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## The New Faces of Violence and War: Peace and Security Challenges

The current challenges to peace and security are complex, unpredictable and related to fields that were commonly considered outside the State oriented security concept. Violence and conflicts in the XXI century are irregular with no clear State and non-State actors involved, and many times with no identified organization involved. For the international, multilateral, State and non governmental actors (including NGOs and business sector) to work towards and inside the complex environments of countries and regions in armed conflict or with high levels of violence have become a difficult task. Even more complex is to have a long term strategy for those actors that want to provide humanitarian relief or international aid with the aim of generating Peacebuilding or long term State building.

The wars are increasingly less confrontations between states and more among non-State groups, political violence is assuming different aspects and the roots of war and violence are related to a broad series of factors. In urban violence, for example, or in the increasing level of youth criminality from Central America to Lagos, violence is neither war nor peace, but politics is included in a broader sense when governments use the argument of being “strong” against civil insecurity or when organized crime linked to corrupted political system use the youth gangs for their aim.

From a Human Security perspective (it means, from a broader human basic needs and broader perspective of security that includes food, health, gender and rights security, among others) urban violence cannot be left aside as “minor”, “apolitical” or “criminal”. Violence in Johannesburg, Rio de Janeiro or Guatemala City is one of poor against the poor, the poor against the rich, and poverty linked to absence of the State and increasing power of the mafias.<sup>1</sup>

Wars are no longer between the armies of concrete states. Even in the few confrontations between states, as the clashes between Ethiopia and Sudan in 2008, or in the open wars (like Iraq) and counterinsurgency war as in Colombia, the paramilitary and irregular forces and the private security forces (mercenaries) are on the rise. Wars are becoming long term processes with cycles of higher and lower levels of violence, with actors that jump into the conflict and stay apart, establish alliances and fight among them. Iraq and Afghanistan are perfect examples. If war in the last 400 years were

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<sup>1</sup> See Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijt (Eds.), *Fractured cities. Social exclusion, urban violence and contested spaces in Latin America*, Zed Press, 2007; and Misha Glenny, *McMafia. Crime without frontiers*, London, The Bodley Head, 2008.

related to the construction of the State (from Westphalia to the anticolonial war of liberation in the XX Century) now they are related to the crisis and disintegration of some states along identity lines, particularly the ones that suffered the impact of neoliberal policies, internal corruption, and external economic and sometimes military interventions.<sup>2</sup> In Iraq, the process of disintegration of Saddam Hussein's State after the 2003 US invasion, led to the fragmentation and eruption of many groups based on identity fighting for the access to oil and land resources and most of them with the common aim of expulsing the US.<sup>3</sup>

In longer armed conflicts, the concept of victory has been deeply affected. The limit that Hezbollah put to Israel in Lebanon in 2006 showed, again, that in some environments a guerrilla group with internal support may win legitimacy and frustrate the ambitions of the other side. But it also showed that Hezbollah is the most powerful player in internal politics in Lebanon and that from a military position is gaining the ground in the internal game of politics in Lebanon.

“Globalization challenges traditional identities, be they ethnic, cultural, religious or national. And as these come under pressure, personal identity too cannot remain stable”.<sup>4</sup> A crucial aspect of modern violence is identity used as legitimacy, from Hezbollah, Hamas and the Shiites and Sunnis Muslims to the youth gangs in Central America (Maras). Identity is a powerful tool used by religious and populist authoritarian leaders to present their confrontations as a must against “the West” or in favor of the recovery of old mythical pasts, or just to attack domestic democratic movements. When real or invented resistance has the identity component, and is mixed with economic interests, they become very strong. In Afghanistan, the groups that NATO identifies as terrorist “Taliban” are tribal, family and identity groups and networks with strong local legitimacy. Israel also describes Hamas as a terrorist group, but in Gaza, and part of the West Bank, is recognized as a political, religious and welfare group that is protecting the Palestinian society.

Terrorism based on identity is a key aspect of the debate about security, but has lost legitimacy in the last decade. There are and there will be terrorist attacks, but the chances to gain popularity and to disrupt either democratic or authoritarian governments is unlikely. But on the other hand, resistance and limited use of force is gaining ground again.

The new vision on war, low intensity armed conflicts and violence is increasingly based on the inter-relation among different factors that generate the use of force. This is not a new approach, but is the way that has been adopted, and there are several factors that are considered direct or indirect roots of conflicts as poverty, climate change, scarce resources and lack of democracy and representation are aggravating the competition for political power, territories, natural resources and cultural hegemonies among different countries and particular communal groups.<sup>5</sup>

War is not any longer the traditional confrontation between the armies of states nor clashes between national liberation movements and imperial powers. Probably Palestine

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<sup>2</sup> See Mary Kaldor, *Human security*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2007, pp. 2-5.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Gérard Chaliand, “Faire face aux conflits asymétriques”, *Le monde. Dossiers et documents*, July-August 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Bhikhu Parekh, *A new politics of identity*, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p.1.

<sup>5</sup> On the relation among environmental crisis, poverty and marginalization, high demand of oil, and militarization see Chris Abbott, Paul Rogers and John Sloboda (The Oxford Research Group, *Beyond terror*, London, Rider, 2007.

is the last war of national liberation, particularly thanks to the stubbornness of Israel and the United States in not accepting that the Palestinians may have their own state accordingly to UN Resolutions and international guarantees for both sides that many countries would be happy to provide.

### **Trends in Global Conflicts**

To address the challenges for security oblige to select what kind of challenges and what kind of violence will be analyzed. If the field of research is armed conflicts around the world, then the main trend to stress is that their number have declined since the end of the Cold War. There are also changes: armed conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa had a major decline, while confrontations in Central and South Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa are growing in number. There is also less number of victims. But at the same time the number of refugees and internally displaced persons grows and the violations of Human Rights continue to be serious and consistent in Sub Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, and Central and South Asia.<sup>6</sup>

If the point of entry is the fighting capacity of states and organizations, then on the one hand it is important to stress that some guerrilla groups and non-state actors groups have access to high technology and sophisticated war fighting and communication equipments that allows them to fight the so-called asymmetric wars.<sup>7</sup> On the other is the very important field of nuclear proliferation and weapons of mass destruction. The main attention is currently focusing on Iran and North Korea, but several countries are developing their nuclear capacities and in the mid and long term could become part of the nuclear armed club. At the same time, countries that have this kind of weapons are involved in dangerous tensions, for example, Iran/Israel, Israel/Egypt and China/Taiwan.

Given that international regime to limit the proliferation of nuclear weapons has many failures and that the most powerful and nuclear armed countries have not shown any interest in the final aim of nuclear disarmament, the realist logic of developing these weapons to be respected and reaffirm the regional or global authority is gaining ground. Nuclear proliferation is related to identity policies and nationalism in the cases of Iran, Pakistan, India and even Israel, where having nuclear weapons is a symbol of prestige and regional hegemony.

Conflict analysis obliges to consider the different factors that generate armed conflicts. The classic definition refers to fight between a state and one or more organized armed actors for territory or political power. This definition is already altered: they tend to last for years and the actors are less clear and predictable than in the past.<sup>8</sup> On the one hand there are other indirect and direct factors that must be included in the causes of war, as poverty, inequality, greed, grievance, fight for natural resources with strong international demand (as oil or diamonds), restrictions of freedom and human rights violations. On the other, the importance and diversification of the non state actors have been growing.

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<sup>6</sup> Human Security Report Project, *Human Security Brief 2007*, Simon Fraser University.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Sheehan, "The changing character of war", in John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens (Eds.), *The globalization of world politics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp.212-224.

<sup>8</sup> Rubert Smith, *The utility of force. The art of war in the modern world*, London, Penguin, 2006.

**Major Armed Conflicts, 2007**

by SIPRI

In 2007, 14 major armed conflicts were active in 13 locations around the world. Over the past decade the global number of active major armed conflicts has declined over all, but the decline has been very uneven, with major drops in 2002 and 2004 and an increase in 2005.

Three of the major armed conflicts in 2007 were not active in 2006 (i.e. had not started or had fewer than 25 battle related deaths): Peru, the Philippines (Mindanao) and Somalia. Three conflicts in 2006 were no longer active in 2007: Burundi, Sudan and Uganda. Four of the 14 major armed conflicts that were active in 2007 increased in intensity compared to 2006: Sri Lanka (Tamil Eelam), Afghanistan, Myanmar (Karen State) and Turkey (Kurdistan). In the latter three, battle-related deaths increased by more than 50 per cent.

**Conflicts by continent**

<i>Africa</i>	Somalia
<i>Americas</i>	Colombia
	Peru
	USA
<i>Asia</i>	Afghanistan
	India (Kashmir)
	Myanmar (Karen State)
	Philippines
	Philippines (Mindanao)
	Sri Lanka ('Tamil Eelam')
<i>Europe</i>	Russia (Chechnya)
<i>Middle East</i>	Iraq
	Israel (Palestinian territories)
	Turkey (Kurdistan)

Source: SIPRI Yearbook 2008, Oxford University Press,

<http://yearbook2008.sipri.org/files/SIPRIYB08summary.pdf>

**Lack of State and the Political Economy of Violence**

One of the characteristics of the current armed conflicts is that many of them are related to the lack of state capacity to manage the normal conflict inside the societies. The so called fragile states do not provide the framework of Rule of Law to guarantee the rights

and safety of the citizens, and in many cases the monopoly of the use of force and there is series of state and non state armed actors. Some of these actors use coercion and provide protection to society groups, and replace the State in its functions and responsibilities.

A second important characteristic is that violence adopts different shapes. With volatile flexibility some actors cross the border from political violence to criminality and from personal or communal revenge to politics. The use of violence has become a way of living and has moved from geopolitics to the political economy of armed conflicts. In some contexts, organized violence (by and around armed groups) provides a code of conduct with rules for groups and individuals and provides a social fabric to make a living for social groups, a problem intrinsically related to the absence of the State. This overlap among the political economy of violence, identity and internal conflicts make very difficult the understanding for external actors (as professional mediators) and the donor community (that tries to implement peacebuilding policies or that deployed peace operations) that tries to work in these complex environments.

There is also a different kind of violence that is in a grey area and could be included in scenarios that are less than war but more than civilian criminality. One example is urban violence, particularly in big urban conglomerates. There is a political economy of urbanization related to the economic structure of the State, the hierarchical architecture of a given society, the internal center and peripheries, and the way that structure is connected to the global economy. Inequalities, exploitation and the use of violence as an instrument to defend interests or to have legal or illegal access to goods are part of the narrative of modern violence. Unemployment, rapid and chaotic urban growth and lack of opportunities for young people is an explosive combination.

In this framework, is relevant the role of the macro cities and how violence is used and integrated in the illegal economy of violence. “Contemporary cities, indicates the Crisis States Research Centre, are increasingly vulnerable to the impact of sovereign and civil war and are also sites of urban-based civic conflicts”.<sup>9</sup> Security firms, gangs, paramilitaries are the non state actors that substitute the public services that must be provided by the State.

### **Food Crisis: Security Threat?**

Six current and very different situations are interesting starting points for the analysis of the current challenges to global security. The food crisis that has impacted on more than 40 countries; the war in Darfur; the different armed confrontations in Mexico among the State, heavy-armed drug lords, corrupted civil servants and some descent judges and officials; the war in Afghanistan where the armed groups are gaining ground against NATO and the Kabul’s government; and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict where the old national liberation demand is now penetrated by religious and identity confrontations while Israel is developing its agenda in an independent way of Washington.

The food crisis that erupted last May in around 40 countries cost the life of about 60 people. A limited number compared to hundred thousand or even millions that have died in the last 20 or 30 years in different wars around the world. But the predictions are dramatic: the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund consider that in 2020 there will be 300 million of people malnourished in Africa. Urbanization, the abandon

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<sup>9</sup> “Cities in fragile states”, Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics, [www.crisstates.com](http://www.crisstates.com)

of the cultivable land, the lack of opportunities in the world market for agricultural goods and climate change are some of the factors.<sup>10</sup> The UN Secretary General called for a reduction or an end of Northern protectionism and the restrictions to imports and exports of food.

The revolts in the streets of Port-au-Prince, Cairo or Philippines showed the link between three levels: the impact of economic and commercial globalization, the weakness of some states to resist to external shocks and the fragility of the political, institutional and social fabric in some countries to be providers and to respond to the basic needs of their populations.

That one of the explanations of the food crisis is that there is more demand to eat better from countries that only yesterday were poor, and that other root of the problem are the US and European subsidies for biofuels, shows the incoherence of a world that is globalized but unequal and anarchic. The OECD and the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization predict high prices for a long time. The food import bill of the poorest countries which faces a food-deficit is likely to climb to US169bn, 40% more than in 2007.<sup>11</sup> The food crisis affects poor people and the political conflict disrupts the production of food. Around 300.000 people were forced to abandon their farms when violence erupted at the beginning of 2008. Many were maize farmers that could not develop their yearly task. The result has been a decline in the harvest.<sup>12</sup>

The food crisis combined with the apparently non-stop rise of the price of oil generated serious concerns in Western governments and multilateral organizations. The "people in the street" is seen as a factor that could generate social unrest, violence and put some governments under risk, from Haiti to more powerful countries as India, Vietnam or Indonesia. Josette Sheeran, Executive Director of the World Food Programme indicates "that riots in more than 30 countries were stark reminders that food insecurity threatens not only the hungry but peace and stability itself".<sup>13</sup>

### **Complex Crisis and the Violence of the Poorest**

The food crisis is part of the humanitarian drama in Darfur. Since 2003, when two rebel groups started a rebellion against the Sudanese government, the conflict evolved to become a complex, transborder conflict with roots in ethnic tensions, struggle for scarce resources, lack of State and misgovernance and the tension between central Sudan and one of its peripheries. Some sources consider that around 300.000 people have died victim of violence and more than 2.5 to 3 million are internally displaced.

Most of the 25 rebel groups are implicated in theft, banditry and violations of human rights. The Darfur crisis is international because it affects the region and due to the implication and interests of the US, China, Russia and Europe, but the international efforts to stop the killings and push the groups and Khartoum to reach an agreement have failed so far, in part for the lack of commitment, divisions, power politics, economic interests among the external actors.<sup>14</sup> Some countries do not want to support the precedent of an international intervention for human rights reasons, others do not want to put their forces under risk, and all have interest in the Sudanese oil.

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<sup>10</sup> "Pastillas para estómagos vacíos", *El País*, June 9th, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> "Food prices forecast to stay high for 10 years", *Financial Times*, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> "Kenya food inflation hits 44%", *Financial Times*, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> "West rethinks strategic threats", *Financial Times*, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> See "The international response to Darfur", *Activity brief*, FRIDE, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008. [www.fride.org](http://www.fride.org)

In the meantime, thousands of poor immigrants have escaped and some were killed and badly hurt in South Africa also on last May. Angry mobs and groups of black people attacked the black people of neighborhood countries, as Mozambique, Botswana and Zimbabwe. Thousands of poor people leave this country because of the disastrous economic situation created by the Mugabe authoritarian regime and now they are pushed back.<sup>15</sup> Poverty, unemployment, grievances for the rise of the new post-Apartheid black elite, and agitation the of some populist leaders generated the attacks on “the others”. “We were an example of racial integration after the long night of Apartheid” told me a South African diplomat”, but now we seem to be the shame of Africa”.

### **The Drug Wars**

In Mexico there is a cross war among the Army, the powerful drug traffickers, the US advisors, some of the illegal gangs among them, and part of the descent civil servants and the corrupted ones. “Mexico is losing the war”, says an expert, and the “illegal actors are capturing part of one of the biggest countries in Latin America”. Although Mexico is an active part of the free trade agreement with the United States and Canada, the situation of poverty, inequality and corruption is extreme. Cultivation and trafficking of drugs are a crucial part of a domestic economy integrated in the illegal global system, with particularly strong demand from the US illicit market.

In other parts of the world NATO forces launched in June an offensive against the Taliban. In the last years several armed groups gained ground in a war that since 2001 has been presented as a success story in opposition to the failure in Iraq. Most of these groups are funded by the narco-economy, are allies or fighting among themselves for control of territory, illegal markets, cheap labor, social legitimacy and political power. All have different identities and it is a mistake to label them *Taliban*, an easy way to describe a dangerous enemy of the West, but wrong to have a deep knowledge of whom are the real actors in that complex country. Taliban and not Taliban groups, all are fighting against the Karzai government, NATO, the US and the UN. And the feeling is that the war is being lost or that it will take many decades to reach some stability.<sup>16</sup>

The war in Afghanistan can't be understood without a regional analysis that includes Pakistan, the hegemonic tensions between India and China over the region. The same happened with the Democratic Republic of Congo and its regional impact, the Rwanda-Burundi Great Lakes area, and the previously mentioned Sudan-Darfur conflict.

### **The Lack of Respect for International Law**

Last scenario: Palestine-Israel. While almost nobody speaks of Annapolis Conference and the chances of having a peace agreement before President George W. Bush will end his mandate, the Israeli Government approves new settlements in areas of Jerusalem that are legally under occupation. The Mahmud Abbas' Government of the Palestinian Authority sees how to have been open for negotiations with Israel does not gives any retribution. He is loosing legitimacy and political support inside the Palestinian

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<sup>15</sup> “Emigrer en Afrique du Sud a tout prix”, *Courrier internationale*, June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2008, p. 35.

<sup>16</sup> See a series of analysis by Astri Suhrke, Robert Matthews, Juan Garrigues and other authors on Afghanistan at [www.frde.org](http://www.frde.org)

population, while Hamas resisting the blockade in Gaza and launching rockets into Israel is step by step gaining ground internally and externally.

Israel does not comply with the UN Resolutions that over the last 40 years have indicated the road to peace. The international community does not react in consequence, showing the Palestinians that when the most powerful countries have the will, then it is possible to build a State, as it happened in Kosovo. This double standard is deteriorating the international regimes and International Law, important instruments that we will need in the future to manage violence and conflicts.

### **Time and Knowledge**

The complexity of the international armed conflicts and other forms of violence oblige the external actors to be cautious and thoughtful. Humanitarian relief, international development aid, diplomacy (mediation, promotion of reconciliation, to help for transitional justice) and peace operations are all possible options, but must be used with a deep knowledge of the situations on the field, with deep knowledge of the historical background and strong relationships inside.<sup>17</sup> “Diplomacy and Peacebuilding”, said recently a Norwegian diplomat with a long expertise in Africa, “is all about personal relationships, know the language, to know the people”.

Sometimes trying to do well may provoke very bad results. Governments and non governmental organizations must be careful about the myth of changing other societies, for good or for bad. From the fast-speed violent neoconservative promotion of democracy to the illusion of generating peace and development in a decade of military interventions that would solve everything, all the external options not based in an adequate knowledge, with full and front-line participation of the local actors are condemned to failure. States in crisis are not entities with lack of vision and projects. On contrary, the local actors have their aims, although they could be illegal and not in accordance with Western standards. If there are situations of violations of human rights, genocide, extreme poverty, hunger and other terrible situations, the international community may help, put pressure, do something ambitious and from a universal values (not with double standards) perspective but avoiding easy responses.

But the domestic context is not the only crucial factor. A globalized world requires an international perspective on domestic and regional problems. External legal and illegal flows and investments open and shadows economies, the privatization of war and remittances are some of the factors that must be contemplated. Even the most weak and poor country of the world has external links, and it is or could be an important segment of licit or illicit movements that may be connected to some level of violence. It is crucial that the countries that are keen to provide aid and relief also look at their private and public investments in order to have a coherent responsibility towards the societies that are supposed to help.

In the particular case of war, armed conflicts and social violence in Africa, Europe could play different roles strengthening the multilateral system and showing that the values and principles that are at the base of the European Union (and its associates) are more than nice words.

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<sup>17</sup> See Jonathan Goodhand, *Aiding peace? The role of NGOs in armed conflict*, Rugby, ITDG publishing, 2006.



First, Europe can support the international regimes in progress on arms trade and anti-personnel land mines. It means to do all the possible efforts to control the transfer of weapons and to impose the strictest control on European private and public arms manufacturers and dealers.

Second, Europe must provide economic, diplomatic and political support to all efforts in the field of protection of human rights and prevention of genocide: the International Criminal Court, the ad hoc courts and any other current and future instrument that may help to consolidate a human rights regime and to help transitional justice in postconflict situations. The exploration of the potential role that the EU may play deepening and in some situations practicing the concept of Responsibility to Protect (through prevention, protection and rehabilitation) is an important task in this field.

Third, there is a need for further and deeper coordination between the Member States, the EU and associates of their action and funding to the multilateral UN system. Contributions to the United Nations' bodies as PNUD and UNICEF, or the World Health Organization and UNIFEM are important, but in the reality of the field, the lack of coordination and the clashes among agencies are diminishing the impact.

Fourth, if peace and development goes along, Europe should also find better ways to coordinate the official aid for development and for emergency actions and funds with the vast world of European NGOs and their local partners. At the end of the day, the fragmentation of aid generates more harm than good. To say it in few words, the official and non governmental aid and emergency policies needs more benchmarks and real accountability.

The monitoring and evaluation processes generally used may not be the best instruments, particularly if they are oriented to confirm what the donors are doing, and they are doing well. It is necessary to deepen and expand the experiences of South-North dialogues and forums, with all the actors involved in order to have a better sense of how the situations evolve, the real needs. Social change needs time so instead of mechanical evaluations there should be more political as well as practical evaluations, of what the different governments, the EU and organizations are doing and what they can do with local actors.

Fifth, the EU and associates must develop expertise in peace operations, particularly in association with the African Union, providing support and helping to facilitate regional dialogues. Military intervention in the postcolonial age, developed by external or African forces, is a very sensitive issue. The EU may promote forums of dialogue, learning from experiences from past and current experiences (e.g., the Latin American forces that are currently deployed in Haiti) on peacekeeping and peace operations, and offer the hardware, transport, intelligence technology and any other urgent needs that may help the African Union to deploy forces, particularly to prevent human rights violations or to guarantee peace agreements in the region.

Any or all of these measures will need a different commitment from Europe and from the African governments. From the European side, it must avoid looking at Africa as a source of opportunities for cheap natural resources and of problems as refugees and migrants. The attitude must mix pragmatism with values, from the understanding that Europe and Africa are historically, geographically and economically linked. From Africa, it would be useful to avoid demagogic anti colonial discourses as alibis for authoritarian legitimation. But at the same time, there are European political, economic, scientific and technological assets, among others, that could be useful for the future development of the continent.

Last, but not least, the external projects on peacebuilding need a long term strategy. One of the most important problems of the donor community is that even when it want to provide funds for aid it lacks a strategic perspective. Lacking this perspective that must be discussed with the domestic and external actors, all help, peace operations and funds will be useless.