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External Interventions in Countries in Crisis

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1) DOCTRINES AND REALITY GOVERNING INTERVENTION: A VARIETY OF CONTEXTS

The history of recent interventions (September 2001 being a convenient starting point from a western point of view) undertaken by some States in third countries shows that the game of imperatives has been singular in each case.

Proof of this can be found in the remarkable variation of positions that the States have adopted over the period in question; there has been no set context on the part of the intervening or opposing States: unanimity in 2001 in Afghanistan, deep division amongst the western allies in 2003 in Iraq, abstention on the part of the emerging powers (including Brazil), and Germany at the Security Council in 2011 in Libya, French solitude in 2013 in Mali, although it did benefit from the logistic support of some allies however.

The same applies to doctrines. The Brazilian whitepaper on national defence as it stood in 2012 devoted a great amount of space to the strategic context of the 21st century [1]. It advocates cooperative multipolarity, associates cooperation and defence capabilities and sets out positions on the international system. Seen from Brasilia the only legitimate interventions are strictly controlled peacekeeping operations under the aegis of the UN: impartiality, no substitution of the parties in conflict. The most recent European strategic reviews and whitepapers put forward hypotheses of external intervention under the explicit mandate of the UN, only in the event of an emergency or preferably in a coalition, insisting on the fact that military action is only a means to relieving a crisis situation in order to facilitate political compromise. In the French vision of the African crises (which occupied 62% of debating time at the UN Security Council in 2012), work is invested in involving regional African peacekeeping forces and diplomatic mediation in regional institutions. In the Middle East in 2013 the goal of reaching political settlement was easier to declare than to achieve since all sides involved in the conflict believed that everything was to be played out in a

battlefield as in Syria. Realism, in other words, the greatest circumspection, has to be applied in circumstances like this.

Divergence has emerged over the principle of the responsibility to protect (UN, 2005). Brazilian diplomacy has promoted the idea of responsibility to protect. But a consensus remains about respecting States' sovereignty and territorial integrity. This was drawn up in the 18th century by Alexandre Gusmão in the legal formula of *uti possidetis*. It was taken up by the African Union (Cairo Declaration 1964) and is a basic concept of the majority of European States, (notably in the face of the risk of division or the reshaping of the Middle East into new "Emirates"). I feel that the real division is between the States which believe that their diplomacy and the defence policy must also serve in the exercise of international responsibilities and the others, which form the majority.

However we cannot ignore history or geography. Half of the seriously open crises in the world in 2013 were a three to six hour plane journey away from Brussels. We could remain indifferent. However in Europe this is neither sensible nor viable long term given the proximity, historic and human interactions between people on either side of the Mediterranean and the Sahara, which is no longer a frontier.

An analysis of the dangers and risks involved in the crises in question (Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Mali, etc.) show quite the opposite – they illustrate the importance of the connections that have formed between the various theatres. Intervening countries have learnt from their experience which explains their policy of prudence in 2013 in Syria and a widespread desire to withdraw from Afghanistan by 2014.

It is also important to assess the dangers of these interventions in the light of their political results, the present state of affairs, which also helps involve national and regional actors giving them back their rightful place, since the latter are often forgotten in the general debate about legitimacy and sovereignty.

1. This updated text comes from a conference at the Forte Copacabana International Conference on Security in Rio on 28-29/11/2013

The key players are those who have long lasting interests (as shown by the case of Pakistan as it has always been in Afghanistan, or Syria in Lebanon, or Iran in Central Iraq and even Algeria in the Sahara-Sahel region). The influence of regional powers is often underestimated, undoubtedly a result of Western narcissism.

2) CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE IMPERATIVES OF INTERVENTION

The list of imperatives includes the motivations and arguments on the part of external players, notably when referring to chapters of the UN's charter (or NATO's article 5 on Allied solidarity), collective moral principles (responsibility to protect 2005), strategic goals (against adversaries defining certain States and their citizens as targets) or less often, economic interests (energy, communication routes).

In the case of Afghanistan, which has experienced a long series of external interventions since 1978, the situation caused by 9/11 led the USA's allies to manifest their solidarity in the wake of the attack, justified by article 5 of the NATO treaty and based on the UN resolution 1386, which was adopted unanimously. The launch of operation Enduring Freedom by the USA aimed to eliminate Al-Qaeda's central bases, to vanquish the Taliban regime and to "rebuild" a State that was deemed as having "failed" on the basis of the Bonn Agreements.

In the case of Iraq it became rapidly clear that the arguments of the Republican administration were fallacious (destroying the arms of massive destruction supposedly held by Saddam Hussein, the absence of which could not be acknowledged in the face of the Iranian adversary) and excessive (reshaping the Middle East). Both France and Germany refused to join in the military expedition (which Senator Obama qualified as disastrous) whilst NATO's new European allies ("the new Europe") were unable, as a last resort, to meet the requirements of their protector. Later it was seen that Paris and Berlin were right to have opposed this operation but they paid the price ("punish France, ignore Germany, forgive Russia", according to Condelezza Rice). French bashing lasted several years with some serious economic consequences and a damaged reputation. Berlin had to accept advanced cooperation

in terms of information provision as we discovered in 2013. Moscow was marginalised.

In Libya the initiative came from Paris and London alone, with the initial argument to implement the new principle of "the responsibility to protect". It was certain that Kaddafi's regime would have massacred the rebels in Benghazi and Cyrenaica as he had warned. It was acknowledged that Europeans already affected by the massacre of the Bosnians would not recover as quickly from a moral point of view if further exactions were committed in Libya. But it is also clear that the interpretation made of resolution 1973 led to the definition of the goal to achieve - a change in regime, in a context of civil war. Germany, Brazil, China, India and Russia abstained at the Security Council. We might note that the Arab League supported the Franco-British approach and that armed forces from Qatar and the Arab Emirates undertook military and support operations.

In Mali the initiative for military intervention in January 2013 was strictly French. It was decided as an immediate response to the advance made by armed jihadist columns on the capital of Bamako, led by AQMI, the MUJAO and Ansar-Edine in response to resolution 2085 (20/12/2012) which was firm and detailed on the part of the Security Council and planned, amongst other things, to deploy the AFISMA, supported by regional and international forces. Military action by Paris was requested by the interim Malian president. The aim was to stop, repel and finally break AQMI's hard core in the mountain refuge of the Saharan part of Mali, authority over which the previous regime had decided to relinquish. The imperative was to re-establish Mali's territorial integrity and to weaken the hard core of Al-Qaeda's North African branch. We should remember that France has no economic interests in Mali unlike China or Algeria (it is the African country receiving most help from France in terms of cooperation) but that it has in-depth expertise (hostages) and a large Malian community living in France, which approved this intervention qualified as "salutary".

In Syria's case the positions of the players quoted above have changed, except for Russia, which has decided to support the regime in a bid to achieve an improbable negotiated solution. After having initially been in favour, Paris and London progressively deemed that it was not wise to intervene in a civil war between Syrian Muslims nor to take the risk of delivering arms which

might be used by internationalist jihadist groups. Europeans are trying to support a credible, respectable, representative opposition politically without planning either a flight exclusion zone or direct military action. The Libyan precedents and especially the experience in Iraq have led to restraint. The European position does not support regional division but aims to help towards a re-balancing of power. Intervention by the Iraqi and Iranian Shi'a regimes on the one hand and Saudi and Qatari Sunnis on the other lend the Syrian civil war a rather worrying regional dimension. The Geneva and Montreux negotiations under the aegis of the UN with the rival support of Moscow and Washington led to nothing and have not stopped the bombing of towns by the regime's armed forces. The division of the country into zones held by the regime or by the radical Islamists leaves the democratic opposition in a precarious situation.

Finally in Central African Republic (CAR), the rapid downturn in the political and social situation after Bangui was taken by the Seleka coalition led to total anarchy and mutual exactions (the Seleka coalition against the "anti-Balaka") and a serious "pre-genocide" risk had been identified. Unlike Mali where it was a matter of fighting internationalist jihadists the French military intervention launched on 5th December 2013 after the unanimous adoption of resolution 2127 was humanitarian in its motivation and was supported by the Sangaris operation (1600 soldiers) from the African Force, MISCA (6000 soldiers).

What we have to note is the variety of external intervention contexts – according to the crisis. Of course the role of leading personalities at the time decisions are taken has to be taken into account, especially in democratic countries and the desire of the latter to distinguish themselves from their predecessor. We can also see that the initial goals often tend to drift off course, except in Mali where the initial territorial goal was achieved. But acting alone made the pursuit of simpler goals easier.

3) DANGERS AND RESULTS OF EXTERNAL INTERVENTIONS, TO BE CONSIDERED AS ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Several Defence and National Security Whitepapers published in Europe at the end of the 2000's highlighted

the idea of the "arc of crisis" to define an area extending from the Sahara to Pakistan in which jihadist groups with international goals might try to gather and coordinate. Al-Qaeda indeed gave its franchise to more or less autonomous groups, the most active of which are AQPA, AQMI and the Iraqi branch of Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) which is fighting Kurds, Alawites and Christians in Iraq and Syria. Likewise, what remains of AQMI's *katibas* chased from Mali, are trying to establish a base in Libya's south west beyond the control of the authorities in Tripoli. Arms stolen from the Libyan arsenal have been found in Mali. Financial aid has been given by AQMI to the Al-Shabab groups in Somalia. All of these crises are regional in nature and areas of neighbouring countries are used as sanctuaries for opposing groups.

A worsening in this type of critical regional problem, with a shifting centre of crisis, is undoubtedly the main threat to regional stability. The other danger comes from the failure of the intervention policy. What happens when foreign troops leave the areas of intervention?

Let us consider the situation in Afghanistan – 12 years on the main players are now making a military withdrawal and elections are planned for 2014. Meetings started in Qatar between the USA and the Taliban representatives, then Tokyo, London and Paris without negotiation ever kicking off. Al-Qaeda's main branch is now weakened but its offshoots in Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Maghreb are still active.

It is likely that if the USA (and their allies) had focused long term on the main goal of destroying the core of Al-Qaeda, the political and economic results would have been more positive. Today experts wonder – in Europe at least – whether it was not an "unnecessary war". And no one dares to forecast greater stability for the country after 2014, unless there is a radical change in policy on the part of the civilian and military authorities in Pakistan, which for its part, unlike the intervening countries, has permanent national interests in Afghanistan. China is also pushing forward its pawns (copper mines; infrastructure projects via Tajikistan).

In terms of Iraq the victors of the American interventions are in order of rank: the Kurds – who are now almost independent and able to negotiate oil contracts directly without consulting Baghdad; most of the Shi'a in power; the Iranian regime, which avenged itself for

the Saddam Hussein period; and finally the Chinese oil companies which won most of the drilling contracts and which are buying half of the oil produced by Iraq (according to the International Energy Agency in 2020, 80% of Iraqi oil will be exported to Asia, mainly to China). As for the vanquished these are the Sunni minority in the central provinces and the Ba'athists, who do not accept their fall from power, as well as the Saudis and the Gulf countries. Hence the continuation of unprecedented levels violence in 2013. The failure of the Bush administration makes it easier to understand its successor in its bid to engage in dialogue with the Iranian regime led by President Rouhani.

In Libya the authorities in Tripoli have not yet managed to assert themselves over regional groups and tribes which are refusing to disarm (around 200 katibas escape central power). Several debates are ongoing in a divided society between the western, more North African part and the urbanised, eastern part which is more sensitive to the theses of the Egyptian Muslim Brothers, who are themselves losing power in spite of support from Qatar.

In Mali territorial integrity has been restored, a UN mission (MINUSMA) has been deployed and the second round of the presidential election ended without protest on 12th August with the success of former Prime Minister, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta who is eager to "give make Mali proud again" and to change political practice. As noted by some experts, the main problem in Mali was not in the north but in the south due to excesses in political governance. France insisted on an early election. Troops have remained in place, in support of MINUSMA since July 1st under the command of a Rwandan general, with 6,300 African soldiers, and a sound mandate (resolution 2100 dated 25th April 2013 places it under chapter VII of the UN's Charter; it was adopted unanimously). This episode in international intervention, justified by the inability of a regime to ensure its own security, was an electro-shock for the African Union and several other countries, in that there was commitment to strengthening African regional intervention capabilities, bringing them to diplomatic mediation (North/South Agreement in Burkina Faso in July before the elections). It remains, as elsewhere in Africa, that the triangle of "security, democracy and development" has now to function. The Malian army is being rebuilt and its training undertaken by the European mission, EUTM. The final side of the virtuous

circle is economic development. On 15th May 2013, 80 countries met in Brussels and promised 3.2 billion € in aid to Mali over 2 years (280 million for France) – ie more than one third of the gross GDP of this Sahelian State.

In CAR a transition government has been in place since 23rd January 2014. The aim of re-establishing minimal security is now being achieved via operations to make safe parts of the capital that still have not disarmed and also roads leading to Chad and Cameroon for supply convoys. The cantonment of the former Seleka soldiers by MISCA with the support of the Sangaris troops is continuing; they will probably return from whence they came. A transition process has been started and there are more and more conciliation meetings hosted by representatives of the three religions and local players (Fula, anti-Balaka). Finally on 30th January 2014 Polish President Bronislaw Komorowski decided to dispatch a military contingent to support the French troops for a three month period with the support of a C130. This was a major decision after in-depth dialogue between experts and decision makers in both countries over the last two years. Estonia and Belgium followed suite.

Again we should note the great variety of results that have followed external intervention. We must also insist on the fact that we have to involve regional players in the introduction of durable diplomatic and political solutions.

THE ROLE OF THE MAIN DIPLOMATIC CIRCLES

The crises we have discussed, which have been the main focus of intervention bear several features. Firstly they have all taken place within three to six hour's flight from Europe. Half of the serious crises in the world are also within this radius. It is therefore difficult to justify indifference because these theatres are close to home and several of them have comprised explicit threats to European interests and its citizens.

Both of the French interventions were an opportunity for other European players to become aware of the stability issues in Africa. The presence in Mali of European trainers, troops from Poland, Estonia and Belgium in CAR and the option of extending the perimeter of

the Athena fund (which finances part of the EU's) are the first steps, in expectation of the establishment of a permanent financing fund requested by Paris. The first declarations made by some German Defence and Foreign Affairs Ministers about assuming greater responsibility in the management of external crises is a welcome change of direction. The recent visit to Dakar and Bamako by the German Defence Minister is a crystal clear message of support.

The idea of the arc of crisis has now proven its limits in that it describes a situation of territorial connections which it is vital to prevent. The most difficult situation is in the Middle East and in this regard the results of western interventions there deserve severe criticism, likewise, direct intervention by Russia in Syria, alongside Iran and the Hezbollah. Moscow has the opportunity to recover its ability to play a harmful role (as in the good old days) in an anti-Sunni posture.

Critical transitions in the Arab world are changing the situation and explain the American attitude of 'wait-and-see' (preferable to neo-conservative transformational activism) and the Chinese game of stealing the economic ante.

Those in power, which have extensive diplomatic corps, must relinquish shaping and commit to accompanying transitions and solutions to these crises. They must also ensure that they act in line with UN mandates. But there is more to it than that. As illustrated by the situation on the African continent the Member States

of the African Union have to realise they must be more involved in the settlement of crises. France, Germany, UK, Brazil, USA all have to encourage and support them in this sense.

Moreover "external" players do not just comprise the western countries; the idea of intervention should be extended to players who have permanent interests in the States in question (Pakistan, Iran and also Russia, China, Uzbekistan in Afghanistan; Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia in Iraq; Turkey, Lebanon, Israel, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries in Syria; Egypt, Algeria, Qatar in Libya; Saudi Arabia and Oman in Yemen; Saudi Arabia and Algeria in Mali). These States are vital either in fomenting continued unrest or, on the contrary, in fostering compromises.

Finally we should remember in this regard that other States have undertaken external interventions themselves – hence Uganda and Burundi in Somalia (AMISOM), and Ethiopia, which also has many troops on the borders of the two Sudanese States and South Africa in Central African Republic. We can no longer say that external intervention is a western monopoly. And that is good news.

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