

HUMAN SECURITY AND THE UPRISING IN NORTH AFRICA

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The new wars

After the end of the 'Cold War' we experienced a metamorphosis of the traditional conflicts per se. Interstate conflicts tend to eclipse and a new form of long lasting intrastate violence has emerged². The only interstate conflict waged in the last decade was the one between Russia and Georgia and it didn't last for more than a week³.

States lost the monopoly of being the sole combatant parties and non-state actors became the protagonists. Uniforms and major battles vanished from the battlefield and new tactics such as ethnic cleansing and counter insurgency, pointing civilians as the primary targets of violence, cause vast casualties. War economies became a self-financed process; international crime network activities and revenues from looting foster the warring parties to perpetuate conflicts instead of resolving them. The international law diagnosed a chasm, the one of distinguishing non-combatants from belligerents. Global media are upgraded to key actors in terms of selectivity, affecting even the states' foreign policy by ignoring or magnifying the deeds to be presented⁴. By using the 'mediatization' of conflicts and demonization of the opposing party they form the public opinion according to the policy they wish to promote and gain the internal and external 'legitimization' of the intervention⁵. These are the 'new wars', as we experienced in our region during the last decade. It's evident that the state is no longer the only force and violence projector. Non-state actors, armed or terrorist groups, criminal networks, private security companies, militia, all of them have a role to play in these new wars.

¹ **Opinions expressed in this article represent those of the author only**

² Kaldor, M. (2006) *New & old wars*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, Eng. ; Malden, MA: Polity Press

³ There were also sporadic clashes (21st of April) between Thailand and Cambodian troops, in the first major territorial encounter since an informal cease-fire that followed four days of fighting in February. See The NY Times (24 April 2011) '[Thailand and Cambodia Clash Again in Border Dispute](#)'

⁴ Balabanova, E. (2007) *Media, wars and politics: comparing the incomparable in Western and Eastern Europe*, Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

⁵ Thussu, D. K. (2007) *News as entertainment : the rise of global infotainment*, Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage

Human Security

Moreover, the 1994 United Nations Human Development Report⁶ (UNHDR) introduced a new security approach, broadened and deepened beyond the stratum of the state, putting emphasis on the security of human beings per se and the web of their social and economic relations. The concept of this form of security, the human security, goes beyond military threats; it is primarily focused on the standards of everyday living, human dignity and safety from diachronic threats such as lack of food and medicine, poverty and restraints⁷. It also refers to the prevention of the phobia of an acute catastrophe, hence preserving the ordinarily living of the citizens with freedom, equality and justice. There is a clear shift from the state-centric to a human-centric approach.

This new concept of global security is directly interdependent with development. Although we are not able to explain how they interact, inequality, low growth, unemployment and weak economic institutions are identified as parameters of the socio-economic development, increasing the risks of violence⁸. It's difficult to ascertain if security is the paragon that fosters development, or vice versa. But no one can doubt that lack of development and insecurity goes hand in hand.

But this doesn't mean that all the North African countries affected by uprisings were underdeveloped: according to the world listing of the [Human Development Index 2010](#) Libya is in the 53rd place, Tunisia in the 81st (high development), Egypt 101st (medium)⁹; but this listing is according to the country's GDP. So the problem in these countries was the unequal distribution of wealth or its exploitation for the enrichment of the elites, which led to the sense of social and economic injustice for many years, two factors that are quite significant to sustain security and stability¹⁰. The poverty – violence nexus cannot be ignored, since undoubtedly the first increase dramatically the latter's risks, creating simultaneously what is known as 'the poverty trap'¹¹.

The [World Development Report 2011](#) describes the security situation as problematic in terms of access to justice, when markets do not provide employment opportunities,

⁶ Available from <<http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr1994/>> [16 April 2010]

⁷ *Ibid*, pg 22-23

⁸ World Bank (2010) Conflict, Security and Development [online], World Development Report 2011 (January 7, 2010), pg7, available from <http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2010/03/01/000350881_20100301084958/Rendered/PDF/526500BROREPLA1cM20101000101PUBLIC1.pdf> [30 April 2010]

⁹ These are quite high positions in the index, taking into account that Turkey e.g. holds the 83rd place, Brazil the 73rd, China the 89th

¹⁰ Stewart, F., Brown, G.K. and Langer, A. (2008) 'Major Findings and Conclusions on the Relationship between Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict' in *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict*, ed. by Stewart, F., New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 285-300.

¹¹ The Economist (April 14, 2011) [Conflict and poverty: The economics of violence](#)

and communities have lost the social cohesion that contains conflict. It also stresses that no country can afford to ignore areas where violence flourishes and citizens are excluded from social justice and economic progress. Finally it argues that unemployment is the main motivation for recruitment into both gangs and rebel movements.

Humanitarian Intervention under the R2P Doctrine

In the above framework, the 'humanitarian intervention' issue was reconsidered as well, in order to address the protection of human rights and civilians per se, in the cases that sovereign states fail. Hence, due to the 'new humanitarianism', a new doctrine was released in 2001 from the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS)¹² as an initiative of the Canadian Government. Under the strong support of the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan but also with many objections from UN member states¹³, a modified Document was adopted in the "World Summit"/ UN General Assembly 2005¹⁴ and reaffirmed by UNSC in 2006.

Thus the "right to intervene" became "responsibility to protect" (R2P); the primary '*... responsibility of the state to protect its own populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity...*', extends to the international community's commitment to assist the states in that objective and its responsibility to react decisively under the UN Chapters VI, VII (on case by case basis), VIII¹⁵ if the state fails. The doctrine focuses on the "responsibility to prevent" as the nub of the concept; the application of political, diplomatic, legal and economic measures in the earliest possible stage, consists the preventive means, while the coercive action should be the last alternative. In terms of authorisation to intervene, if the UNSC fails to act due to a potential veto from the P5, the concerned state can approach the UN General Assembly, then a regional organisation, coalitions of

¹² International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty., Evans, G. J., Sahnoun, M. and International Development Research Centre (Canada) (2001) "The responsibility to protect: report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, Ottawa: International Development Research Centre. Available from <http://www.iciss.ca/pdf/Commission-Report.pdf> [20 January 2010]

¹³ The US rejected the idea of criteria on the grounds that it wouldn't commit itself to intervening in places where it had no national interests, and that it wouldn't be bound to criteria that would constrain its right to decide when and where to use force. China and Russia suggested that UNSC was undermined, feared of abolishing their veto power.

¹⁴ Resolution A/RES/60/1, available from <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/No5/487/60/PDF/No548760.pdf?OpenElement> pg 30/38, paragraphs 138-140 [15 January 2010]

¹⁵ Chapter VIII refers to regional arrangements.

willing, and the outlined hierarchy of responsibility goes down to the individual and adjacent countries¹⁶.

The cases of Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar¹⁷ (May 2008) and Zimbabwe's "elections campaign" (President Mugabe prohibited all the food and medicine distribution from aid agencies, with the excuse that they were strengthening his political opponents)¹⁸, where the inability of the international community to enforce the 'R2P' doctrine caused the death of thousands of people, led to the conclusion that it doesn't refer to natural disasters, to the broad debate concerning the perpetrators of crimes against humanity in a non-coercive means and to the evidence that its spectrum is explicitly limited in scope, dealing solely with what could be case by case perceived as 'crime against humanity'. But it's also evident that its umbrella doesn't mantle the whole globe. In these terms, building peace in double standards is against the fundamental principles of its own existence.

The Libyan Case

Focusing on the uprising in Libya, the [UN resolution 1973](#) came just in time (by Vote of 10 in Favour with 5 Abstentions – China, Russia which have the power of veto, as well as Brazil, Germany and India-) to prevent Gaddafi forces from overrunning Benghazi. The resolution called on member states and regional organizations to '*take all necessary measures... to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, including Benghazi, while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory*'.

So the intervention in Libya was clearly under the doctrine of 'R2P', as a product of the broader 'human security' concept. But let's see the application of the doctrine and the UN resolution in the field.

The first question that emerged was if we could achieve the "protection of civilians" according to the UNSC mandate by air strikes. Although the mandate authorises only a 'no-fly zone', it is obvious that civilians are going to be killed as 'collateral damage' instead of being protected. The international community's will to

¹⁶ Evans, G. J. (2008) *The responsibility to protect : ending mass atrocity crimes once and for all*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press

¹⁷ Bellamy, A. J. (2010) 2nd edn., 'Humanitarian Intervention' in *Contemporary Security Studies*, ed. by Collins, A., New York: Oxford University Press: 359-377

¹⁸ Zachary, P. G. (2008) 'Humanitarian Dilemmas' *The Wilson Quarterly* 32, (3) 44-51

provide more weapon systems to the rebels¹⁹, deploy advisory teams²⁰, or even enforce them in terms of economic aid²¹, is not only under consideration to the extent of its legitimacy and effectiveness as an action to “protect civilians”, but furthermore it contributes to the perpetuation of the conflict and killing of even more civilians. Although the UN mandate was under the concept of a ‘human security intervention’, it finally became a ‘new war’. Violence was supposed to be the last option, but there were not many opportunities for all other options and the AU initiative for negotiations, although it was accepted by Gaddafi, it was rejected by both NATO and the rebels²².

In all interventions a final stage is critical, for both political and military objectives; and in our case –always according to the UN resolution- is the protection of civilians and the end of violence. But the methods deployed by the Western Forces and NATO seem to aim at a regime change after destroying all Libyan infrastructure and Armed Forces. Maybe the final objectives should be reconsidered, since the regime change is not a legitimate cause in any doctrine or security concept, including the R2P. Safe havens should be established instead, in order to secure all the revolted populations from the Governmental Forces (and vice-versa); achieve a cease fire agreement through the deployment of ‘Blue-helmets’ in this de-militarised zone which shouldn’t be violated by any side; the final stage should be the step by step democratisation process, through a transitional authority as perceived by the Libyan citizens themselves. But the use of military means and NATO air strikes, produce more polarization among the Libyan population, fostering the “us and them” aspect which will make the reconciliation’s ‘next day’ even harder. And this endangers the creation and perpetuation of another ‘new war’, following the prototypes of Iraq and Afghanistan.

On the other hand, it sounds oxymoron to launch a ‘human security intervention’, where the forces that intervened choose to fight by the one or the other side. We were supposed to protect **all** Libyan citizens, no matter if they are supporting the rebellion authority or the Gaddafi regime. We could debate if the rebels are civilians (non-combatants) or combatants according to the international law, since they don’t wear uniforms etc., but this is not the point. They drive armed vehicles, they fight using tanks and weapons and when NATO bombed some of them, the Alliance

¹⁹ AlJazeera (April 22, 2011) [US deploys armed drones in Libya](#)

See also The Independent ((May 8, 2011) [Italy 'offers to arm rebels' as Gaddafi forces destroy oil tanks](#)

²⁰ Al Jazeera (April 20, 2011) [France and Italy to send Libya advisers](#)

²¹ BBC News (May 5, 2011) [Libya: Contact group creates fund for rebels](#)

²² AlJazeera (April 11, 2011) [Gaddafi 'accepts' AU plan to end fighting](#)

stated that they regret the loss of lives from friendly fire²³... Moreover we could debate to what extent are Gaddafi's compounds legitimate military targets for NATO, in order to protect civilians. But definitely, the air strike that targeted the house of his 29 year old son, killing him and 3 of his grandsons²⁴ didn't contribute to the protection of civilians. On the contrary, it made Gaddafi even more popular among his sympathisers, with sentiments of compassion for his loss, anger towards the western intervention and more polarisations towards the rebels who called NATO for help. How do we imagine the 'next day' after all, and how could this country be led to peaceful and democratic elections and reconciliation?

The media are contributing to this polarisation by all means. The demonization of Gaddafi is the primary concern: he has been reported responsible for the death of children even by NATO's aerial bombings²⁵; rumors about a potential use of chemical weapons against Misrata fuelled more fears and criticism against him²⁶. The videos with F-16s taking off, sophisticated weapon-systems in move, missiles launching and destroyed tanks and buildings, provide the contemporary type of presenting 'news as infotainment', in a Hollywood movie style or a new video game. But the other side of the operations never reaches our TV device, in order to present the real and terrifying dimension of the war: civilians killed in bombed buildings, or the human beings inside the destroyed tank, no matter which side they support – they are the civilians that were supposed to be protected.

The next issue we could debate about is UN Security Council's selectivity. The resolution for the intervention in Libya was achieved in one night as already mentioned, but even a press statement wasn't achieved, calling on Syria's leaders to stop the violence against their own people²⁷. Of course intervention was out of question. Why such a selectivity comparing to the situations in other -even neighbouring- countries such as Ivory Coast? Why do we have to use humanitarian causes as the legitimisation of the intervention when not applied in equal terms for everyone? And the EU, despite the proximity, economic ties, and all this dialogue about the means to cope with the problems caused from the 'immigrants fleeing violence' (I wonder also why aren't these people called refugees according to the international law), is completely absent.

²³ BBC News (April 8, 2011) [Libya: Nato 'regrets' loss of life from Ajdabiya strike](#)

²⁴ AlJazeera (May 1, 2011) [Nato strike 'kills Gaddafi's youngest son'](#)

²⁵ The New York Times (March 30, 2011) [Libyans Offer Credible Case of Death by Airstrike](#)

²⁶ The Independent (May 2, 2011) [Nato airstrikes hits Misrata outskirts](#)

²⁷ The New York Times (April 27, 2011) [Push in U.N. for Criticism of Syria Is Rejected](#)

It's difficult to assume what tomorrow will look like in Libya, even from the optimistic point of view. The rebelled "government", already started the oil international trade²⁸ from the port of Tobruk, under the status of 'Free Libya', but it should be an exacerbation to discuss its legitimacy when our previous debates remain without an answer, and the deed that the income from this oil exploitation will fund and perpetuate the conflict. Perhaps this could be an international effort to rename the 'Responsibility to Protect', into 'Right to Punish'. But whatever reason this 'new war' was waged for, finally the civilians are still paying the cost; not in terms of oil wealth that could boost the development and living conditions of all Libyans, but in human lives, increasing the everyday death toll instead of following a reconciliation process and transition to democracy, if this is the end state they aim at.

²⁸ The Independent (April 6,2011) ['Free Libya' oil tanker brings new hope but rebels in retreat](#)