

SOMALIA REMAINS “STEALTH”: THE HUMAN INSECURITY PARADIGM

Ioannis Chapsos¹

(Commander, Hellenic Navy (PhD Cand), Hellenic Supreme Joint War College Instructor, Global Security specialist)

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While the [UN resolution 1973](#) 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 ...*”, the civilians in the East coast, the Horn of Africa, are experiencing the absolute “human insecurity”. The citizens of the failed state of Somalia, amidst the decade long civil war, have to cope with terrorist groups, organised crime networks, piracy, poverty and complete absence of human rights. More recently a famine stemming from a prolonged draught, cause the death of hundreds of people in a daily basis. Yet, the international community remains in apathy and the famous “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine can not be implemented, since it refers only to the protection of “... *populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity...*”².

The [Failed State Index 2011](#), published recently by Foreign Policy, ranked Somalia for fourth year in row, in the top position of the world. Moreover, the 417 page [report of the UN monitoring group on Somalia](#) released in late July, describes the complete lack of governance and functional national institutions in the country. During the last few months clashes between the AU force and Al Shabaab, the jihadist movement linked to Al Qaeda, are intensified for the control of the capital Mogadishu, as well as

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

² 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]

close to the borderline with Kenya³. Civilians are trapped between “governmental” forces and Al Shabaab fighters (who are aiming at overthrowing the transitional government and impose Islamic law) and are abused by both sides since the one accuses them for supporting the other⁴. Only during the last two years, more than 1.5 million people were forced to flee Mogadishu due to insecurity and the increasing violence.

Indications of close ties and cooperation between Somali Al Shabaab militants and Yemen’s franchise terrorist group of Al Qaeda, plotting potential attacks against US targets, led the US military to execute drone attacks in early July in Somalia⁵. But definitely, these spasmodic reactions can not affect decisively towards a viable solution or put an end to the civil war.

On the other hand, piracy flourishes in the coast of Somalia. Out of 266 pirate attacks that were perpetrated worldwide in the first half of 2011 (a rise from 196 attacks the same period last year), more than 60% of them were by Somali pirates⁶. The existence of ungoverned areas and the lack of efficient law enforcement agencies provide the perfect “safe haven” in the soil of the failed state, despite the international flotilla conducting counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. But this lucrative business is not because of the attractive life-style of the modern pirates; for the Somali people are the means to survive⁷.



As if the civil war and the criminal activities were not enough, an unprecedented drought –the worst in the last 60 years- was the missing part of the human insecurity puzzle. Somali families flee to the adjacent Kenya, where the biggest refugee camp in the world, “... *the overcrowded Dadaab refugee camp in Garissa continues to receive new arrivals at alarming rates. The current number of registered refugees – 353,921 – is four*

³ The Economist (March 31, 2011), [Somalia's civil war: A bloody border](#) [5 April 2011]

⁴ Al Jazeera (05 Jul 2011), [The human cost of Somalia's civil war](#) [30 July 2011]

⁵ Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt (July 1, 2011), NY Times, [US Expands Its Drone War into Somalia](#)

⁶ Safety4Sea (18 July 2011) [Piracy once again rose in the first half of 2011](#) [30 July 2011]

⁷ Ioannis Chapsos (2011), RIEAS, [From Human to Maritime Security: The Implications and Cost of Piracy](#)

*times its capacity. Twenty thousand people have arrived in the last two weeks alone.*⁸ The UN refugees agency characterised the situation as the “worst humanitarian crisis in the world”; more than a quarter of Somali population is affected, while more than 50% of the children that manage to arrive to the refugee camps (and not die on their way to Kenya) suffer from severe malnutrition⁹. According to the UN, the situation is expected to deteriorate even more.

The famine conditions are made even worst for the civilians due to the conflict. Al Shabaab prevents many humanitarian aid agencies and NGOs from distributing food to affected areas under its control¹⁰. Even worst, it tries to halt the exodus of people towards the camps, by imprisoning refugees who are trying to escape their territory¹¹. Torture, raping and any kind of abuses have been extensively reported against people trying to reach food security by moving to another territory, out of Al Shabaab’s control¹².

The increasing numbers of child soldiers and child pirates’ recruitment confirms that this insecure environment provides children by all means, an alternative to survive. Those who manage to survive from the famine prefer to join the Al Shabaab militants or the pirate groups, ensuring this way that they will have something to eat, at least for one more day. Inevitably, the complete lack of human security in all its dimensions and parameters, enhance the perpetuation of conflict and insecurity, creating a huge deposit of people willing to fight or perpetrate a crime, instead of starving to death.

Comparing the casualties of Libya’s “new war” -the mainstream media top event- and Somalia’s famine (without counting the conflict’s death toll), anyone should wonder why this part of the world is profoundly neglected to that extend. It’s evident that the principles of human security are not applicable in Somalia. The “freedom from want” and “freedom from fear”, are unknown words for the citizens of this part of the world; their primary objective

⁸ UN news Centre (30 June 2011) [Regional drought causing ‘alarming’ overcrowding at Kenyan refugee camp: UN](#) [4 July 2011]

⁹ UNHCR (5 July 2011) [Staggering malnutrition rates as quarter of Somalia population uprooted](#) [30 July 2011]

¹⁰ International Crisis Group (26 July 2011) [Five Things to Know About the Horn of Africa Food Crisis](#)

¹¹ Jeffrey Gettleman (August 1, 2011), NY Times, [Somalis Waste Away as Insurgents Block Escape From Famine](#) [2 August 2011]

¹² The Washington Post (July 29, 2011) [Somali man recalls horrors of jail, rape, death while fleeing country’s famine](#) [1 August 2011]

is to live another day. Thousands are dying everyday, most of them children, but the international community is reluctant to intervene and “... *take all necessary measures... to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat ...*” of the civil war, famine, and human rights abuses of any kind.

The R2P doctrine is indeed problematic in its application and enforcement, but the selectivity and partiality of what we optimistically call “international community” can not be ignored or overlooked. In the case of Somalia there is no sovereignty to be questioned or violated, since there is no state. Hence, the “right to intervene” and the “responsibility to protect” become rhetoric wherever there are no national interests of those who have the power to react. The threats posed against populations, genocides and humanitarian crises are not stemming only from weapons. Human dignity, food security, access to potable water and health care, are the fundamental needs and human principles, no matter in which place of the world we refer to. And these principles are violated when we demonstrate to the world that we exploit the “humanitarian cause” only if we wish to legitimise our intervention in a specific time and place, while the worst crises remain “stealth”.