Gaddafi regime's far-reaching policy of social benefits, created a huge advance in the social and economic status for the population. Libya was still a class society with rich and poor, and gaps between urban and rural living standards, but illiteracy was basically wiped out, while education and health care were free and extensively accessible. By 2010, the per capita income in Libya was near the highest in Africa at $14,000 and life expectancy rose to over 77 years, according to the CIA's World Fact Book.

These radical improvements that came as a result of social spending, including free tuition through higher education, were made possible because of the state exerted tight control over oil production, and hence did not allow unrestricted foreign access, which was more than irksome to Libya's foreign colonizers. Additionally, the financial, military, and symbolic support that Libya gave to national liberation struggles across the globe was particularly threatening to imperialism and the burgeoning neoliberal order. The Jamahriya government helped the South African fight against apartheid, the Palestinian struggle against the Israeli settler-colonial state, and the Irish

Republican Army struggle against British colonialism, just to name a few. This support was instrumental to many resistance movements.

With the overthrow and collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc countries between 1989 and 1991, Libya was forced to make some economic and political concessions to the neoliberal order. Thus, there were some cutbacks in social spending and minor de-nationalizations of industry. This was the price that Libya paid to gain access to the new international political economy that was developing; international sanctions against the country were therefore eased (not necessarily lifted wholesale). Still, Libya under the Gaddafi government was never a neoliberal state; goods and services like housing, education, and healthcare were non-privatized and considered free and public. Additionally, there are signs that the neoliberal policies adopted by the Gaddafi government in the 1990s were being turned back. For example, one cable from the U.S. Embassy in Tripoli to the U.S. State Department in 2007 warned, “there has been growing evidence of Libyan resource nationalism. The regime has made a point of putting companies on notice that ‘exploitative’ behavior will not be tolerated” (U.S. Department of State, 2007/11/15). The public services and institutions that were built from nationalization policies became direct targets in the war against Libya, including schools. During the second month of the bombing campaign, for example, a NATO missile took aim at and destroyed the Libyan Down’s Syndrome Society, an elementary school that helped transition young students with Down’s Syndrome into the general public school system (Noueihed, 2011, April 30).

It is crucial to comprehend that the central Libyan government was not a monolith.[3] The retreat from neoliberal policies certainly angered factions of the government. Thus, the leading body of the rebellion—the National Transition Council—was composed of disaffected government leaders, in addition to bankers, lawyers, and the Libyan bourgeoisie. This is why the global leaders of the neoliberal order were so quick to jump to the defense of the uprising: They saw in the protests (and most importantly, the leadership), international class allies. In fact, within the first few months of the war, the rebels put up a billboard that read “USA: You have a new ally in North Africa.” In May of 2011, NTC leaders travelled to Washington to meet with the U.S.-Libya Business Council, and in attendance were big oil companies, including Conoco-Phillip and BP. In September of that year, before the sovereign government had been overthrown, the United States was already working on securing business contracts: “As battles raged in Sirte . . . U.S. Ambassador Gene Cretz returned to Tripoli . . . and he immediately ‘participated in a State Department conference call with about 150 American companies hoping to do business with Libya’” (Forte, 2012, p. 61). And after U.S. and NATO forces had overthrown the government, and after Gaddafi’s brutal execution, *Libya was open for business, both for the*

accumulation and the production of capital.[4] In addition to the opening up of Libyan oil reserves for exploitation by corporations in the imperialist countries, the international capitalist market was giddy when U.S. company Cinnabon officially expanded into Libya in August of 2012, becoming the first U.S. franchise in the country (Kavilanz, 2012, Aug. 1). This was the neoliberal class strategy in Libya: a violent attack oriented toward restoring the power of the international neoliberal bourgeoisie, which sovereign Libya threatened both materially and symbolically.

Linking Resistances, Establishing Allies

We are enduring through a period of intense reaction. We might even call it *counterrevolutionary*. To be sure, there are promising sparks of uprisings routinely occurring, flickers of protest and social movements, and sustained flames of resistance across the globe. In some parts of the world, resistance movements even hold dominant political, military, social, and economic power. But compared to the circuit of socialist and national liberation struggles that swept the world during the twentieth century, it is clear that international capital is winning. The neoliberal agenda could even still be in an infantile stage.

As we study and fight against neoliberal rule in the U.S. educational arena and elsewhere domestically, we must look abroad for allies and supporters. We must also recognize and address our relatively privileged position in an oppressing, imperialist nation. Thinking through how the current war on public education in the United States and the war on Libya are embedded within the same neoliberal logic of capital accumulation and production can address both of these pressing, practical needs. This step also entails surveying the world scene and drawing lines of demarcation and, in so doing, we might be surprised who and what forces we find on our side.

Despite facing a concerted military attack by a consortium of the most well-funded and deadly militaries, which continuously bombed Libyan cities and villages for a nine-month period, the Libyan people resisted heroically. This included both armed resistance and organized protest movements. For example, in July of 2011, as the bombing campaign was intensifying, 2 million Libyans—*about one-third of the entire population*—hit the streets of Tripoli in a protest against the bombing.[5] The line between "civilian" and "military" became increasingly blurred and, as the war progressed, obliterated. In March, as the rebels first tried to advance to the central coastal city of Sirte, they were repelled not by government forces but by armed civilians, primarily those belonging to the Warfalla tribe. In July, as NATO bombing intensified, the government distributed 1.2 million weapons to civilian volunteers, many of them women (Londono, 2011, Jul. 1).[6] Unfortunately, in

the United States there was a relative absence of an anti-war protest movement, especially when viewed in light of the massive movement against the war in Iraq.[7] Even worse, many activists, left organizations, and alternative media outlets actually supported the NATO-backed rebels, in word and in deed (see Becker & Majidi, 2013 for a sharp polemic about this).

It could be argued that the movement against the neoliberal rule in U.S. schools should focus its energy and momentum on one issue. Once we locate this trend as an internal manifestation of a global system, recognizing the tight connection between neoliberalism and imperialism, then the stakes of the struggle change. More accurately, the stakes of the struggle and the battle lines that define that struggle become sharper. The neoliberal war on U.S. public education becomes one facet in a broader neoliberal war against the public everywhere. We can then see that a victory for neoliberal imperialism in Libya is a defeat for the movement against neoliberalism in the U.S.

NOTES

1. Again, returning to Forte's (2012) study: " . . . in a Pentagon press conference, when asked: 'Do you see any evidence that he [Gaddafi] actually has fired on his own people from there air' . . . U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates replied, 'We've seen the press reports, but we have no confirmation of that.' Backing him up was Admiral Mullen: 'That's correct. We've seen no confirmation whatsoever'" (pp. 241–242).
2. For example, life expectancy increased by 20 years between 1980 and 2000. See http://www.earthtrends.wri.org/ for more information.
3. It is also important to point out that the Libyan superstructure, contrary to Western political and media propaganda, was not a "tyrannical dictatorship." There were actually mechanisms for the diffusion of power throughout society, including workers' and neighborhood collectives.
4. I very purposefully portray the war with this language. While many (but certainly not all) of the "boots on the ground" were Libyans, it was the NATO bombing and sortie campaigns that were instrumental in winning the war for the rebels.
5. Video footage of the protest can be seen here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWzNhk3zv4U
6. The fact that the Libyan government felt confident distributing over 1 million arms to volunteers speaks to the popular support that they enjoyed in the fight against the international neoliberal order.
7. The primary, and perhaps only, exception to this was a united front formed by the Nation of Islam and the ANSWER Coalition (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism), which organized nation-wide protests and a nation-wide speaking tour featuring Cynthia McKinney, who led an international delegation to Libya in May–June, 2011.

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