IRREGULAR WARFARE AND (IN)SECURITY IN THE HORN OF AFRICA
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Abstract: The paper will focus on the transformation of war (associated with phenomena such as human displacement, famine, violence against civilians, and commercialization of military troops) and on the refugee flows and insecurity within refugee camps which amount to humanitarian tragedies. The second chief aim of this paper is to investigate tenets of the extended analytical framework of security and to emphasize the relevance of constructivist and critical security studies. The pivotal line of arguments will revolve around specificities of violent conflict in the Horn of Africa which trigger the need to revisit mainstream approaches on state security by analyzing intra-state (and internationalized) violence and by including types of post-colonial insecurity, food insecurity and environmental degradation. The main underlying research question is: why is human security a valid framework of analysis in the case of irregular warfare in the Horn of Africa?

Keywords: human security, Horn of Africa, state weakness, food insecurity

1. Introduction

The increase of intra-state war is directly proportional with the outbreak of violence in Africa. At the same time, most of what has often been termed in the media "humanitarian emergency", "deteriorating crises", "civilian suffering", "huge refugee crisis", "famine, hunger, and pandemics", "violent attacks by local militias" points to the African continent. Most intra-state conflicts are internal but become internationalized due to massive refugee flows which destabilize neighbouring countries and due to plight of civilians hit by famine or disease [1].

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) focused on such trends in its reports and yearbooks: "Africa was the region with the most conflicts in the 10-year period 2000–2009, with 12 major armed conflicts recorded [...]. Only one of the 12 conflicts was fought between states: Eritrea–Ethiopia. Half of the intrastate conflicts were internationalized at some point, which distinguishes Africa from other regions ..." [2].

In this article I intend to briefly present the shift from traditional state-centric views on security to the extended analytical framework of security (and human centred views). Then, I will proceed to exploring specificities of violent conflict in the Horn of Africa which triggered the need to revisit mainstream approaches on state security by analyzing intra-state (and internationalized) violence. The final purpose is to show that human-centric analyses of armed violence in the Horn of Africa reveal the merits of human security.

2. From states' security to individuals' security

Within the last decades security issues have been shifted from the national level to the concept of Human Security which focuses on the security dimensions of individuals from the internationally guaranteed human rights perspective.

Along with the millennium goals at the UN and other international organizations the human security approach was closely linked with the concepts of sustainable development and good governance and is therefore meant to reduce the likelihood of violent conflicts.

2.1. Traditional conceptions of security

Traditional conceptions of security were often equated with Strategic Studies developed during the Cold War. The latter have strong connections with Realism and Neo-realism in International Relations. The traditionalist perspective is based on state-centrism, materialism, and the use of force which refers to the *use of military force by states* and implies the prevalence of *military threats* that states are confronted with. Therefore, in Realist Strategic Studies the concept of security defines the "state as the referent object, the use of force as the central concern, external threats as the primary ones, the politics of security as engagement with radical dangers and the adoption of emergency measures" [3].

The Realist postulates have been dominating the field of Security Studies throughout time and especially during the Cold War, when *national security* became the centrepiece of concern. The realist account on national security entailed the materialist-loaded conception of states' ability to maximize the military capabilities in order to address security issues. The Neorealist understanding of an international system governed by anarchy implied an international order wherein *security from outside threats* (due to the ubiquity of conflict/violence/attack) was the essence of rational thinking. The international anarchical condition turned *statism* and *self-help* into overriding principles. Such thinking *cum* decision-making was designed to protect the state and maximize its power; herein power was exclusively and overwhelmingly centred on military capacity.

It has often been argued that the poverty of Realism does not capture a complex dynamic of violence (as is the case with most African new wars) wherein weak states are confronted with internal fragmentation and proliferation of militias, civil war, the spill-over effects of conflicts in neighbouring states, and the incapacity to protect citizens who become tragic victims of humanitarian disasters. The reductionist worldview of Neo-realism solely aims at state's defence. Here, security is understood as *freedom from threat* and rules out the *freedom to* (meaning the *enabling* attribute of freedom). The groups' and the individuals' security is not primarily addressed since state is the political unit of concern and the provider of internal security [4].

2.2. Extending the meaning of security

During the 1990s alternative approaches moved away the objectives of policy (and the essence of theorizing) from the military to economic, societal, environmental, and human security. Basically, the non-traditional, "widening" and "deepening" debates on security were extended so as to challenge and complete the realist account.

There are several basic claims that Constructivist Security Studies, Critical Security Studies and the Copenhagen School of Security Studies share: firstly, "that 'security' is not an objective condition", secondly, "that threats to it are not simply a matter of correctly perceiving a constellation of material forces", and thirdly, "that the object of security is not stable or unchanging" [5]. Therefore, central to these approaches are questions such as "*how* the object to be secured (nation, state, or other group) is constituted, - and how particular issues (economic well-being, the risk of violence, environmental degradation) are placed under the 'sign of security'" [6].

Constructivist scholars tackled the issue of need (dis)satisfaction and the way in which the realist pre-given, ubiquitous security dilemma is constructed. For instance, Alexander Wendt emphasized the social construction of fear and anxiety and

explained how people experience the emotion of satisfaction when needs are met, and how they experience anxiety, fear or frustration when such needs are not met [7]. Jennifer Mitzen showed that the realist survival (understood in terms of physical survival) led to people's tendency to think "about security monolithically, as physical security, or security of the body" but she emphasized that "there is another fundamental form of security, ontological security, or security of one's identity" [8].

At individual level, traumatic daily experiences in an armed conflict environment or in war-torn society lead to the individuals' perpetual anxiety and their inability to go back to who they were before the dreadful events that marked their *selves*, be it their physical well-being, be it their knowledge about who they are. African humanitarian disasters such as Somalia, or regions of insecurity (such as the Horn of Africa) showed that a large number of individuals lived in a paralyzing fear and were not only unable to protect themselves physically, but also incapacitated to control the threat environment and to acknowledge whether they were targets, victims, security referents, or waves of refugees creating a security issue.

Critical Security Studies and Feminist Security Studies evolved alongside with constructivist approaches. According to Edward Newman indicated that critical security studies and human security shared certain concerns and both challenged the narrow neorealist scholarship, and most specifically "the state-centric orthodoxy of conventional international security, based upon military defence of territory against 'external' threats" [9].

2.3. Human Security

In 1994, The United Nations Development Program, through its Human Development Report, established as chief theme the shift "from nuclear security to human security," or to "the basic concept of human security," defined as safety from "such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression," and "protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions" [10]. A year later, The International Commission on Global Governance was the exponent of vertically extended security [11] and stated that "global security must be broadened from its traditional focus on the security of states to the security of people and the planet" [12].

In 1995 the United Nations Secretary-General called for a "conceptual breakthrough," going "beyond armed territorial security" (as in the institutions of 1945) towards enhancing or protecting "the security of people in their homes, jobs and communities" [13].

In 2001, the Commission on Human Security was set up and in 2003 it released its report wherein it stated that "the demands of human security involve a broad range of interconnected issues"; consequently, the Commission has concentrated on "distinct but interrelated areas concerned with conflict and poverty, protecting people during violent conflict and in post-conflict situations, defending people who are forced to move, overcoming economic insecurities..." [14].

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has associated human security to several salient issues: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political. Ramesh Thakur defined human security as follows: "Human security is concerned with the protection of people from critical and life-threatening dangers, [...] whether they lie within or outside states and whether they are direct or structural..." [15].

In what follows, I will emphasize certain sources of insecurity in the Horn of Africa and will argue that state-centric views on security in this region do not offer solutions for the security of individuals; rather, human security is the most appropriate framework for analysis in this case.

3. The Horn of Africa and Human (in)Security

There are several threats to security in the Horn of Africa, but I will here briefly

mention a few. First of all, the persistence f inter-state warfare (Ethiopia *versus* Somalia, Ethiopia *versus* Eritrea, and Sudan *versus* South Sudan) has also produced irregular warfare. As shown by others, proxy wars in the Horn of Africa represent a "logic of subversion", meaning that "the states of the Horn of Africa took advantage of every local tension or conflict to support rebel movements in neighbouring states" [16]. Secondly, the existence of so-called *African strongmen* (Mengistu, Nimeiri or Siad Barre) has produced clan-affiliations or ethnic or religious discrimination. Thirdly, piracy and terrorism are the main causes of human insecurity, as indicated by other scholars. For instance, Endalcachew Bayes showed that "the danger of maritime criminal activities is apparent in the Horn of Africa, which is detrimental to human security" [17]. All these elements, coupled with droughts, famines, disruption of pastoralists' lives, triggered environmental degradation, scarcity of resources, food insecurity, and human insecurity.

It is my main contention that human-centred approaches lead to apprehending the weakness of states' institutions in the Horn of Africa, but also to understanding the weakness of civil societies in rebounding and rallying around certain stable leaders. The argument focuses on the inability of civilians to manage their environment, since irregular warfare has pervaded their mere existence; hence, they suffer from both physical and ontological insecurity.

The attempts of the states in the Horn to focus on the military sector (aiming at counteracting external threats) and the subsequent military spending did not produce the ending of territorial disputes or absence of inter-state warfare, but rather deprived the civilians and the societies. As shown by Berouk Mesfin, the ambition of governments to "build and maintain military forces of large dimension" leads to scarcity or resources since "excessive militarisation entails an increased burden" and "[is] wasteful, resulting in social

projects in education or health remaining stagnant or even non-existent" [18]. Therefore, the combination of *strongmen* (who have their strongholds in clan- or ethnic based affiliation and who reject the others from power sharing) with military spending in order to strengthen the state has not proven a viable solution in the Horn of Africa. The result of all these efforts has led to the states' militarization, but also state weakness. More specifically, states "spend a large share of national expenditure on the military in disproportion to their available economic resources and existing security threats" [19]. Basically, the militarization of the state does not match the immediate threats and impoverishes the society, producing human insecurity and the crippling of states' institutions.

For example, during the 1990s, after toppling down Siad Barre, Somalia was in a devastating state of decay. The anarchy which governed the Somali society in the 1990s, the prevalence of small guns, "armed vehicles", the local militias and warlords, the looting and human suffering, all indicated the need to design a robust military operation centred on the separation of civilians from the irregulars and on the insecurity of individuals. A human security approach and a non-Western account of African state formation and institution building provide an insightful view of how humanitarian crises could be solved and human suffering and insecurity could be ended.

Irregular warfare in Somalia still produces disastrous effects on the civilians. Due to the food insecurity that reached critical levels, in 2011 the ICRC "provided emergency food rations to more than 1.2 million people, emergency water rations to 347,000 people and shelter materials to 561,060 IDPs" [20]. Also, Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) "treated over 95,000 patients for malnutrition; treated over 6,000 patients for measles and vaccinated almost 235,000 children against the disease" in the period May-December 2011 and "within its

various healthcare structures MSF assisted in over 5,500 deliveries and provided over 450,000 consultations" [21]. Large parts of the Somali population (especially those in South-Central part of country, often called the epicentre of the crisis) are severely affected by continuous conflict, violence, self-perpetuating insecurity, lack of food, and actually survive with emergency aid.

The main argument supported here is that states' security in the Horn of Africa should come from within, from the *enabling of citizens*, meaning bottom-up participatory initiatives meant to strengthen states' institutions. Such initiatives would lead to social projects and improvement of the quality of life which would ultimately lead to strengthening the state as corporate agent, not merely as military actor in the region.

4. Conclusions

The main argument defended here is centred on human security as valid framework of security in the Horn of Africa. The traditional conception of security, based on states' militarization (meant to counteract external threats) has proven ineffective in the case of the Horn of Africa, since it has not produced absence of inter-state wars. Consequently, the result of such policies was an over-militarized state apparatus, the ubiquity of guns, but also the breaking down of institutional structure and human insecurity.

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