

## Capitalist War in Tawfiq Al-Hakim's *the World is a Comedy* and Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children: A Comparative Study*

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**Abstract:** Capitalism plays a major role in maintaining war leading to death and sufferings of mankind. This common disorder in the world characterized by wars and violence is addressed through this comparative study between two writers from different cultures and regions. This paper will shed light, through a Marxist approach, on how war and capitalism have been a source of insecurity and unrest. Bertolt Brecht belongs to Germany, which suffered terribly from wars, violence and capitalistic motives during the rule of Hitler. Tawfiq Al-Hakim belongs to Egypt, which was an arena of war and destruction mainly during the rule of President Nasser. These two writers attempt to expose the sinister objectives behind war, its capitalistic drive and its destructive consequences on humanity and nations.

**Keywords:** War, Capitalism, *The World is a Comedy*, *Mother Courage*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Capitalist and imperial powers find a suitable environment for their weapons, which can provide them with long-term revenues. To achieve its strategic objectives, war capitalists deal with other nations and individuals as a commodity. Without any human consideration, Militia get weapons and support from capitalist countries to prolong the duration of war as a capitalistic drive. It is the man who pays and dies at the end. For them, the warriors they equip with their weapons cost less while killing others brings them a lot of revenues. Capitalist countries spend a lot on arms productions and military equipment, and send their soldiers overseas, but will not contribute with little shares to address issues of depopulation, reconstruction and human relief during war because their main concern is material gain.

D.W. MacKenzie explains the connection between capitalism and war and how others view this relation. Some believe that economy is generated to meet the demands of war expenses while others argue that war is needed to promote economy. Some think that war is used as “shock therapy to get the economy on its feet” (Mackenzie, 2003). Paul Krugman believes that “the September 11th attacks might improve economic conditions by stimulating business investment. ... [and that] prosperity emerges from devastation” (Mackenzie, 2003). If they do not attack other nations for the game of business, they engage other countries in conflict so that their game is achieved. MacKenzie further states that “capitalists even conspire to promote war, as a means of reaping grim profits from armaments production” (para.3), which is central to Al-Hakim’s *The World Is a Comedy* (1974).

In *A Conversation with the Planet Earth*, Al-Hakim (spelled El-Hakim in this book) defines the economic power as “the first power and for its sake appeared all other powers in the form of methods” (Al-Hakim, 1985, p. 74). He also associates this power with troubles when it is identified with domination (Al-Hakim, 1985, p. 75). He further states that those nations which compete with each other to achieve this power are devoured by wars (Al-Hakim, 1985, p. 76). He suggests that,

“economic cooperation, whether in the form of integration or exchange ... is the best way of eliminating the notion of destructive domination”(Al-Hakim, 1985, p. 76). Al-Hakim thinks that the states use their economic power to facilitate the process of manufacturing and producing weapons of mass destruction instead of directing it towards the welfare of humanity and the poor nations. But nations use this power to attack and destroy others and they use the latest technology to inflict suffering upon powerless nations. The capitalist countries also compete with each other to achieve the maximum level of profit by through military deals with several developing counties to keep them under their domination.

War, as a capitalist motive, develops, organizes and fixes the economy of a capitalist country which peace cannot. Brecht in *Mother Courage* (1939) communicates it through a sergeant appearing on a highway outside the town of Dalarna recruiting for the Swedish army. The sergeant refers to the war as the order and foundation of the world and that all the resources of the world are directed to support this ‘order’(Brecht, 2005, pp. 3-4). All man’s powers and natural resources are exploited by war and the working classes are being taken advantage of to support this system. The only profiteers of war, as Al-Hakim’s Comedy dramatizes, are the rulers, leaders and businessmen. Similarly, Brecht points out in *Mother Courage* that ‘order’ exhausts the society which survives on its productions.

Brecht lived in a society involved in many wars and likely to get involved in another war as predicted in *Mother Courage*. Many European powers had gone through the ‘Thirty Years War’ during which famine, disease and starvation spread all over the continent. Germany had gone through the WWI and the Nazi regime plunged the country into another war. Brecht had warned that Germany would experience a war similar to the ‘Thirty Years War’ if capitalists continued to be in power. The fascist system, according to Brecht, could “be fought by treating it as capitalism”(Willett, 1959, p. 194). For Brecht, Fascism and Nazism were only variants of capitalism: “... the only difference between the fascist and capitalist countries was that in the latter ‘the butchers wash their hands before bringing in meat’(Willett, 1959, p. 194). In a conversation with Walter Benjamin, Brecht confirms how the system of his country is tyrannical and devastating(Benjamin, 1973, p. 120).

In the notes to his play, as pointed out by Keith Dickson, Brecht thinks that “the Thirty Years War ...was one of the first largescale wars that capitalism brought upon Europe”(Dickson, 1978, p. 97). Brecht states that capitalism is the central design behind this war which is also true of Germany in the 1930s. This war was in the memory of the Germans in which Germany lost two thirds of its territoryas pointed out in the preface to *Mother Courage*. Brecht wants the people to be aware of the danger looming under the leadership of Hitler. After Brecht had seen the direction his country took, he is sure that the Fascists are a real threat to humanity. Being a Marxist ideologue, Brecht communicated that capitalism has always thrived on war and has to be confronted. With his Marxist understanding of the Thirty Years War, Brecht warns people of the Fascist and Nazi system which is similar to the capitalistic motives of the kings and rulers of the 17th century.

Al-Hakim and Brecht felt that their governments paid more attention to the military equipment and weapons and tried to compete for armament. The two countries were always engaged in confrontations and preparation for war – Germany led by Hitler (1889-1945) and Egypt by Nasser (1918-1970). Both the writers felt that war cost a lot of economic deterioration. Hitler’s threat and his growing capitalistic motives possibly made Brecht alert to this danger and, therefore, he kept warning the people of this danger in order to rise against this kind of “rampant Nazism and Fascism”(Leach, 1994, p. 128). Kenneth Fowler argues that Brecht believed that capitalism “is a barbaric, inhuman oppressive, unjust, and unfree system”(1996, p. 133). The world is full of evil people like Mother Courage or the Reaper as in *Mother Courage* and *The World Is a Comedy* respectively. These people who are real war-parasites favor war because their business thrives on it. Brecht and Al-Hakim provided different windows to look at capitalism in relation to war. Brecht used the Thirty Years War, which had taken place in the 17th century to denounce the modern war and capitalism; Al-Hakim imports a para-psychological phenomenon known as the transmigration of souls to bring the idea that mankind always attempts to live in a world devoid of war and violence.

### **1.1. The World Is a Comedy: Balance of Power and Capitalism**

Egypt occupies a crucial place in the world trade routes that connect the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. Because of this position, capitalistic and imperial powers have competed to get hold

of Egypt several times. In March of 1919, Egypt witnessed a strong revolution against the British control which forced the British rule to declare Egypt's independence in 1922 with some parts under the British rule. During his school years, Al-Hakim had played a vital role in the 1919 demonstrations against the British colonizers and wrote his first anti-colonial play in 1918 *Al Dyeaf Al Thaqil*. In 1953, Egypt was declared a republic and the hero of this revolution was Nasser. According to Hala Mustafa, Nasser considered Al-Hakim's *The Return of Spirit* a prediction of the 1952 revolution, in which Al-Hakim calls upon the Egyptian people to stand up and revive their spirit by backing up a single leader who will bring back that spirit (Mustafa, 2005). The other important event in the history of Egypt is the 1967 defeat by Israel. This event caused chaos and confusion among the Egyptians. Some supported Nasser urging him to go on despite the defeat while others criticized his politics of war which cost Egypt a lot. Although Al-Hakim in the beginning is a strong supporter of Nasser's regime in his revolution against the British, he later criticizes his politics. He believes that the country is deteriorating and that war is futile. Families have been living in miserable conditions due to shortage of public services and accommodations. Near the frontlines, people had been forced to vacate their homes for fear of air raids and lived in underground shelters with poor services and power failures. Due to these conditions, Al-Hakim was not happy with Nasser and the deteriorating situation in Egypt. Yoram Meital points out Al-Hakim's criticism of war and Nasser's regime and describes Al-Hakim as one of the salient opponents of war especially in his last decades (1997, pp. 14-15). He has hoped to see the world as one family living peacefully with each other discarding hostilities and conflicts.

Al-Hakim states that Egyptians have recovered their consciousness after the departure of Nasser. One of the passages in *The Return of Consciousness* (1974) narrates the conditions during the war and the huge amount of budget spent on military preparations while proletariats are dying and sleeping in streets:

Thousands of millions taken from the sweat of the brow of Egyptians went down the drain. ... defeat came upon us ... five years and more have passed and Egypt has remained motionless, without war and without peace, spending on its do-nothing army. . . a fortune with which the Aswan High Dam could have been built twice over. (Meital, 1997, p. 105)

Internal capitalism is a direct result of the international capitalism and imperialism, which has affected Egypt directly. As a result, Egypt has suffered a lot due to foreign presence on its soil and has been dominated by colonial and capitalist powers for a long time, first by the French, then by the British colonizers. Later the Soviet Union and the USA competed to get hold of Egypt. During the Cold War era, with the help of the Soviet Union, Egypt led by Nasser focused on building a strong military defense system. This had made Egypt prepare huge military budgets by imposing intolerable taxes on the people. People had felt unhappy about it as they wanted no war. These developing nations, as Al-Hakim maintained in *The World Is a Comedy*, serve as a market for capitalist powers. He warns the nations to stop armament race to give a violent blow on the capitalist nations. The play was written during the cold war period in which the world witnessed a strong trend towards armament to maintain 'balance of power' which was mainly the objective of the capitalists to bring balance back to their economy. Al-Hakim criticizes Nasser's policy of war and considers it 'internal capitalism' for exploiting the farmers and lower-class people. He is agitated to find his country represented by Nasser's leadership as being obsessed with armament and military superiority while the majority of the people were in extreme poverty. He also blames the global changes which focus on super military power leading to the invention of atomic bomb. For him, it is only the super powers which benefit from the warring nations and conflicts among the developing countries.

*The World Is a Comedy* is divided into three acts containing seventeen Scenes and in every scene the characters change their identities to play a different role taking up various issues on top of which are war, atomic bomb and armament. The first two scenes and the last two are staged outside the mind of the protagonist, Khalid. The remaining thirteen scenes take place in the subconscious mind of Khalid, after he falls asleep while reading a book on Transmigration of Souls. In his sub-consciousness, Khalid wants to be an important man with an influential position to get rid of the burdens of life he is suffering from. Khalid is confused, lost and unhappy with his way of life. He gets up the next morning to the bell of the alarm clock and rushes to work but he is still under the effect of various horrible dreams he had had at night. During sleep, he plays different roles such as the President of an atomic

state, Romeo, a Scientist, a Fisherman, and Antony. His colleagues in the office also change roles that suit the nature of Khalid's new role. They play roles such as a Minister, Juliet, a journalist, a laboratory assistant, a Nurse, and Cleopatra. With the help of these multiple roles they take up every time, they discuss various issues such as war and its relation to capitalism.

Literary men like Al-Hakim and Mahfouz have paid tributes to Sadat for his peace initiative with Israel and his strong determination to restore peace after so many years of wars and conflicts, which is portrayed in *Comedy* that dramatizes an important role which Khalid plays as a president. Khalid has been transmigrated into the head of an atomic state surrounded by ministers looking busy with lots of work to do. Being a President, Khalid discusses a very crucial issue related to the universe which will change its entire course. It is war, the manufacturing of arms and atomic bombs which have led to the imbalance of the world. The President is concerned with a peace plan which he intends to initiate. He wants the world to discard arms and live peacefully. In the play, the President may be compared to Sadat, Nasser's successor. Sadat has been hailed in Egypt as the hero of peace and war. Egyptians from different walks of life have praised Sadat for his political policy that have brought Egypt to prosperity, dignity and peace. In *Comedy*, the President decides to put an end to war and destroy all arms which, as he thinks, may be a good initiative for other nations to follow suit. It is the only solution to the world conflicts as the President believes. The president affirms that the people chiefly responsible for wars are the capitalists who hold monopoly companies that manufacture and sell weapons to nations in conflict. Similar to the President's intention in the play, President Sadat believed that his peace initiative is right and suits Egypt's circumstances to survive and become a partner in the twenty first century before it is too late (Meital, 2003, pp. 152-3).

Egypt under the rule of Nasser had to face serious wars and unrest followed by peace and stability during the rule of Sadat. These different shades of the Egyptian politics have been reflected in the long dialogue between the President of the atomic state and his Minister in the *Comedy*. The dialogue values Sadat's policy of peace and criticizes Nasser's policy of war. The Minister, similar to the spirit of the people before the 1967 setback, guarantees victory to the President because of the quantitative and qualitative weapons they possess. This spirit had been widely spread in Egypt during the preparation for waging war against Israel. Victory had been assured to people through fiery speeches of military leaders. People were assured that enemy will be certainly defeated because the authority has allotted "£ E 700 million annually" (Meital, 1997, p. 105) and that the army is in full swing. The Minister tells the President that the war project includes all necessary war items as the report presented before the President indicates: "anti-ballistic missiles, trans-continental rockets, aircraft-carriers equipped with atomic and hydrogen bombs" (Al-Hakim, 1985, p. 103). Al-Hakim affirms that the huge cost of this war equipment goes to the capitalist nations, the only profiteers from wars. Such anti-war and anti-capitalistic views are communicated through a dialogue between the President and the Minister in the play (Al-Hakim, 1985, pp. 103-4). The dialogue also raises a significant issue the world suffers from. It is the balance of power, which has led to wars, destruction and havoc. This balance of power is the outcome of the growing capitalism that has endangered the world. This state of warfare facilitates the path for capitalistic powers to tighten their grip around the neck of the nations, first by selling them weapons and later by providing them with 'aids' in return for unaffordable interests and unconditional demands. The process of recovery takes years and the nations remain exploited and enslaved to the capitalistic nations, which Al-Hakim calls "the monopolizing magnates of big industry" (Al-Hakim, 1985, p. 77).

Balance of power has always dominated the postwar world. It is not only among the giant nations but it has also spread over the rest of the world. Many countries attempt to be armed to the teeth even while its people are starving to death. Its importance is in being with balance with its neighboring country. This is what the President in the play argues about. He points out the dangers of maintaining the balance of power which, he thinks, will never lead to peace but to more and more violence. Mahfouz, similarly, in *Death and Resurrection* (1969), raises the issue of 'balance of power' and insists on the importance of sincere negotiation to resolve the disputes and to establish peace. Balance of power is absolutely a capitalistic motive to promote and escalate the level of arm production and make profit especially in the developing nations. It is quite clear that capitalists have succeeded in spreading this tendency to achieve the maximum level of profit and economic power. This tendency has led to several wars. In this connection, Al-Hakim remarks: "this concept of strong individual and strong state remained for a long time and caused numerous conflicts and wars" (Al-Hakim, 1985, p.

75). He also thinks that the world will change for the better if domination is replaced by cooperation. In his philosophical dialogue, "A Conversation with the Planet Earth", he draws the attention to the experience of the European nations: "look at the powerful countries in Europe, which used to compete with one another for the markets until they were devoured by wars. Now they are on their way to cooperation in place of conflict and have conceived the idea of establishing the European Common Market"(Al-Hakim, 1985, p. 76).

Al-Hakim has experienced many formative events during his early twenties. The great events of the world such as the two World Wars, the world's two ideologies – the conflict between Capitalism and Socialism, and the emergence of the New World System represented by the USA seem to have shaped his mind. With these events, he realizes that the world was confronting a serious disaster with this blind competition towards armament and military superiority. He seems to believe that 'violence engenders violence' and therefore, he calls for "coexistence under a regime of peace and universal prosperity and the respect of each country for the system of organization, ideologies, principles, and beliefs of others"(Al-Hakim, 1985, p. 76). In a similar frame of mind, the President, in *Comedy*, is angry and agitated with the violent state of the world. He determines to stick to his decision of disarmament in spite of the warnings of his Minister. The President's statement affirms Al-Hakim's opposition to war and its business orientation(Al-Hakim, 1985, p. 107).

Al-Hakim attacks war promoters, arms traders, and monopoly companies. He considers them responsible for wars and conflicts between nations and inside nations. They get huge amount of profits which come from the violence and war. That is why the Minister warns the President that the decision to do away with war and armament would invite danger on his personal life because the "men of business will not remain inactive"(Al-Hakim, 1985, p. 107). The Scene ends with a strong note of the President's intention to abolish war and its mongers who are mainly capitalist traders and millionaires. The Reaper in the following Scene reinforces the fact that capitalists are the ones who are responsible for wars, destructions and conflicts among nations. Symbolically, the Reaper, representing the spirit of capitalism, becomes alarmed and agitated on hearing the news that the President has decided to do away with war calling for disarmament. This shocking decision makes the Reaper alert to the breaking news and he decides to take away the President's life before his decision takes effect. The President's decision on the peace plan threatens the business of the Reaper who will be idle if the peace plan is put into effect. If nations stop warring and begin to disarm, the Reaper's capitalistic goals will cease to exist. The Reaper prepares himself to accomplish his mission, but the job has already been carried out by someone else, because profiteers are many and no one can wait till the President gets his plan done. A shot is heard when the Reaper and the Registrar are discussing the threat of the President's peace plan. It is the President who is shot; it is this advocate of peace who has fallen a victim at the hands of a cruel capitalist.

Like Musgrave in John Arden's *Serjeant Musgrave's Dance* (1960), the President in Al-Hakim's *Comedy* has adopted a very hard doctrine to establish nonviolence. Both of them do not know the complexities of the world around them. Complete pacifism is impossible to be found. The President's plan for disarmament and peace has failed and he is shot dead before his plan see the light. Musgrave's plan also is not fulfilled and he is imprisoned. These two pacifists have probably been 'extremists' in their peace ideologies. The President jumped to the idea of abolishing arms production without taking gradual and reasonable steps to work out a peace initiative, which might have succeeded. Musgrave also adopted a difficult step to warn his nation against wars and violence.

The murder of the President is prophetic. The play was written in 1974 during Sadat's rule who was an advocate of peace. He did his best to bring peace to Egypt by signing a peace agreement with Israel in 1978 at the White House. Three years later, specifically in 1981, President Sadat was assassinated. The warning came true, as Al-Hakim had predicted. There are many who like peace but only a few narrow-minded people like violence and conflicts to go on. Such peace plans are aborted by the profiteers of war. The Minister has already told the President in the play that his life will be in danger if he takes up this stand against war.

Al-Hakim exposes another episode of the destructiveness of war. Scene XII discusses the nature of weapons used in modern times, their level of destruction and their immediate effect on man and nature. Al-Hakim takes his audience to an island where an atomic experiment is going to take place. He exposes the negative effect of war on a fisherman living on the island and leading a simple life

away from the tensions of the modern age and its hazardous technological weapons. Even in a remote place, man is threatened and displaced and is asked to leave that peaceful island. Al-Hakim portrays the simplicity of the common man against the monster of war and its capitalistic motives. He affirms how atomic bombs can demolish the human world in seconds as he communicates,

... Nowadays, there are things that are called atomic bombs. When they are dropped beside a small island like this, the whole island will disappear and will be swallowed up by the sea. ... They are not capable of making this island disappear, but they are capable of destroying the whole world, with its cities, towns, adults and children! (Al-Hakim, 1985, pp. 50-51)

Al-Hakim makes many references to those who control the world with their power of domination and destruction. It is the power of some imperial and capitalist nations that grab and exploit the poor nations. He calls them devils and their action an act of madness. In the Scene of the nurse and the fisherman, Al-Hakim refers to western capitalist powers and their intention to get hold of the world in general and Egypt in particular. Similarly, the Giant in Mahfouz's *Death and Resurrection*, represents the capitalistic nations. The Giant intervenes in the politics of another nation, namely Egypt. He exposes his power and imposes himself on the man, symbolically Egypt, without any prior consent. In addition to his domination, the Giant dictates certain conditions on the Man to fulfil which violates the Man's rights and dignity. Al-Hakim states that no one can hold the capitalists from carrying out their actions or stand in their way of destruction because they possess this enormous power that can demolish the entire world. The sophisticated weapons they invented have resulted in many unusual diseases and epidemics as happened to the fisherman who stayed away, yet he was affected by atomic radiation as revealed after analyzing his blood.

This play has a series of episodes most of which revolve around the themes of war and violence. It begins with President's plan for peace leading to his assassination, then comes the atomic experiment, and after that comes the leader's military plan. The leader inquires Antony's spirit about how successful his plan is. He is planning to wage war against his enemy and expects Antony's spirit to give him the right answer because the leader assumes that Antony's spirit knows well about war and victory. Antony's spirit asks the leader to explain his military plan. The leader tells the spirit that he has sufficient number of supersonic jet planes. This leader is a product of the capitalist regime which, as the nurse describes, is "an enormous case of madness as big as the whole world" (Al-Hakim, 1985, p. 152). Here, Al-Hakim makes a reference to the western powers and their interference in the politics of the world and their unchallenged domination. He communicates to his audience that war is a game of business and capitalism which cannot be terminated as long as there are arms and weapons.

The play ends on the note that war will continue from one generation to another as a consequence of both the human nature and the systems which generate wars. With this game of the capitalists who prefer the continuance of war, Al-Hakim again presents his audience with another image of capitalism in Scene XII dramatizing the capitalistic domination over the world. Like *Mother Courage* which ends on a note that war will continue for generations because of people's passiveness and their contribution to war, *Comedy* also ends with a similar note. As long as there are war mongers and war profiteers, the cycle of war will never end and any human effort to break this cycle will not succeed, which is noticeable all over the world.

## **1.2. Mother Courage and Her Children: The Evils of War and Capitalism**

Brecht is known for his criticism of capitalism and its exploitive system, which resulted in wars and violence. He remarks that war and capitalism are inseparable and interdependent and that wars are an integral part of capitalism as pointed out by Fowler (Fowler, 1996, p. 122). Brecht believes that socialism is the solution to contemporary world problems. He has written a great deal of work to publicize his socialist thoughts to encourage mutual cooperation between individuals and nations and to condemn war and violence. He always remarks that capitalism, which spread all over Europe, promoted war between nations. In a conversation with Brecht, Benjamin states that Brecht thinks that "socialist economy doesn't need war, and that is why it is opposed to war" (Fowler, 1996, p. 116).

Brecht has done his best to promote the Marxist thought through his works. His epic theatre, based on Marxist principles, is meant to analyze people's attitudes and behaviors towards certain social and political issues. In his epic theatre, Brecht uses the V-Effect to distance and alienate his audience from

identifying themselves with his characters. With the help of this distancing technique, Brecht urges his audience to ask questions and criticize the prevailing issues in their society so they can change it for the better – an ideology central to the Marxist thought. These ideas have resulted in clash with the Nazis, especially after staging his play *Mother Courage*. As a Marxist, Brecht believes that peace can only be achieved by eliminating capitalism. He has envisaged that the 1930s Europe has been under a largescale war with capitalistic motives with the rise of Nazism.

Breaking away from the Aristotelian theatre, Brecht develops techniques such as alienation and distancing to give his audience a chance to probe into social issues with the aim of changing the society around them positively. He uses epic theatre to illustrate the Marxist view that man is alterable and capable of changing the society around him. Unlike the Aristotelian theatre which focuses on emotions that depicts the existing social condition as acceptable and satisfactory, Brecht's epic theatre focuses on reason and intellect and, encourages people to criticize and question the prevailing issues to bring about a progressive change in the society. Brecht thinks that the Germans are like Mother Courage who helps and allows the 'big people' exercise power on them. The Germans did not realize that the war would cost them intolerable taxes and their lives as well. With this passive inactivity on the part of the Germans, Hitler's power on the country has grown out of control and became an alarming threat.

Brecht's textual changes in the play were meant to emphasize and denounce the business-oriented motives of the capitalists as Christopher M. Sperberg points out in his introduction (1979, p. 1). Brecht's view to portray Courage as a capitalist fails several times to maintain his antiwar stance based on denunciation of capitalism. There are certain occasions when the spectator identifies himself with the characters which went against Brecht's intention as pointed out by Martin Esslin (Esslin, 1959, p. 131). Therefore, Brecht works on the play several times to characterize Courage as the spirit of capitalism. Despite the distancing devices, Brecht created scenes which moved the audience's emotion. For instance, in 1949 production of *Mother Courage*, Helene Weigel, knowing Brecht's intention in depicting Mother Courage as a business woman, saves some money when she is bargaining with the villagers for the burial rituals of her daughter, Katrin. With this physical gesture of holding back some money, Weigel draws the audience's attention to Courage's business mind even at such a moment of extreme agony. Even at this time when her daughter is to be buried, Courage still has a capacity to bargain and make profit.

Sometimes wars have been waged in human history to vindicate national honor or to take revenge for real or imagined offence to the pride and dignity of a people. At other times wars have taken place in the name of lebensraum, which amounts to a ruthless expansion into the territory of neighboring states. From the Marxist viewpoint, however, all wars are essentially class wars on a large-scale transcending national boundary. For example, the two world wars that ravaged the world in the twentieth century are from the Marxist viewpoint rooted in the economic interests of predator capitalist-imperialist states of the world. The wars of the last century are actually driven by the lust for the exploitation of the natural resources and cheap labor power of the militarily weak nations of Asia and Africa. But the western colonizers created the pretext that they are there in Africa and Asia to do what is necessary for civilizing the backward countries steeped in ignorance and deprived of the blessings of the enlightened Christianity. In the name of dispelling the darkness of the so called superstitions, magic cults and cultural rituals practiced by the peoples of Asia and Africa, the entire nations were enslaved, oppressed and exploited. However, the realities of the wars are quite diverse. They have been unleashed for the ruthless exploitation of the people and for plundering their wealth. However, Marxism maintains, and *Mother Courage* demonstrates that all wars have economic origin; they are all organized and executed with the only aim to earn huge profit through wars waged against resource rich but militarily weak nations. Wars make for good business. Petit bourgeoisie earn a little profit through petty and demeaning acts of cheating and trickery, while big bourgeoisie capture and gobble up nations one after another to build up empires.

This view of war, which is prototypically Marxist, informs and organizes Brecht's *Mother Courage*. Courage affirms that "War is a business proposition" (Brecht, 2005, p. 55), even if the means are guns and swords (Brecht, 2005, p. 55). A similar view towards war is expressed in Scene III where Courage stresses the economic character of war, and how economic interests govern and regulate the behaviors of individuals caught up in the frenzy of this war. Brecht especially shows how all sacred human

relations are subordinated to the lust for money and how cash nexus binds human beings together under capitalism. Brecht shows how Courage gambles away the life of her son in order to save the cash box. She haggles over the amount of money to be given to those who will ultimately shoot him dead (Brecht, 2005, p. 39). This leads to a tragic end to her son who is shot and is thrown on the garbage dump. The situation becomes more tragic when Courage refuses to acknowledge him as her son, flesh of her flesh, and blood of her blood. Her fear of business termination leads her to act in a cowardly manner denying her relation to her 'dear' son.

The play demonstrates how wars and how profit motive pervades all ranks and all individuals, be they religious priests, generals of the army, and peasants in the countryside or kings. They are all people swayed by the lust for money and unable to escape the main driving force of history behind capitalism. This emotional play dramatizes Marx's characterization of capitalism in its first phase around the time of the Thirty Years War in which most of the major European states were involved besides the Catholic Holy Roman Emperor and some German Protestant states. *Mother Courage* is a restatement of Marx's observations on the nature of capitalism under conditions of dramatic art. Brecht's Marxist view clearly informs this play stressing that the expected war in Europe would take place as a result of the capitalists whose aim is to exploit the common people for the sake of their own profit and power. If the common people, who have been the object of exploitation, change and improve themselves, the society around them will respond to this transformation.

Courage's war loving nature has already cost her one of her sons, Swiss Cheese. The news of his execution shocked her. She decides to stop her business journey when there is a peace break in Scene VIII. War has ruined her: "I'm glad about the peace even though I am ruined. At least I've got two of my children through the war" (Brecht, 2005, p. 57). When she hears the news that the war breaks out again, she becomes excited and calls off her decision to go to church to say her prayers for Swiss. But her persistence to make profit out of war costs her dearly. She loses all her three children to war while she is busy in her business transactions. Swiss is executed because he hides away a cash box from the enemy soldiers while his mother has not acted in time and has haggled a lot. Eilif again is executed for attacking peasants and taking their cattle during a peace break. He comes to see his mother before he is executed but she is in the town to get merchandise. Katrin faces two terrible accidents while her mother is busy in business. Despite all these tragedies, Courage does not learn and continues her business: "Mother Courage, whose business has brought her children into the war which eventually kills them, is seen at the close of the play, putting her wagon after the army, still continuing her business" (Lyons, 1968, p. 90).

Capitalism values business and profit with no consideration for human values. Sergeants bring Courage's son on a stretcher for identification. At this agonizing moment, one believes that she will admit her guilt and she will give up her business, but she denies him. Brecht intentionally portrays Courage as a business woman whose children are like commodities to her. He associates her business with her children's misfortunes. Eilif who has been absent from Courage's eyes for about two years is now to face execution. Courage may not directly be held responsible for his death, but she has contributed to it as seen in the First Scene. Courage appears defiant in the First Scene and tries to defend her sons against being enlisted. Knowing her business mindedness, one of the recruiters attempts to "Get her involved in a business transaction" (Brecht, 2005, p. 11). The sergeants are sure that business would keep Courage distracted which would enable them to enlist her son. She becomes busy haggling over a belt while her son is taken into military (Lyons, 1968, p. 92).

Courage claims that she loves Katrin and always appears to protect her, but Katrin becomes dumb due to her mother's explicit involvement in war and business. Later, Katrin gets a big scar in the forehead because her mother has sent her to the town to get some goods. Again, Mother Courage leaves her daughter in the custody of the villagers while she goes to the town to get more merchandise. When she returns, she finds her daughter shot dead by the attacking soldiers. Courage has already lost two sons and now loses her daughter to war while she is busy with her business.

Courage's greediness and love for money is also depicted in Katrin's funeral. She bargains with the villagers for reducing the burial charges to save some coins at the most unfortunate moment. She leaves the burial job to the peasants and continues her business asking the soldiers to wait for her. She does not even wait and make sure that her daughter is buried properly. Dead bodies are useless to her as she has done with Swiss earlier when she refused to identify him as her son. His body has been



thrown into “the carrion pit”(Brecht, 2005, p. 40). Now Katrin’s body is also not that important to her. This is the heart of a business-oriented, callous person who does not succumb to such emotional moments.

Brecht’s aim is to make his audience aware of Courage’s direct responsibility for her children’s deaths. All their deaths appear not to be accidental but happen while Courage is in business especially in the case of Swiss and Katrin. Her determination to continue her business and its consequences is made clear through Chaplain's words: “... he who sups with the devil must use long spoon”(Brecht, 2005, p. 60). He reminds her of her war loving nature, which will cost her dearly. Brecht portrays Courage as a criminal supporter of war who even sacrifices her own children to war to make profit. All her inhuman actions during the war are related to business and profit-making right from the beginning. She joins the war with her children with the view to making business. Though she is aware of the dangers of war and its plunder, she joins it and never gives up even at extremely critical moments.

Brecht blames Mother Courage’s involvement in business for the destruction of her children. The deaths of all her children, as Brecht stresses, happened due to the victimization of the big people whom Courage chooses to be on their side. Economic motives dominate over her human feelings and sweep them away. With the insecurity that results from capitalism, she becomes hardhearted and insensitive to others even in adverse circumstances. She refuses to give bandages to the wounded villagers which reflects her callous heart and business-oriented mind(Brecht, 2005, p. 45). She neither wants to lose anything without getting something in return nor wants to sacrifice her four expensive shirts to these poor villagers. Her commodity serves the capitalist rulers, kings and military officers who can pay her well. She is remorseless and void of human feelings for others around her. She sees some people bleeding and some are amputated and still refuses to give them bandages. When a soldier sells his bullets, she buys them cheap; when the villagers ask for money for the burial of her daughter, she gives them as less as she can; when Yvette, the camp prostitute, bargains with her for leasing the wagon, Courage attempts to keep the sum as low as possible so that she can pay it back.

Mother Courage leaves the stage untouched and unchanged. She has not learnt from her experience that war is futile and brings destruction and misery. With this inability to change on the part of Mother Courage, Brecht aims at shocking his audience which may transform them into active participants in their society. If little people like Courage think that they can make profit from the war, then society will remain unchangeable and people subject to destruction as a result of this state of unchangeability. But they should know, as Brecht always stresses, that profit is always made by big people and that little people are exploited as means to achieve the goals of the capitalist class. With this view in mind, Brecht urges his audience to learn from the mistakes of Courage and draw their own conclusions about the prevailing social issues such as war and capitalism which characterized the German society during the 1930s.

The play clearly depicts the undeniable motives of capitalism. Rulers, kings and military officers are the real plotters of wars and violence to achieve their own capitalist goals. They use religion as a cloak, as the Chaplain, to hide their interests and use it as an incentive to push their soldiers into battles. Many of the Scenes in the play portray the conflicts between the capitalist leaders themselves over the territories leaving behind destruction, corpses and amputated bodies. The Chaplain blames the leaders for the destruction they cause to humanity and the helpless people. When Katrin comes back wounded from the town, he does not put the blame on the soldier but on his leader because the soldier is helpless and carries out the orders of the higher authority. Brecht also portrays another level of capitalism which lies between the capitalists and the voiceless part of the society through various incidents in the play. The first one begins with the recruiters’ attempt to enlist Courage’s two sons to the Swedish army persuading them to join the army. It is much similar to the recruiting episode in Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11*, where two Marine recruiters appearing in attractive military uniforms attempt to enlist two youths to the military. In two different Scenes, Brecht gives a vivid presentation of the attacking soldiers and the helpless villagers and townspeople. In Scene V, the soldiers under the command of their officer attack a village, destroy its livestock, injure and kill its people. In Scene XI, the soldiers again attack the village of Halle and threaten its people if they do not guide them to the

nearby town, their target. Katrin is shot dead when she takes a drum up the roof to hit it to warn the townspeople of the danger lurking for them.

This system of war always results in fighting and conflict between all classes of society as Brecht puts in *Mother Courage*. Some of the common people also fight each other for survival and others want to become rich. Eilif being himself one of the working class attacks the peasants and steals their animals; Yvette takes advantage of Courage's critical situation and gives low price to her wagon; the cook refuses to accept that Katrin accompanies them and demands that Courage goes with him alone; the peasants stand passive to the attack and just pray for the safety of the townspeople for the fear of sacrificing their own possessions. These acts of selfishness and love for one's own life are imposed on them as a result of the domination of the capitalist regime that has spread fear and misery among this class of people.

Courage has chosen to be on the rulers' side exploiting the powerless littlepoor people. She does not like to help others except for material gain. Like Joe Keller in *All My Sons*, Courage appears that she only takes care of her children and pays no attention to the rest who are just a market to her business. Both Courage and Keller sacrifice others to achieve their material gain. But, people like Keller and Courage cannot make profit and their profit is just temporary and quickly turns to misery and misfortune. According to Brecht, only the big dogs can survive and make profits from wars while little ones destroy themselves. Mother Courage lost all her children to war, but she did not want to admit her guilt and preferred to continue her business journey.

## 2. CONCLUSION

Out of humanism, Al-Hakim insists that humanity should reach a decision to prevent war and to demolish all the atomic weapons and warn all nations against wars and their terrible consequences. His philosophical dialogues are meant to persuade the reader that war is meaningless. His play, *The World Is a Comedy*, is a call to achieve peace and to do away with armaments. The play does not take up a story, but through argumentative dialogue and logical arguments, it presents war as absolutely meaningless and meant for profit. Al-Hakim blames the manufacturers of weapons, who are the source of real trouble for the society and mankind. The play stands against the manufacturers of weapons who care only about the success of their business. The President in *Comedy* advocates pacifism and comes up with a decision that will change the world as he believes. He wants to disarm his state and he thinks that the decision will lead other states to follow suit. In one of the scenes, he also depicts the harm of the nuclear weapons on the mankind. A fisherman is living calmly in an island but he is asked to vacate it due to expected atomic experiments. Al-Hakim points out how these weapons of mass destruction threaten the mankind and nature. He attributes this arms race to what he calls 'the balance of power' and capitalistic drives. Like Miller, he also maintains that the only profiteers from wars and violence are the capitalists and monopolistic companies.

In *Mother Courage*, Brecht restates Marx's observations on the nature of capitalism and stresses that the modern war is a profit to the big people and a loss to commons. Brecht believes that people deserve war if they subscribe to the system which generates it, namely capitalism. According to him, war and capitalism are inseparable and interdependent. Carl Von Clausewitz's famous quote, 'war is the continuation of politics by other means' becomes 'war is the continuation of business by other means' in Brecht's *Mother Courage*. To illustrate this, Brecht makes use of the 'Thirty Years War' because it was believed to be unleashed by capitalists. Using the epic theatre which was initiated by Erwin Piscator, Brecht engages his spectators intellectually with evils of war and capitalism so that they can look at it objectively without empathy with the characters. He believes that people in general are 'cysts' in this exploitative system. He affirms that if people remain passive, then the system of war generated by capitalism will continue. Brecht wants people to be involved actively in order to put an end to the system which leads to war and violence, which ultimately victimizes the common man. Brecht stresses that the modern war can be eliminated if people react positively against capitalism. In *Mother Courage*, Brecht contradicts the view which states that war is an irresistible phenomenon and affirms that it is created by man who keeps its wheels going. The fact that the play ends with a note that war will continue for centuries explains Brecht's message about the relationship between the continuity of the war and the passivity of the people.

Brecht and Al-Hakim invariably believe that modern wars are generated as a result of capitalism. There are other causes which sometimes lead to war, but economic motives, profiteering and balance of power are considered essential. Economic motives are associated with many wars in the past and the present time. In the past, nations invaded other nations to gain economic power but, capitalism is associated with the modern wars. Domination, power, and economy are the major factors which characterize the modern wars. Brecht's *Mother Courage*, and Al-Hakim's *The World Is a Comedy* have dramatized war as a game based on capitalism and business. They have manifested that business and profiteering from war matter a lot for some individuals and regimes even if this profit is at the expense of their families, relatives and nations. These plays make it clear that war is just waged for material gain and for exploiting the working class people.

Brecht criticizes capitalism and draw the attention of his audience to the evils of modern wars and capitalism. Brecht uses the epic theatre leaving his audience to think about the consequences of war in relation to business. He urges them to think a lot about Mother Courage's determination to continue her business deals throughout the war. With the help of the epic theatre, Brecht engages his audience intellectually with the prevailing social issues of war and capitalism. With this intellectual engagement, he expects them to react against these two evils. Unlike Brecht, Al-Hakim presents war and its various dimensions without much elaboration, moving from one episode to another quickly letting his audience draw their own conclusions. His play explains that the people desire to live outside the system that generates war and violence. But this desire fails and people are thrown back again into the cycle of violence. When Khalid, through his different incarnations, attempted to escape this cycle, he was pulled back by the forces of war.

Brecht and Al-Hakim have depicted capitalism as a bad system. Brecht looks at it as a system that is based on exploitation of the poor who were driven into wars with other nations for the sake of territorial expansion – an absolutely capitalist objective. Al-Hakim looks at capitalism as a system of domination and power which spread after the Cold War era. This system appeared in this era as a system of power based on trading with arms and nuclear weapons. What war destroys is not the economic or political structure of the society; this structure can be and is often raised and may be, in a better way. What war actually destroys is the spirit of man; it is the essential, inherent spirit of man that is brutally mauled. So brutal is the mauling that it becomes impossible to recognize even the face of humanity, let alone its essential spirit. And when the essence is gone, the life is gone. It is this dead thing that needs the real revival.

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