

# Approaches to Regional Stability and the Outlook for NATO

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## ABSTRACT

In recent years the international security environment within and around NATO perimeter has seen instability increasing and spreading in various ways, ranging from enduring conflicts and state failures, to sudden shifts in the strategic posture of relevant countries. Given the increasing connection between the local and international dynamics, the regional dimension of stability has gained importance for both experts and practitioners. At this level, interested states may find common ground in order to foster joint efforts to stabilisation, or at least to mitigate diverging national agendas which in turn contribute to instability. Focusing on the broad regional security complex encompassing Sahel, North Africa and Middle East, it is evident that it is increasingly unstable, as it represents the physical space where multiple forms of instability coalesce at local, national regional and global level. In order to understand such web of instabilities, the view on the relevant actors should be broadened by looking at both states and non-states, local and international ones including NATO and EU – and their role in terms of stabilisation/destabilisation. This publication is the result of the sixth academic conference organised in Bertinoro (Forlì) on 24-26 October 2018 by the NATO Allied Command Transformation (ACT), the University of Bologna and the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI).

*Middle East | North Africa | Sahel | Terrorism | Crisis management | NATO*

**keywords**

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## Introduction

by Sonia Lucarelli, Alessandro Marrone and Francesco N. Moro\*

In recent years the international security environment within and around NATO perimeter has seen instability increasing and spreading in various ways, ranging from enduring conflicts and state failures, to sudden shifts in the strategic posture of relevant countries. Experts have been discussing whether this is part of a more structural crisis or decline of the international liberal order. In particular, in Africa and the greater Middle East crisis areas have witnessed significant changes in the balance of power on the ground (i.e., in Syria and Iraq), a prolonged situation of anarchy (e.g., in Libya), and challenges to the delicate balances that were sometimes reached in previous years (in Afghanistan, but also within the Sahel region). These crises areas remain linked in various ways to international terrorism, which continues to constitute a relevant threat to Euro-Atlantic security despite the relative decrease of large-scale attacks experienced after 2016. Even a "frozen conflict" such as the one in Ukraine cannot be regarded as stable, given the risk of escalation with Russia in the context of broader international tensions, and the features of the so-called "hybrid warfare".<sup>1</sup> Noticeably, both regional powers and smaller states have adopted a more assertive approach, including various degrees of use of force – overt or covert – in their neighbourhood, which further destabilise an international system where great power competition seems on the rise. Against this background, the Academic Conference organised in Forlì on 24–26 October 2017, was meant to reflect on the approaches to regional stability, in both conceptual and concrete terms.

In this context, given the increasing connection between the local and international dynamics, the regional dimension of stability has gained importance for both

<sup>1</sup> See for instance, Cusumano and Corbe (2018).

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· This publication is the result of the conference "Projecting stability in an era of hybrid warfare and terrorism: which NATO role?", organised by NATO Allied Command Transformation (ACT), the University of Bologna and IAI. The conference was the sixth iteration of ACT's Academic Conference series, and it took place at the Centro Residenziale Universitario of the University of Bologna in Bertinoro, on 24–26 October 2018. The success of the event was due to the joint efforts of the three institutions, and the editors want to acknowledge the ACT's Academic Outreach Team, in particular Lt. Col Romano dell'Aere, and Anna Gaone of IAI. Opinions, conclusions, and recommendations expressed or implied within are solely those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the views of IAI, University of Bologna, ACT or any other agency of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

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experts and practitioners. At this level, interested states may find common ground in order to foster joint efforts to stabilisation, or at least to mitigate diverging national agendas which in turn contribute to instability. At the same time, organisations like NATO, EU and OSCE can play a relevant, two-fold role. On the one hand, they can offer a well-established, multilateral forum for strategic dialogue among member states on instability areas, crisis, conflicts and risks. On the other hand, they may offer a toolbox encompassing diplomatic, military and civilian instruments to work for regional stability, which can be deployed in synergy with national efforts and foster a greater involvement of the international community.

When it comes to approaches to regional stability, the outlook for NATO is important for various reasons. First, a greater understanding of the regional dynamics surrounding and/or involving member states is crucial for the Atlantic Alliance to perform its core function of guarantor of Euro-Atlantic security. Indeed, regardless the fact NATO as such may act or not act in a given crisis areas, an enhanced, shared awareness of the stability of its neighbourhood enables Allies to take better decisions and actions at national, regional and multilateral level, to address threats and challenges coming from neighbours – bearing in mind that, as stated by Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, that “when our neighbours are stable we are more secure” (NATO 2017). Second, NATO is already engaged in a number of stability operations and activities beyond its perimeter, from the Balkans to Afghanistan, from Tunisia to Iraq, as well as in the Mediterranean Sea. Their operational success does heavily depend on the strategic context, including political, economic, social, cultural aspects which concur in various ways to regional stabilisation. Third, the Alliance has invested for over three decades in a range of partnerships stretching from Mauritania to Afghanistan – plus partners around the globe in South America, East Asia and Oceania. They are meant, broadly speaking, to increase the security of both counterparts, and this goal is achievable only if NATO manages and eventually adapt such partnerships in light of regional dynamics. As a result, approaches to regional stability are relevant to a different extent for all three NATO core tasks, as established by the 2010 Strategic Concept: collective defence, crisis management operations, and cooperative security with a particular focus on partnerships (NATO 2010).

When looking at stability in conceptual terms, it seems to be increasingly discussed as a pragmatic and minimalist concept based on security (meant as limited societal and political violence), resilience of social and political institutions which ensure a certain degree of governance, and a level of economic and social development needed to stabilise a specific country.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the focus is shifted away from the strict promotion of human rights and democracy, which marked the NATO and broadly speaking Western approach to crisis areas in the 1990s and 2000s. At the same time, it could be argued that stability does not necessarily mean lack of change. On the contrary, the ability to undertake changes successfully when needed makes an actor – being a state or an international organisation –

<sup>2</sup> See for instance, Lucarelli et al. (2017).

stable and viable in facing an evolving environment.

Focusing on the broad regional security complex encompassing Sahel, North Africa and Middle East, it is evident that it is increasingly unstable, as it represents the physical space where multiple forms of instability coalesce at local, national regional and global level. In order to understand such web of instabilities, we need to broaden our view on the relevant actors by looking at both states and non-states, local and international ones – and their role in terms of stabilisation/destabilisation. In this context, the first Working Group (WG1) focused on the metrics of stability in a multi-dimensional perspective. The second and third WGs adopted two complementary lenses to analyse stability: WG2 looked at organised crime, corruption and illegal migration, and their implications for defence capacity building; WG3 focused on international and transnational terrorism, its link with regional instability and the role international organisations can play in this regard.

### *The metrics of stability: A multidimensional perspective*

There is a large consensus that military organisations such as NATO need refined indicators of stability. For this reason, it is necessary to further develop the qualitative and quantitative metrics to unpack and understand stability in a multi-dimensional perspective – which was the focus of the WG1. Stability is in fact a multi-faceted notion that is often represented in multiple ways that are not necessarily easy to reconcile. The key problems that have emerged in the WG revolved around how to measure stability, a necessary, but complex, task to design, monitor and eventually assess stability operations. Academic discussions about stability, and attempts to concretely measure it, have increased in parallel with the attention devoted to non-conventional threats (from civil wars to migration) by Western political and military decision-makers. A rich body of quantitative research has been dealing with this in the past few years. There is increasing recognition that the military domain cannot be analysed on its own, looking for instance at stability as the simple absence of all-out war, as stability encompasses more political, social and economic elements. Also, there is an increasing trend towards disaggregation: stability is not always or necessarily the property of an entire country. The level (and meaning) of stability can be different in different parts of a single country. Moreover, looking at the local dimension might allow to monitor risks of instability spreading but also to observe which factors can lead to an “oasis of stability” in a conflict-torn context.

In collecting and analysing data, the information revolution and the emergence of so-called big data, might allow to bring about improvements, through lower costs and more granularity (for instance allowing to gather more fine-grained data in space and time). Still, several problems remain, or are even amplified, by big data: availability of more information increases the need to filter and interpret large amounts of material. In this scenario, NATO needs to develop its own data policy. To do so, it should first recognise the inherent limitations associated with complex notions such as stability: measures and data can help decision-making; yet, defining the appropriate level of stability remains an exquisitely political and

strategic act. Second, NATO should engage with other organisations, political and academic, to develop shared measures that limit the risks of “organisational biases” in data gathering. Third, NATO should be further incorporating the findings of recent research on stability that recognise the biases of looking at stability simply at the state level and focusing on (the absence of) violence.

### *Organised crime, corruption and illegal migration: what implications for defence capacity building?*

The view that organised crime and terrorism have a strict link (the so-called crime-terror nexus) is widespread, up to the point that the two aspects have been increasingly regarded as two sides of the same coin. In particular, organised crime is perceived as a major destabilising factor, especially in the Sahel region, described as an “ungoverned space”. In WG2 it was discussed how such an approach grossly overlooks the perceptions of local actors about the different roles of criminals, terrorists, migrants, smugglers, and states. Moreover, the interaction between weak states and informal powerbrokers is more complicated than expected. Somewhat similar preconceptions are widespread with reference to migration, which is regarded as a destabilising factor for both the countries in the region and European ones. Migration’s links with development, political and security dynamics are, however, complex and multi-layered, and by no means should be reduced to migration as a simple security threat.

In this context, NATO too has launched several cooperation activities in North Africa and Middle East in the field of Defence Institution Building (DIB), the most relevant being the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building (DCB) initiative. Three factors emerged as central in the discussion. The first is NATO’s lack of the specific expertise needed to address the issues of both migration and organised crime. Second, the general short-term orientation of DCB initiatives raise the question of whether these instruments alone can become long-term solutions to structural problems such as migration or the challenge posed by criminal and terrorist groups. Finally, as for other large international organisations, there is the tendency for NATO to rely on a one-fits-all approach, whereas DCB initiatives need to be better adapted to different national conditions as well as cultural and political sensitivities of local actors. Accordingly, relevant implications for the Atlantic Alliance are: (a) the feasibility of consistent state-building in the region; (b) the resources’ commitment by NATO members over the long-period; (c) the definition of shared strategic objectives within the projecting stability agenda; (d) the effectiveness of cooperation with UN and EU as well as local actors; (e) the clarity and expectations management over what can be realistically achieved.

### *Instability factors and international terrorism: the outlook for international organisations*

The ensemble of Middle East, North Africa and the Sahel, is a region without regionalism. In other words, security interests of states in this regional security complex are connected in a way that they cannot be managed one apart from

the other, yet there are no effective multilateral frameworks to address them in a cooperative way. National leaderships fight among each other for regional hegemony or at least influence, by politically playing sectarian affiliations as a tool to mobilise people and constituencies. Accordingly, the prevailing approach among states in the region is based on a zero-sum-gain mindset. Unfortunately, also external actors, including members of EU and NATO, act in the region on the basis of a zero-sum game approach, and often compete rather than cooperate to advance their national interests and engage local actors. Such competition among Western countries obviously leads to a certain degree of incoherence between NATO approach and those of its members, as well as between EU approach and those of European countries.

Since 2016, at both the Warsaw and the Brussels summits, the Allied heads of state and government stated the general goal of “projecting stability” in NATO’s neighbourhood. Accordingly, the Alliance has adopted at ministerial level the “Framework for the South” and the “Package for the South”, while establishing the hub for the “strategic direction south” in Naples, which has become fully operational in 2018. In this context, the fundamental political question is whether, in the aforementioned decline of the international liberal order and cohesion of the West, the Western countries would give up the idea to have a multilateral strategic dialogue on important crises such as those in Libya or Syria. Different opinions emerged in the working group. Some participants affirmed that NATO has a potential as politico-military alliance to provide strategic thinking about complex security and stability issues in that region, in partnership with third countries, EU, UN, African Union. Others suggested NATO to focus on technical contribution and niche capabilities, which do not touch upon political sensitivities of NATO Nations and leave aside strategic dialogue. However, even at such an operational level, niche contribution cannot be fully effective if local actors continue to compete with each other according to a zero-sum game logic, and if NATO members themselves do not cooperate to stabilise the region.

These and other elements are dealt in depth by the next chapters. The publication is structured in three sections. Each section is devoted to a specific working group and encompasses two papers that has been presented there as well as the report summarising the subsequent debate. As a whole, as for publications resulting from previous Academic Conferences, it aims to offer to the reader a complimentary ensemble of thought-provoking views as well as to favour an intellectual exchange between the policy-makers and academic communities.

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## 1. Security and Stability for Whom? Concepts and Observables

by Andrea Ruggeri\*

This paper addresses the concept “political stability” in an attempt to provide conceptual clarity to the oft-used term for researchers and policy makers. A crucial attribute of stability is the presence and management of violent political conflict. However, stability should not be defined exclusively in terms of the incidence and intensity of political violence. It is crucial to identify the diverse beneficiaries of political stability: citizens, domestic incumbent groups and international actors. First, this paper examines conceptualisations of political stability by focusing on when the political realm becomes violent and affects security. Second, it highlights the tensions of extant conceptualisations of stability. Third, it provides a succinct discussion on observables and operationalisations of stability within literature and their pitfalls.

Political stability is a frequently used concept within academic research and policy making. However, few scholars provide a definition of political stability within their research. As highlighted by Toulmin, stability seems a concept “that everybody uses and nobody explains” (Toulmin 1972: 8). Available definitions of political stability vary significantly depending on the context of the research and on the academic field. Some research relies on proximate concepts, such as equilibrium, order, and balance as substitutes. In the following, the core issue that needs to be disentangled is what we mean when we use the term stability. First, we must establish what stability means in respect to what realm (e.g., economy, technology or security) and, second, who is experiencing or benefiting from this stability. This latter point, which actors – civilians, governments, the international community – are experiencing and benefiting from the existence of political stability, is often unexplored in literature. This paper is a conceptual exploration of stability rather than a conclusive analytical elaboration of it. A further aim of this paper is to provide a selection of proxies and data sources that can help researchers and policy makers to tackle stability using empirical data. It is important to note that while this paper provides a selection of empirics, it does not analyse this data. Hence, this is a preliminary paper that can be used as a base for future empirical analysis.

The main argument of the paper is that research and analysis would benefit from systematically re-assessing and analysing the critical, but slippery, concept of “stability”, specifically in relation to security. Researchers have to avoid using “stability” as a catch-all concept. This approach creates a situation where stability can be applied to almost everything but, analytically and empirically, tells us nothing. Stability needs to be used with extreme care within research. First, stability is not absolute but relational and interest-defined: stability is always for someone

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and in relation to some groups' interests. Second, stability occurs in different realms, and these realms can be interdependent. Researchers and policy analysts need to clarify what realm of stability we are analysing or building policies around. The interdependent facets of economic, institutional and security stabilities make this even more complex. Third, there could be trade-offs between different groups' interests and, hence, we will see interchanges in the level of security stability for different actors and even across different time horizons. Stability cannot be understood and used as objective and absolute element. Instead, stability implies political decisions, benefits and costs. The paper follows this structure: first, it tackles the definition of stability; second measurement and empirical trends and, finally, a concluding section on research avenue and policies implications. The first section starts discussing the constitutive elements of politics and, therefore, stability (power, uncertainty and identity). Then, the same section, before providing the working definition of security stability as a *situation with a low probability of abrupt use of violence as conflict resolution strategy*, elaborates on the relation between stability and political violence. The second section provides a selection of data about security stability for three level of analysis: citizens, domestic regimes and international actors. Moreover, it highlights some possible issues when managing data. The final section provides remarks about future research agenda and policy challenges.

### *Defining stability*

Stability is used to describe a phenomenon across many different realms. For example, the term stability can be used to describe economic stability in markets, institutional stability in governments, domestic security stability and the decline of international stability. Comparing several policy reports and academic works on "stability" in order to address this broad use of stability and security, a first observation is the risk of conceptual overstretching (Sartori 1970), or what Tilly describes as "conceptual sponge". Stability can be "lumpy and labyrinthine. Like a sponge, when squeezed it changes shape and loses most of its juice" (Tilly 1971: 416). Recently, Graham Allison stressed that order and stability terms are like Jell-O: "The ambiguity of each of the terms in the phrase 'liberal international rules-based order' creates a slipperiness that allows the concept to be applied to almost any situation" (Allison 2018: 125). Stability, as concept, has ample ontological and intensity variation. Adding to this conceptual fuzziness, stability, as a quality, is often evaluated after an event has already occurred – a *post-hoc* assessment rather than an *ex-ante* one. There is widespread consensus that once stability is lost, it is difficult to re-establish and the consequences of this instability may last for years. There is also the normative assumption that stability is a positive attribute. We assume *prime facie* that stability is the ideal attribute that we should strive for. The paper aim is to define, challenge and demystify stability in order to improve its use by policy makers and academics alike. The paper unpacks the different facets of stability and elaborate on the relationship between stability and political violence. It then discusses the empirical proxies and examine the difference in trade-offs between different conceptualisations of stability. As highlighted by Weber, "The greatest advances in the sphere of the social sciences are substantively tied up

with the shift in practical cultural problems and take the guise of a critique of concept-construction" (Weber 1949:106). "The progress of the social sciences is thus ineluctably tied to 'reconstruction of concepts through which we seek to comprehend reality'" (Gerring 2001: 35).

### *Stability: power, uncertainty and identity*

Before proceeding, it is necessary to do some conceptual housekeeping to clarify the scope of this paper and its reasoning when approaching this topic. When writing about stability in a security context, hereafter it is assumed there are three elements that act as constitutive factors of politics and, therefore, stability: power, uncertainty and identity. This paper defines politics as the arena where there is decision and struggle on "who gets, what, when and how" (Lasswell 1950). Politics is about resource distribution (material and ideational) and about the struggle to control this distribution. This struggle or conflict is organised and facilitated by relationships of power between actors. In this context, power can be defined in different ways (Baldwin 2013, Lukes 1974). Stability relates to different power relations and also to the uncertainty of these relations. Power uncertainty that is omnipresent, is the main engine for interactions, dynamics and changes among actors. Here we start to see how this understanding intersects with the conceptualisation of stability. Moreover, we cannot ignore a further constitutive element of politics: identity. Power relations contributes to the formation of identity but also relies on identity. To be more precise, the uncertainty about power relations make identity necessary. Identity creates routines of expected relations and minimises uncertainty about interactions between actors. The existence of a shared identity tends to be a necessary feature for alliances and in and out-group dynamics. Identity and group membership are often assumed, usually implicitly, when referring to stability (Huntington 1996, Fukuyama 2006).

### *Political violence and stability*

The relationship between violence and power is not so straightforward. Arendt suggests that the presence of violence and power is mutually exclusive:

Politically speaking, it is insufficient to say that power and violence are not the same. Power and violence are opposites; where the one rules absolutely, the other is absent. Violence appears where power is in jeopardy, but left to its own course it ends in power's disappearance. (Arendt 1970: 56)

However, according to Weber the state is the highest political organisation because it controls the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence. Hence, the (legitimate) monopoly of violence could also relate with stability. Huntington suggests that conflict and politics are profoundly intertwined: "in the total absence of social conflict, political institutions are unnecessary; in the total absence of social harmony, they are impossible" (Huntington 1968: 9).

What is political violence then? First, it is political actions aiming to change or preserve the social and institutional (power) relations within a community or between communities (identity). This political action challenges the power relations among social actors (uncertainty). Hence, we can broadly define political violence as the use of violence in order to obtain a political goal where a political goal is the change or preservation of the actual power relation between actors. Furthermore, political violence entails a willingness and (il)legitimacy (Stoppino 1973). These two latter elements, willingness and legitimacy, are often underappreciated when thinking about stability (Lake 2016).

Should we then think about political violence as reinforcing or jeopardising stability? It depends: political violence could be used by those who want to maintain stability in their favour (*stability keepers*), but also by those who want to change the status quo (*instability seekers*). Regime repression aiming to keep a status quo would act as *stability keeper* and, similarly, a hegemon carrying forward a military invasion in alien territory is again acting as *stability keeper* that is employing political violence. However, a regicide has an *instability seeker* nature and also a military resistance to a military invasion can be understood as an *instability seeker* action. In fact, "order is necessary for managing violence as much as the threat of violence is crucial in cementing order. [...] violence is employed both by those who wish to upend an existing order and by those who want to sustain it" (Kalyvas et al. 2008: 1).

### *The risk of negative definition*

Theoretically, the definition of "stability" is difficult to establish as its definitions tend to be residual definitions or "*negatio inficiatioque facti*" (Sartori 1969 and 1970, Gerring 1999), meaning that stability is defined by the absence of another phenomenon. For example, we can define stability as an absence of war or other forms of conflict. We tend to embrace tangential concepts as state failure or civil war as key defining phenomena of stability. Therefore, negative definitions (*ex adverso*) of stability are conceived as the absence of war, civil war, terrorism, genocide. However, how does defining "negatively" affect our analysis? First, it could obscure the role of interests and goals because agency is underspecified. Hence, in the absence of war or other related phenomena, it is hard to respond to one of the core questions in politics: *cui bono*? To whom is it a benefit? Second, negative definitions tend to oversimplify a phenomenon implying a dichotomous nature (e.g., no war vs. war), whereas most of the political interactions are about intensities and continuums. Third, a negative definition could imply a symmetric data generating process of the absent phenomenon – the causes of instability could be conflated with the causes for stability. Finally, it could suggest a "normative positivity" because absence of a conflict phenomenon should be welcome. However, given the previous point of "who benefits?", these norms could be beneficial for some actors but not others.

### *Stability and International Relations theory*

To elaborate, this paper looks at two approaches to stability: (1) game theory that focuses on strategic and stable equilibrium and (2) International Relations literature that tackle concepts of balance of power but also hegemonic stability. In game theory the definition of equilibrium (Nash 1951) gets close to the idea of stability: "It reduces the set of all possible strategic choices by the players to a much smaller set of those choices that are stable in the sense that no player can increase his payoff by unilaterally changing his strategy" (Kohlberg and Mertens 1986: 1003). This definition introduces a factor that is not usually considered in security stability: is stability a zero-sum or positive-sum game? This question stresses the interdependence among actors and the possibility of trade-offs when having stability in respect to security. However, Richardson's stability simply referred "to any set of conditions under which the system would return to its equilibrium state". Hence, instability means "any state of affairs that would not so return [to equilibrium], but rather would continue to change until reaching some limit or breakdown point of the system" (Deutsch and Singer 1964: 391). This idea of adjustment is echoed by Kenneth Waltz: "stability measured by the peacefulness of adjustment within the international system and by the durability of the system itself" (Waltz 1964: 881). Wohlforth further stresses the importance of duration and the absence of violent conflict. He defines

"stability" as peacefulness and durability. [...] Durability subsumes another common understanding of stability: the idea of a self-reinforcing equilibrium. To say that an international system is durable implies that it can experience significant shifts in power relations without undergoing fundamental change. (Wohlforth 1999: 8)

Furthermore, Schweller highlights the elements of uncertainty and predictability introduced earlier in this paper:

A system exhibits "order" when the set of discrete objects that comprise the system are related to one another according to some pattern; that is, their relationship is not miscellaneous or haphazard but accords with some discernible principle. Order prevails when things display a high degree of predictability, when there are regularities, when there are patterns that follow some understandable and consistent logic. (Schweller 2016)

These scholars tend to think about stability as a systemic phenomenon but if they were to consider different analytical levels, they could find different degrees of stability. Deutsch and Singer suggest:

stability may, of course, be considered from the vantage point of both the total system and the individual states comprising it. From the broader, or systemic, point of view, we shall define stability as the probability that the system retains all of its essential characteristics; that no single nation becomes dominant; that most of its members continue to survive; and that

large-scale war does not occur. And from the more limited perspective of the individual nations, stability would refer to the probability of their continued political independence and territorial integrity without any significant probability of becoming engaged in a “war for survival”. (Deutsch and Singer 1964: 390–1)

### *A working definition and levels of analysis*

A possible working definition of security stability is a *situation with a low probability of abrupt use of violence as conflict resolution strategy*. However, stability has to be defined in relation to specific actors’ interests and specific realm. This does not necessarily imply that actors’ interests and different environments are not intertwined. We still need to clarify at least three elements for defining more precisely stability: (1) stability for whom, (2) stability of what, and (3) stability relative to what time?

To answer the first question – “stability for whom?” – we can consider three levels of actors that echo the Waltzian three images (1) for citizens; (2) for an incumbent domestic regime and (3) for international actors (Waltz 1959). To understand the second question – “stability of what?” – stability could be understood and studied over different realms. For example, these “realms” could be economy, institutions and technology. However, the focus of this paper is concerned with security. The third question would involve thinking about trade-offs or convergences between short-term versus long-term horizons. In Table 1 there is an organising matrix to demonstrate the security realm and the possible observables according to different analytical levels.

**Table 1** | Levels and interests

For whom?	Security observables
Citizen	e.g., torture
Incumbent regime	e.g., civil war
International actors	e.g., inter-state war

If stability is defined by several different levels and varying actors’ interests, is it simply unhelpful as a concept? No, because stability helps us to provide a framework where high order and low order concepts are organised. As noted by Gerring:

It would have no way of putting these small-order ideas together into a coherent whole. Large-order concepts comprise the scaffolding on which we hang observables. Without general concepts, science cannot generalize. A social science without abstract concepts would be a series of disconnected facts and microtheories. (Gerring 2001: 38)

### Measurements and trends

Huntington, one of the first political scientists to think systematically about political order, suggested that “the indices of political order or its absence in terms of violence, coups, insurrections, and other forms of instability are also reasonably clear and even quantifiable” (Huntington 1968: vii). In this section, the paper provides a selection of proxies that have been or could be used to evaluate levels of (in)stability. The academics that formed the Political Instability Task Force found that: “A model that forecasts with a two-year lead time the outbreak of civil wars and other forms of political instability. [...] the model achieved over 80% accuracy in distinguishing country-years followed by instability from ones where stability continued” (Goldstone et al. 2010: 191). However, they cautioned the reader that instability for them was presence of political violence, civil wars, but also the possible regime change: “Many civil wars do not involve adverse regime changes, as the ruling regime remains in authority throughout; and many adverse regime changes (e.g., bloodless military coups against democratic governments) occur with little violence, and thus do not count as civil wars” (Goldstone et al. 2010: 192).

This section introduces proxies of stability, first focusing on citizens’ security, then regime security and, finally, security for international actors such as UN and NATO.

### Security and stability for the citizens

For the citizen level, the paper introduces data and patterns about human rights, civilian victimisation and the killing of journalists. Security stability for the individual is, at its core, about “*habeas corpus*” and respect of physical integrity. In the past few years, scholars have elaborated several projects on systemic data collection on human rights violations (Landman and Carvalho 2010, Wood and Gibney 2010); among these projects, one of the most used is the CIRI dataset (Cingranelli and Richards 2010).

**Figure 1** | Human rights violations: mass killing

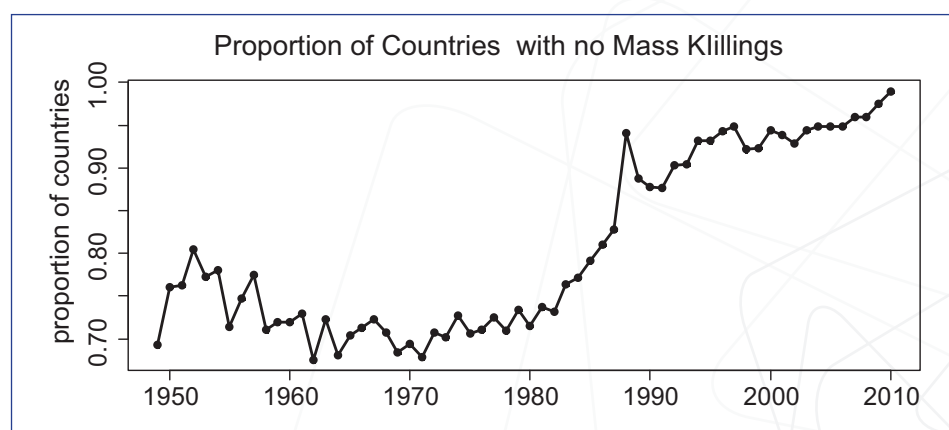
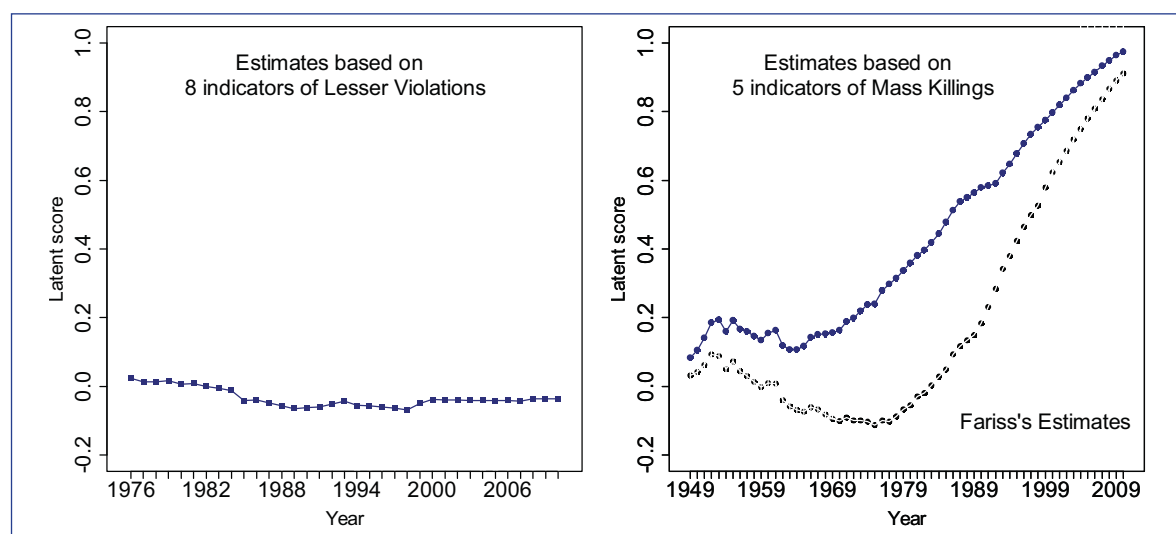


Figure 1 is a graph by Cingranelli and Filippov (2018: 1084). Cingranelli and Filippov show that the level of large-scale human rights violation, such as mass killings, has diminished over time. However, they also show in Figure 2 (Cingranelli and Filippov 2018: 1085) that there has been variation of mass killings (graph on the right), yet lesser HR violations such as individual torture do not show a clear decline.

**Figure 2** | Lesser violations vs. mass killing

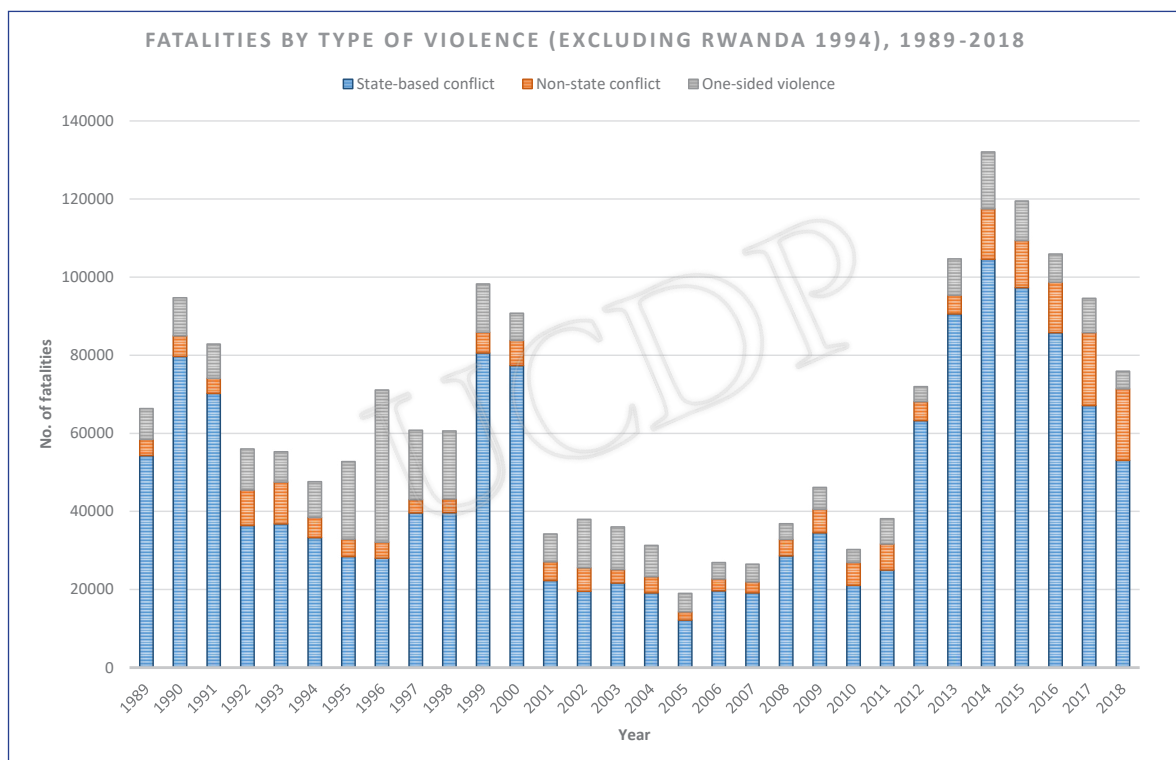


Scholars from the UCDP project (Uppsala) have compiled an authoritative dataset that they title "one sided violence" (OSV). The OSV database contains data on civilians that are killed as passive targets of violence and where perpetrators can be the government or non-state actors (Eck and Hultman 2007). Figure 3 shows a trend of OSV since the end of the Cold War.<sup>3</sup> The figure shows a clear decline of OSV in the early 2000s. However, today the average OSV per year has returned to pre-2000s levels.

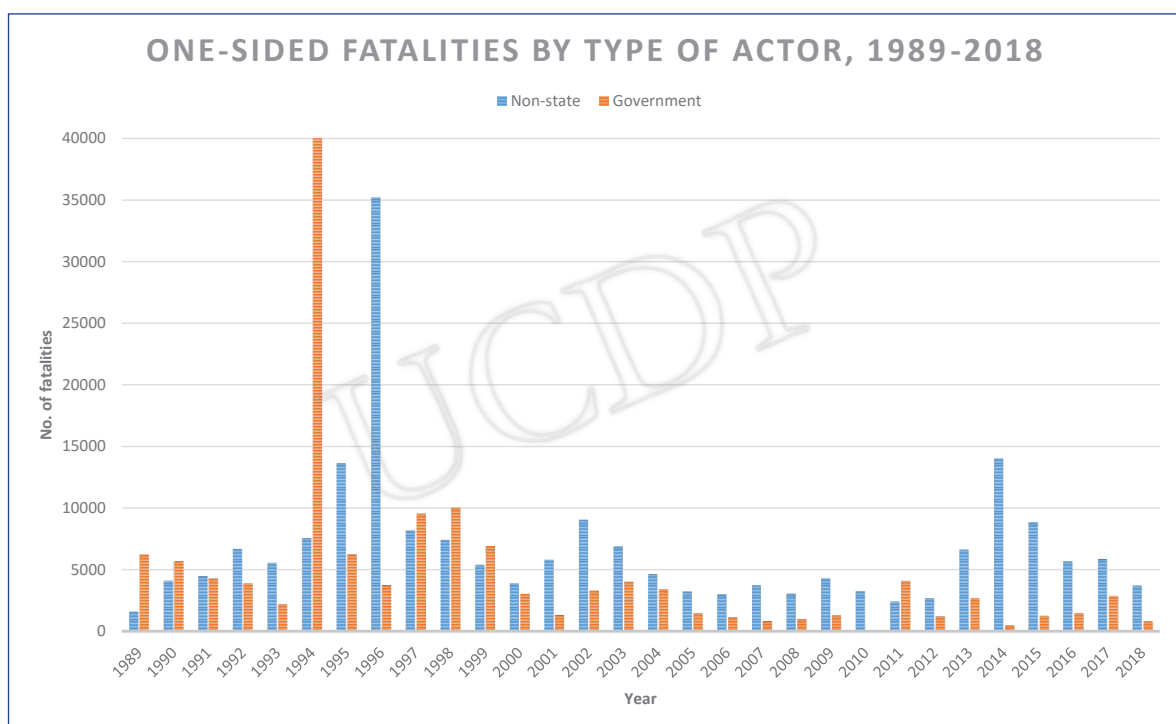
Figure 4 reports the OSV data to show civilians' victimisations according to the perpetrator: government or non-state actors. What is quite interesting, taking in account the emergence of the norm Responsibility to Protect (R2P), is that in the last few years, the most active actors against citizens have been non-state actors. Finally, Figure 5 demonstrates the data on the killing of journalists. This graph was been created by Gohdes and Carey (2017: 158) and it reports over different levels of HRs violations (using the Political Terror Scale) the number of journalists killed. Human rights violations are measured on the x-axis from one to five with one being low and five high. The graph shows that in the middle range of HRs violations many journalists are killed, but not in war scenarios. In their article they argue that the killings of journalists are an early warning indicator for HRs deterioration.

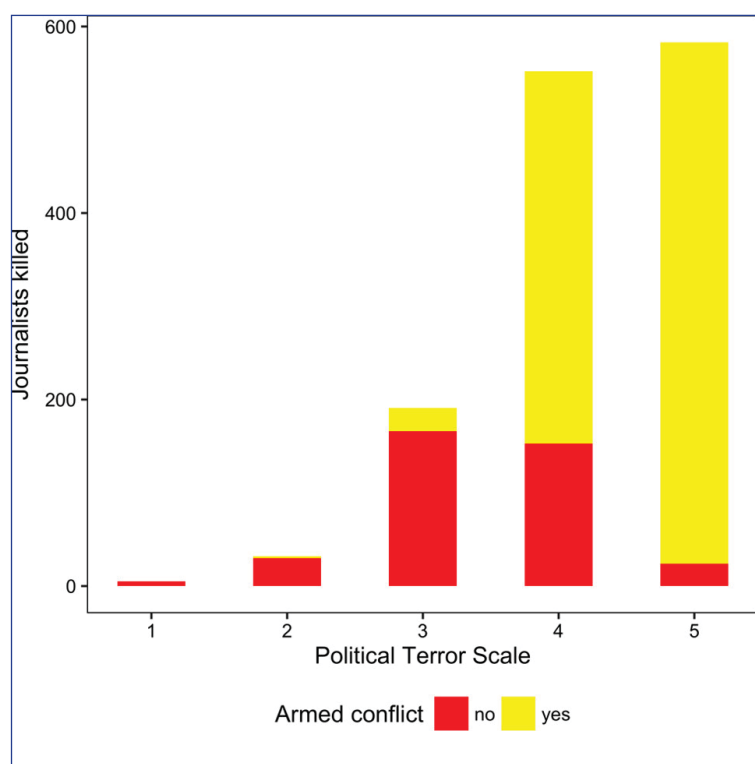
<sup>3</sup> Note that the intrastate conflict in Rwanda is excluded as the Y-axis would be too long.

**Figure 3** | Civilians' victimisation



**Figure 4** | Civilians' victimisation by actors



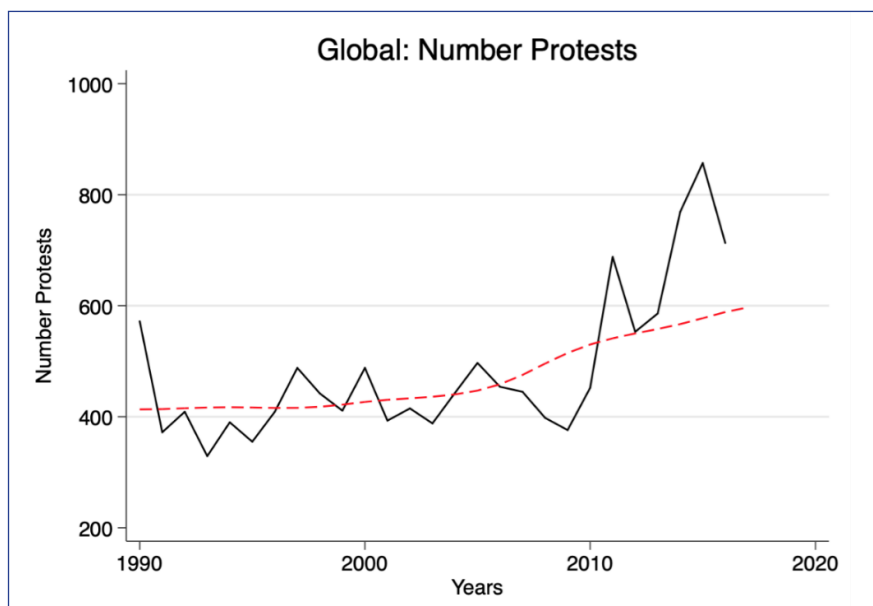
**Figure 5** | Journalists' killing, 2002–2013

### *Security and stability for a domestic regime*

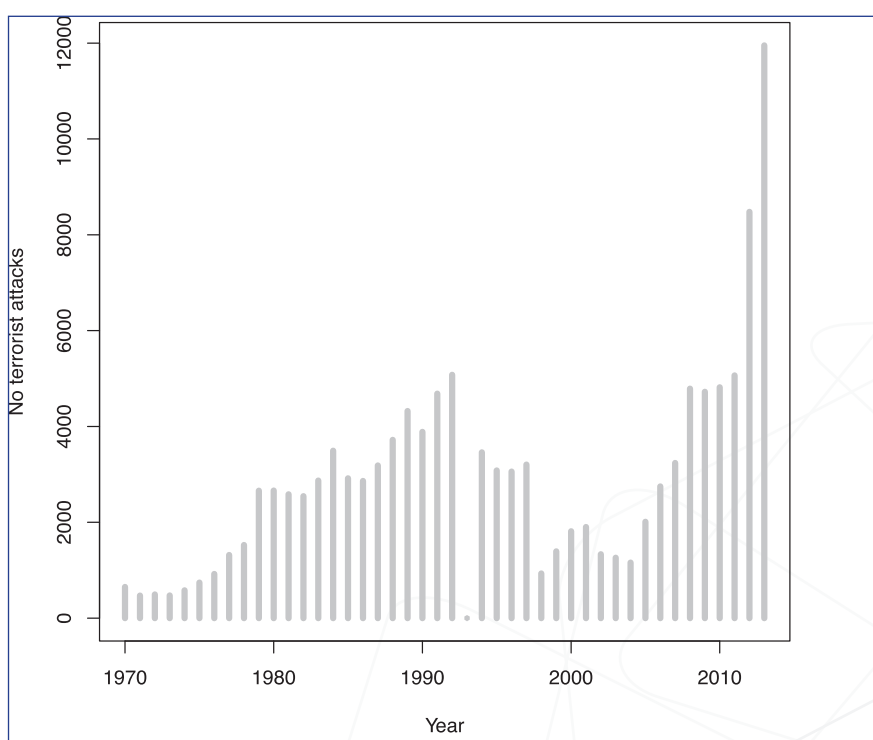
This section looks at indicators of instability at the domestic regime level. Protests against the state can signal instability within a polity and, most likely, protests are a very important factor for an incumbent regime's policy and survival. The SCAD project has provided analysis on riots and social unrest (Salehyan et al. 2012). Chenoweth and several co-authors have worked on non-violent protest data (Chenoweth and Lewis 2013) and also created data on non-violent protests within country at war (Chenoweth et al. 2019). Recent data by Clark and Regan (2016) provide information on instances of protest against governmental authority. Figure 6 shows a timeline of the number of protest incidence at global level (solid line) and a trend of these protests (dashed line). It appears that since the end of the Cold War, there has been an increase in protests. Though, these findings should be taken with a grain of salt – this result could reflect simply having better information about protesting around the globe over time.

Figure 7 reports a trend of terrorist attacks using the widely used dataset, the Global Terrorism Dataset (GTD) (LaFree 2010). The authors stress that there has been a substantive variation in the quality of sources about terrorism events over time and, therefore, caution users about possible artificial temporal trends.

**Figure 6** | Number of protests



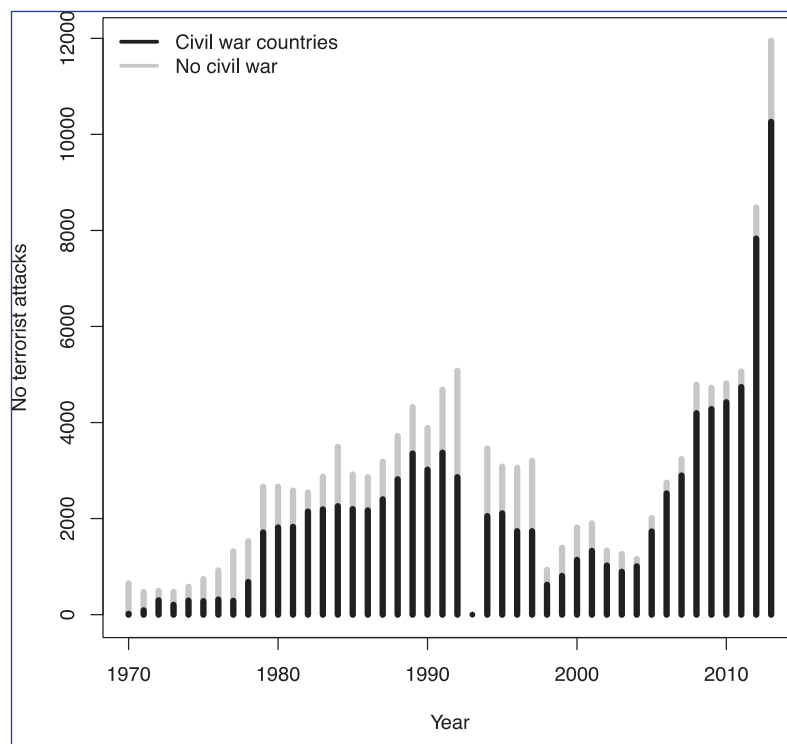
**Figure 7** | Terror attacks' trend



Yet, many policy reports, news outlets and policy makers have stressed an increase of instability given, as Figure 7 shows, a steep increase in the number of terrorist attacks. However, these figures do not account for the variation between the number of terror attacks occurring in states experiencing civil war versus states that are not at civil war. Figure 8 demonstrates the divide between the incidences

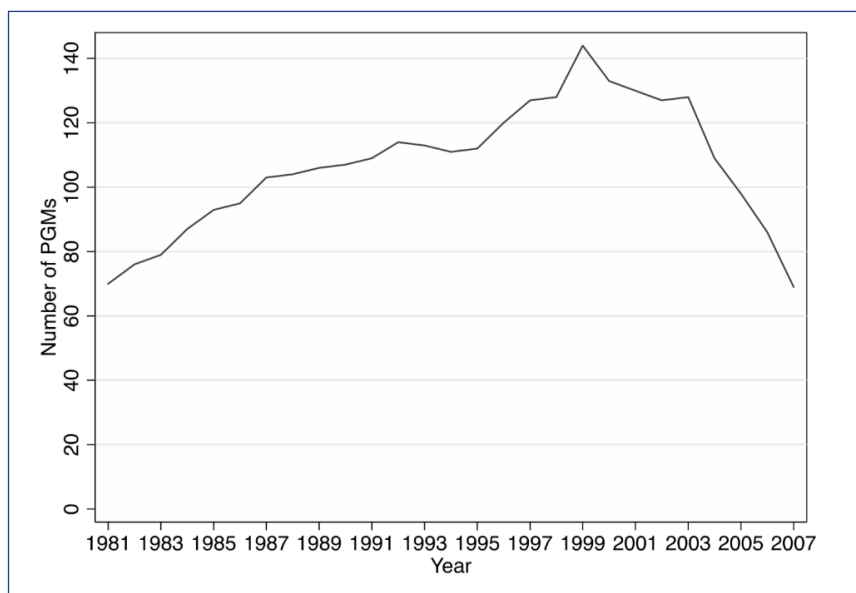
of terrorist attacks in states experiencing and not experience civil war. This graph tells a vastly different story.

**Figure 8** | Terrorism and civil war



The increase of terror attacks is occurring in states that already unstable by the occurrence of civil war. These attacks are illustrated in the darker areas. If we only look at the lighter areas, states that are not experiencing civil wars at that time, there is a flat trend. States that do not have civil wars have not experienced an increase of terror attacks (Gleditsch et al. 2017). For data on civil wars, the most recent and disaggregated data, both in terms of subnational location and temporal granularity, are data from the UCDP project (Uppsala, Sweden) and the ACLED project (Sussex, UK). Kristine Eck (2012) provides a comparison of strengths and limitations of these two data sources.

Pro-government militias are another indicator of the stability of a state or regime. An incumbent tolerates pro-government forces when the Weberian state is not fully functioning and a legitimate monopoly of violence is not feasible or not desirable by the regime. Figure 9 reports the data collected by Carey et al. (2013). Since the 1980s there has been a steady increase of militias, however since the 2000s, this number is declining.

**Figure 9** | Number of pro-government militias

### *Security and stability for international actors*

This section briefly moves to the last level of analysis, international actors, and relative proxies for stability. Figure 10 shows 200 years of interstate and intra-state wars using as data source the Correlates of War project (COW). The great majority of years since 1816 have experienced interstate war (darker bins). In the past few years, almost no interstate wars have occurred. Though, many recent wars have been defined as internationalised civil wars.

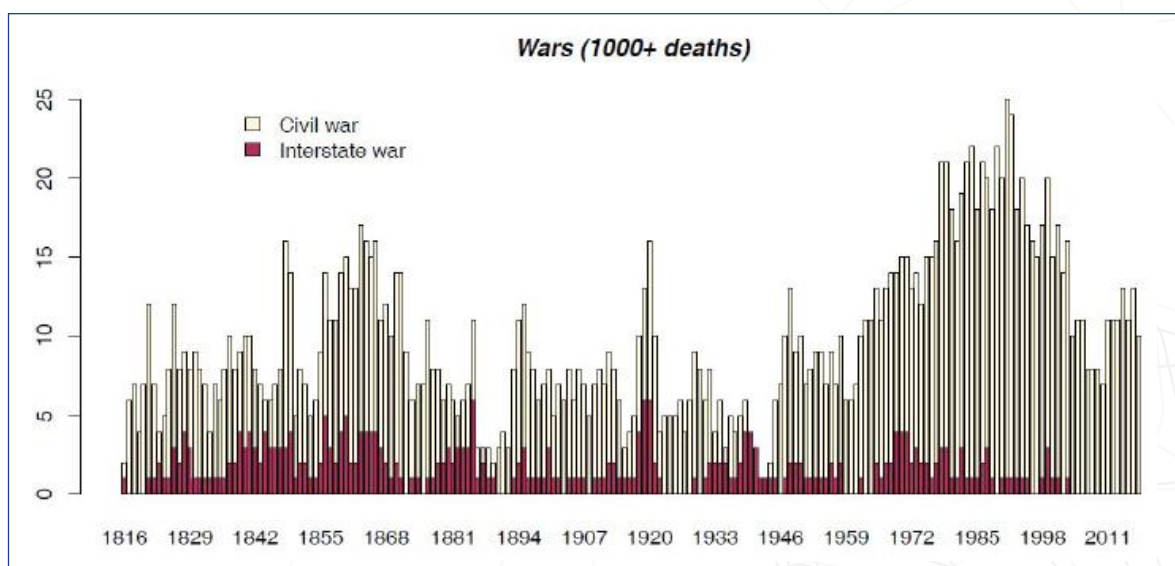
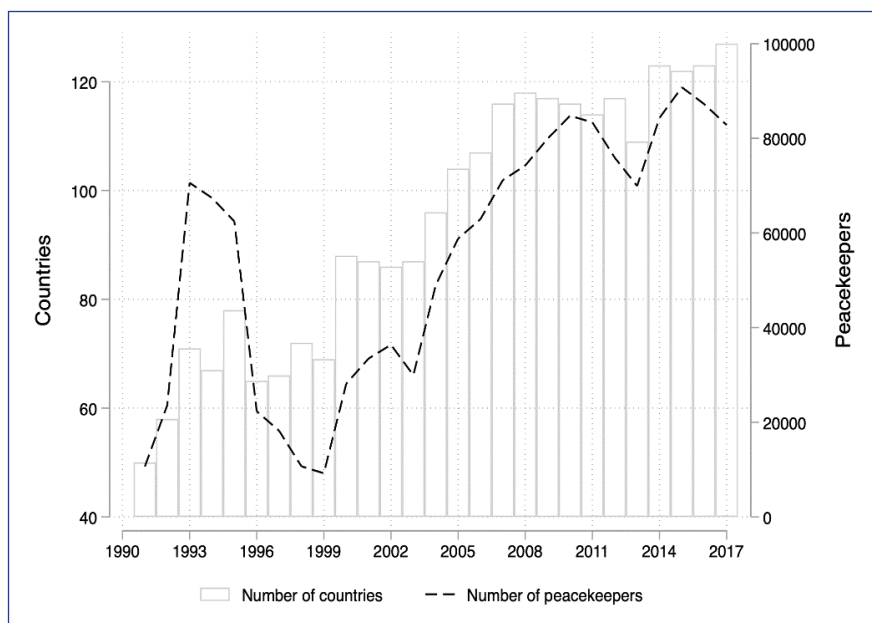
**Figure 10** | Wars

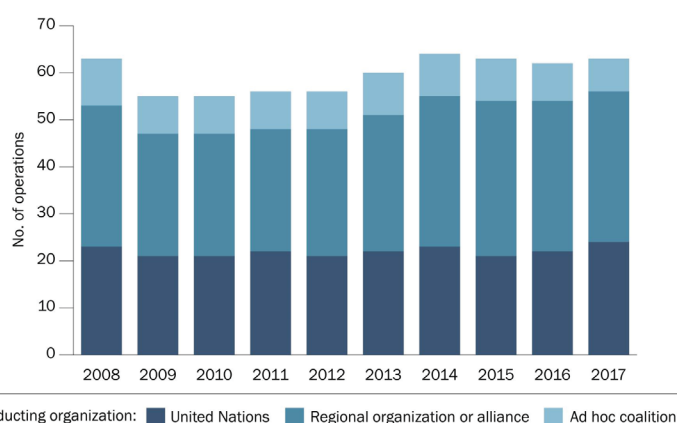
Figure 11 comes from Bove and Ruggeri's (2015: 682) work. It shows that the number of states contributing to United Nations missions has increased substantially from around 50, just after the end of the Cold War, to more than 120 today. The dashed black line shows that the number of peacekeepers deployed today is around 80,000 – an extremely large military deployment.

**Figure 11** | UN peace operations and peacekeepers



**Figure 12** | Peace operations and organisations

Number of multilateral peace operations, by type of conducting organization, 2008–17



Source: SIPRI Multilateral Peace Operations Database (18 June 2018)

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Finally, Figure 12, from SIPRI data, demonstrates how, in the last 10 years, regional organisations and alliances, rather than solely UN operated missions, have overseen the majority of multilateral peace operations. This suggests that, in terms of interests and role of intentional actors, security stability has become more regionalised than ever before.

In table 2, I summarise a non-exhaustive selection of proxies for the different interests' levels and their data sources.

**Table 2** | Summary selection proxies for security stability

Level	Security observables	Data source
Citizen	Human rights	CIRI; Political Terror Scale
	Civilians victimisation	OSV-UCDP
	Journalists killing	Gohdes and Carey 2017
Domestic incumbent/ regime	Mobilisation	SCAD, NAVCO, Clark and Regan 2016
	Pro-government militias	Carey et al. 2013
	Terrorism	GTD
	Civil war	National: UCDP-PRIO Subnational: UCDP-GED, ACLED
International/ external (alliances)	Interstate war	Correlates of war (COW)
	Alliances	COW
	Peace operations	SIPRI

## Data issues to keep in mind

Before concluding this section on data and measurement, it is necessary to briefly point out issues analysts and policy makers should consider when interpreting empirics on stability. First, analysts and policy makers should consider the overall validity of a dataset – the quality of conceptualisation and measurement. This issue of validity refers directly to this paper's section on defining stability. Are the data valid proxies for the core conceptualisation? Second, the temporal coverage of a dataset should be taken in account, the left-or-right-truncation of the temporal domain, hence missing data points before or after the temporal window of the analysis, could be misleading when analysing trends. Third, the geographical coverage could over-or-under-represent some areas. What we could believe to be hotspots are perhaps just areas with more reliable and accessible data sources. Fourth, temporal and geographical units need to have the appropriate level of granularity for the purpose of analysis. Moreover, the coding decisions on levels of temporal or geographical units affect their autocorrelation and spatial interdependence. Finally, analysts, but also policy makers, should wonder and question the data sources consistency. Variation of data quality could create artificial trends and stable areas.

### *Final remarks*

Security stability is intrinsically related to trade-offs and divergent interests. Huntington points out that “economic development and political stability are two independent goals and progress toward one has no necessary connection with progress toward the other” (Huntington 1968: 6). It is clear in this paper that projecting stability, and relative strategies, is a foreign policy decision. Stability is not exclusively about tools and strategies, it is about interests and goals. Therefore, we need to define political and security stability based on actors’ interests, specific realms, and time horizons. This implies interdependences and (possible) trade-offs between interests, realms and short/long terms. Moreover, political violence and stability are intertwined, not exclusive.

However, we do not only have conceptual challenges but also empirical challenges ahead for measuring security stability. As stressed above, a multidimensional conceptualisation needs complex multidimensional indicators. Synthetic indexes, often requested by policy makers, could be misleading or only represent partial interests because they could conflate multidimensions and diversity of interests. The paper has highlighted different analytical levels, units and realms interdependence. Therefore, sophisticated statistical modelling will be necessary, especially when dealing with forecast modelling (Hegre et al. 2017).

Moving forward, the research agenda will need to clarify the trade-offs between different levels of stability and, more explicitly, how the stabilisation of a state can jeopardize the stability of citizens’ lives. It must also consider how time horizons and trade-offs between short-and long-term effects can be introduced more carefully and systematically in the study of stability and relative strategies.

Policymakers should think more about stability strategies rather than stability tactics. The logic of stability cannot be easily integrated into the grammar of politics, where the political survival of leaders and electoral cycles tend to shrink time horizon instead of considering medium and long-terms effects. However, the effectiveness of polices necessitates analytical clarity paired with solid empirical evidence.

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## 2. Disaggregating Measures of Political (In)stability: Lessons from Electoral Violence

by Ursula Daxecker\*

In November 2018, Afghanistan held parliamentary elections despite a highly unstable security environment. Ten candidates were killed before election-day, a quarter of polling stations could not open because of security conditions, and on election-day alone, 27 people were killed and 100 others wounded (Mohamed 2018). Elections held in Bangladesh, Brazil, Congo, and Zimbabwe in 2018 also involved substantial violence, and observers are already raising concerns about violence in the 2019 Nigerian elections. As these examples show, holding elections under precarious security conditions is not unusual; since the end of the Cold War, about 80 per cent of countries experiencing armed conflict have held one or more elections while conflict was ongoing. More generally, 30 per cent of all elections held outside of advanced, industrialised democracies since 1991 have experienced deadly violence (Daxecker and Jung 2018, Daxecker et al. 2019).

Elections and instability thus often go hand-in-hand. While scholars have only recently become interested in electoral instability, the broader question of how to create and maintain stable order lies at the origins of International Relations as a discipline. Scholars disagree on how to promote stability, but they generally agree in defining stability by what it is not, namely the absence of war. Traditionally, International Relations have focused on instability between states, neglecting instability within countries that harms the security of citizens, such as the violence threatening Afghan voters mentioned at the outset of this paper. This emphasis on interstate security changed with the end of the Cold War, when scholars increasingly started to study domestic instability. Until the recent disaggregation turn, though, scholarship on stability within states also lacked geographically and temporally disaggregated indicators, categorising countries as either “at civil war” or “at peace” in a given year, regardless of whether violence only affected a minor part of the territory or occurred over a very short period of time. This has changed in the last decade; an increasing number of disaggregated measures of intrastate (in)stability is now available.

This paper argues that fine-grained measures of electoral instability – thus disaggregating different *types* of instability in addition to disaggregating geographically and temporally – offer important benefits for International Relations scholars. First, measuring instability around elections is important conceptually because it allows broadening the focus beyond civil war and major periods of instability, yet simultaneously keeps the theoretical and empirical scope manageable by limiting the focus on electoral periods rather than considering all collective action. Second, disaggregated measures of electoral instability benefit

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theory development and empirical testing. Scholarship on elections and instability indicates that competitive elections, elections held in weakly institutionalised regimes, and fraudulent elections are more often followed by instability (see Fjelde and Höglund 2016, Mares and Young 2016 for an overview). However, these accounts help us understand why some elections are more or less violent in the aggregate, but do not allow for revealing more fundamental issues of whether, where and in what ways election instability happens. For example, which political candidates are targeted and why, such as those killed in recent Afghan elections? Data limitations means scholars are limited in developing and testing meso- and micro-level accounts.

This paper views disaggregation in the measurement of instability as a welcome and important development, but argues that disaggregating different *kinds* of political instability – limiting the scope of inquiry to elections – provides additional advantages. Drawing on recent conceptual and operational work on elections and instability (Daxecker et al. 2019), the paper will demonstrate the advantages of disaggregation. Global and country-level illustrations show that disaggregated data show different and more nuanced patterns of electoral instability than more aggregate data. For example, the data show that India experiences electoral instability primarily in the border regions, while it affects a much larger area of Nigeria's territory. Moreover, temporal trends show that deadly violence is declining in India, but not Nigeria. These patterns are relevant for policymakers since they can help identify countries and areas at risk for instability. The final section discusses avenues for future research on instability. Disaggregating measurement is important but insufficient because we need to link local, disaggregated patterns back to the incentives and opportunities faced by politicians and other macro-level actors. The paper concludes with suggestions for theory-building linking micro-and macro-level factors for work on elections and instability and crime and politics.

### *Measuring (in)stability in international relations*

How do we conceptualise and measure stability and its antonym, instability? The question of how to create a stable or even peaceful world has defined International Relations from its emergence as a discipline in the early 20th century. While International Relations theories disagree on how to achieve stability, they share a negative definition of stability. In classical realism, stability is possible if responsible leaders maintain a military balance of power or if the particular structural distribution of power in the international system permits stable outcomes (Morgenthau 1948, Waltz 1979). Across realist theories, though, stability is defined primarily what it is not, namely the absence of war, and realists agree that “the threat of violence and the recurrent use of force” characterises international politics even during peaceful periods (Waltz 1979: 102). Yet while liberal theories are much more optimistic about the possibility of stability and even consider peace feasible (since the latent threat of violence is not a defining feature of IR), various liberal variants nevertheless again define peace by what it is not, namely the absence of war. Some liberal theorists have a more nuanced view of peace, viewing it as a continuum

rather than the mere absence of war. For example, strong liberals distinguish the “warm peace” among European liberal democracies from the “cold peace” between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War (Boulding 1978, Adler and Barnett 1998). A related distinction is the one between a negative and a positive peace (Galtung 1969). Yet across empirical assessments of realist and liberal theories, the focus has been on measuring *instability*, i.e. the incidence of war and conflict, rather than the presence of peace.

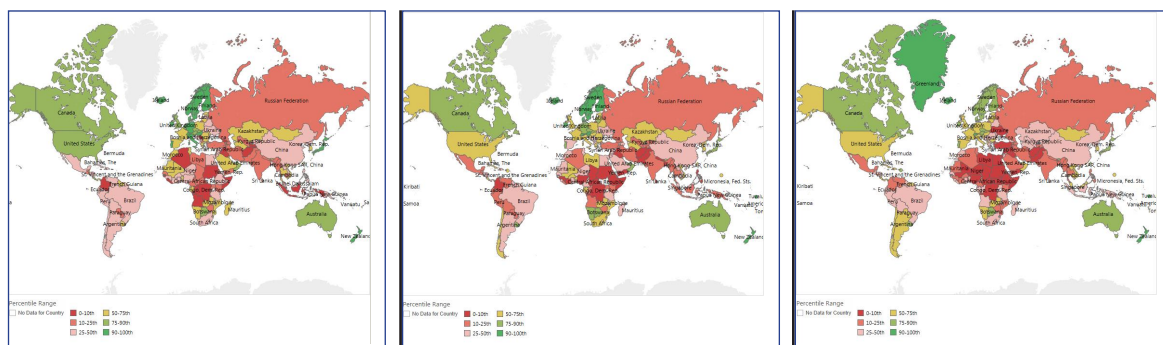
The focus on the measurement of instability is understandable if we consider that periods of instability are simply more easily observable and empirically rare than periods of stability. Empirical research has therefore expended much time and energy on conceptualising and operationalising war and armed conflict. In a seminal contribution, Hedley Bull (1977: 184) conceptualises war as “organized violence carried on by political units against each other”, highlighting that it involves interaction between two or more actors, requires organisation, occurs between political agents, and encompasses the incidence of violence. Operational definitions of war and conflict in the Correlates of War (COW) and the Uppsala Conflict Data Project (UCDP) are compatible with Bull’s conceptual definition, but add additional requirements necessary for measurement, in particular a minimum-level of intensity of violence in terms of battle-related deaths (Gleditsch et al. 2002, Singer and Small 1972, Wright 1964). These data coding projects were crucial in allowing for empirical assessments of realist and liberal claims. Unexpected empirical correlations identified by these researchers even helped spur entire research agendas, such as the democratic peace (Babst 1964).

Historically, International Relations scholars were most interested in the causes of instability between states, but since the end of the Cold War, there is an increasing emphasis on domestic instability, in particular civil war and terrorism. This interest in civil war and terrorism, however, lags behind empirical trends. As data on both interstate and intrastate instability from COW and UCDP have shown, the decline of interstate war precedes the end of the Cold War, as does the increase in the number of civil wars – the number of intrastate conflicts increased throughout the Cold War and peaked right around its end (Gleditsch et al. 2002). Regardless, organised crime, terrorism, and civil war are often invoked as major threats to stability today, and these threats take place primarily in countries considered weak or fragile.

Traditional measures of domestic instability use country-level data to indicate whether countries are unstable or not. Yet the characterisation of entire countries as experiencing armed conflict means neglecting extensive geographic and temporal variation in violence, crime, and hence instability. For example, Figure 13 below shows political stability at the country level in 1998 (left panel), 2007 (mid panel) and 2017 (right panel), covering a 20-year period. These data come from the World Bank Governance Indicators (Kaufmann et al. 2009). What stands out from these maps is that not much has changed in terms of broad patterns of stability – the same countries and regions experiencing most instability in 1998 continue to be unstable today, in particular Africa and the Middle East. While not necessarily inaccurate, these aggregate patterns mask substantial variation in instability

within countries and over time. For example, while countries affected by the Arab Spring, such as Egypt, have become less stable overall, these dynamics still do not capture substantial subnational and temporal variation in instability.

**Figure 13** | Political stability and the absence of violence across the world, 1998, 2007, 2017



Recognising the need for more fine-grained indicators, conflict researchers have invested substantial resources in collecting temporally and spatially disaggregated measures of instability in the last 10 to 15 years. In particular, there has been an explosion of event data projects coding incidents of various types of conflict and violence, such as UCDP-GED, ACLED, and MMAD (Raleigh et al. 2010, Sundberg and Melander 2013, Weidmann and Rød 2019). This is an important and much-needed development not only because it provides conflict researchers with more accurate and valid indicators of the phenomena they study, but also because it allows for properly testing theories that often focus on not just the state but also crucial sub-state actors such as criminals, rebels, or civilians.

We observe a similar shift towards fine-grained indicators in policy. For example, the NATO/ISAF mission in Afghanistan observed the implementation of a multitude of evaluation programs that collected increasingly fine-grained measures of security, popular support for the government, support for anti-government elements, community cohesion, health, economic well-being (Iyengar et al. 2017). The Afghanistan Nationwide Quarterly Research (ANQAR) survey data conducted for NATO/ISAF is exemplary. While the survey did not commence until 2008, it uses scientific sampling techniques in quarterly face-to-face interviews with Afghan citizens in all 34 provinces, and asks management and quality control questions, demographic questions, and questions on topics including security, government services, reconciliation, and elections (Iyengar et al. 2017: 15). The surveys offer a wealth of disaggregated indicators for policymakers and scholars interested in evaluating the impact of the NATO mission.

How can we evaluate the quality of disaggregated measures of instability (or measurement in general)? For good measurement, we need indicators that are reliable and valid. Reliability refers to the need for indicators that remain consistent over time and across different people coding the information, while validity means

that indicators capture the theoretical concept they are supposed to measure. Since researchers do not usually collect their own data, they need to think about issues of validity and reliability of the measures they are using. Herrera and Kapur (2007) highlight that researchers should consider the *incentives* and *capabilities* of the data producers involved. For data produced by governments, which is the data source for many country-level indicators, capacity issues will be much more serious in developing countries. Governments may also have reasons to report better or worse outcomes depending on the incentive structure. For example, Jerven (2016: 5) shows that surprisingly many countries report gross national incomes just below the eligibility threshold for financing by the International Development Association. Countries facing the most serious capacity issues might thus simultaneously be the ones having most incentives to distort the data (Jerven 2016). For event data, serious threats to validity and reliability emerge from the capacities and incentives faced by two primary data producers, (1) the media reporting information and (2) the coders responsible for translating news into events. I discuss both issues in the presentation and discussion of events data on electoral instability below.

### *Why electoral instability matters*

This paper demonstrates the benefits of disaggregated measurement by focusing on instability during electoral periods. While many other forms of instability are worthy of further study, there are several reasons for focusing the scope of inquiry on elections. First, elections are key moments deciding the winners and losers in politics. In stable democracies, election losers accept defeat because they believe that democratic institutions will allow them to pursue their interests in the future (Przeworski 1991). However, much of contemporary politics takes place in countries that hold competitive elections even though their democracy is not thoroughly institutionalised. Almost all countries hold minimally competitive elections today, but outside of advanced, industrialised democracies, politicians worried about losing can use violence to try and influence election outcomes rather than risking defeat. Similarly, opposition actors opposed to the government or the electoral process itself can use violence to influence or disrupt elections. It is the combination of importance and uncertainty inherent in elections that creates favourable conditions for instability. Second, electoral instability is indeed a frequent and recurring problem in many countries, as protests and violence accompanying elections in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Iraq, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Zimbabwe has shown. Since 1990, more than one third of all elections held in the developing world have experienced deadly violence (Daxecker et al. 2019). Third, international actors, including but not limited to NATO, the UN, the EU, and the OSCE, care deeply about elections and often support holding elections even if they need to take place under very difficult circumstances, such as recent elections in Afghanistan mentioned in the beginning of the paper. Increasingly, elections are held during ongoing armed conflict, which has contributed to scholarship examining under what conditions armed groups adopt violent or nonviolent electoral strategies (Staniland 2015, Matanock and Staniland 2018).

*Describing electoral instability*

What is electoral instability? The Electoral Contention and Violence Data (ECAV) defines electoral contention “as public acts of mobilization, contestation, or coercion by state or non-state actors used to affect the electoral process, or arising in the context of electoral competition” (Daxecker et al. 2019: 3). The data use events as their unit of analysis. An event of electoral contention involves at least two actors who disagree on an issue and are thus seen as being on opposite sides. These events are publicly observable, linked to an electoral process in timing and substance, and can be violent or nonviolent in nature. The resulting dataset contains approximately 18,000 geocoded events of electoral instability coded for 2,000 election rounds held in 136 countries from 1990 until 2012 (Daxecker et al. 2019). The ECAV data project relied exclusively on human coders who identified and coded events of instability from three newswires (Associated Press, Agence France Press, and BBC Monitoring).

There are several obstacles in coding reliable and valid event data from news. It is useful to consider the capacity and incentives of the data producers involved, in this case the media organisations reporting events and the student coders identifying and coding these events. First, regarding the media, reporting bias is a major concern since what is reported in the news targets a particular audience, is biased in favour of particular countries or events, and is not representative of what is happening locally (Baum and Zhukov 2015, Chojnacki et al. 2012, Höglund and Öberg 2011, Weidmann 2014). Reporting also differs across authoritarian and democratic regimes (Baum and Zhukov 2015) and has increased over time, making it difficult to establish whether increases result from greater reporting or represent a true increase in events (Urdal 2008). Without access to the universe of true events, it is impossible to assess the extent of reporting bias. In general, however, elections draw a significant amount of media attention, suggesting that events during elections may be more likely to be covered (Fillieule 1999, McCarthy et al. 1996). Researchers can also attempt to correct for biases using new techniques to model over-or-under-reporting (Cook et al. 2017). Second, the capacity and incentives faced by student coders deserves scrutiny. Coding data from news entails two steps; first, coders identify the events in news reports; and second, they encode events according to the variables included. Coding reliability requires coders to identify the same events and interpret them similarly (Ruggeri et al. 2011). The ECAV data project conducted a detailed assessment of the reliability of event identification and event encoding of all coders in the ECAV data project. For event identification, precision rates showed that coders on average identified 66 per cent of events correctly. For event encoding, Krippendorff’s alpha showed very good or good results for most variables.

Using the data on electoral instability collected by the ECAV project, I now describe some general patterns in the incidence of electoral instability over space and time. Figure 14 shows the geography of electoral instability over the entire time period (1990–2012) for which we have data. Squares on the map show locations where electoral contention happened, and darker square indicate a higher number of

events. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, electoral instability is most common in Asia (31 per cent of events), followed by Africa (27 per cent), the Middle East (20 per cent), the Eastern and Southeastern Europe (7 per cent), and the Americas (8 per cent). The figure thus highlights the importance of studying electoral instability in regions other than Africa. It is notable that in most countries, electoral instability affects only parts of the territory, highlighting why it is important to have more fine-grained measures instability rather than designating entire countries as unstable.

**Figure 14** | The geography of electoral instability, 1990–2012

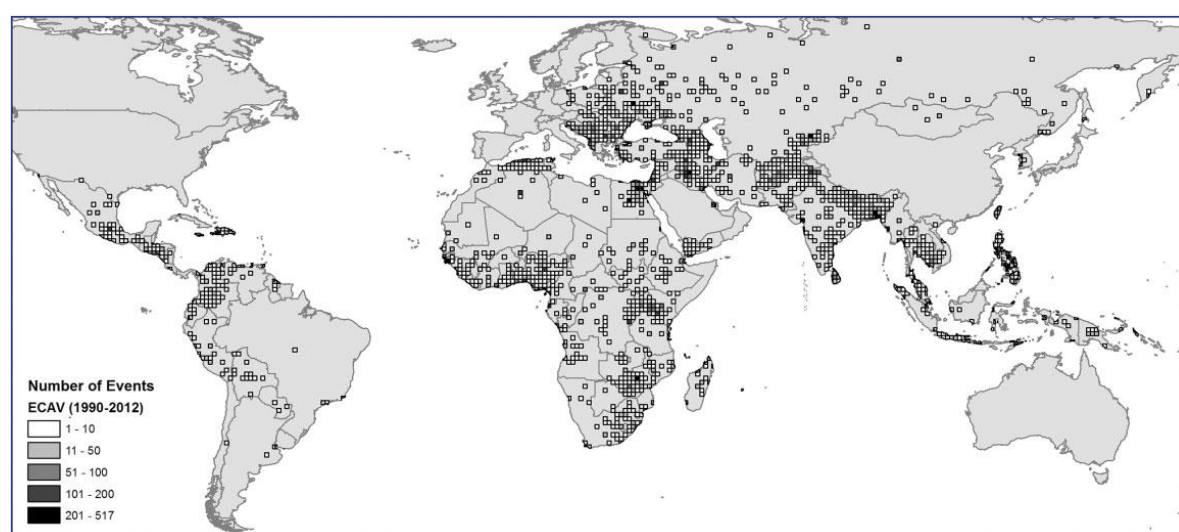
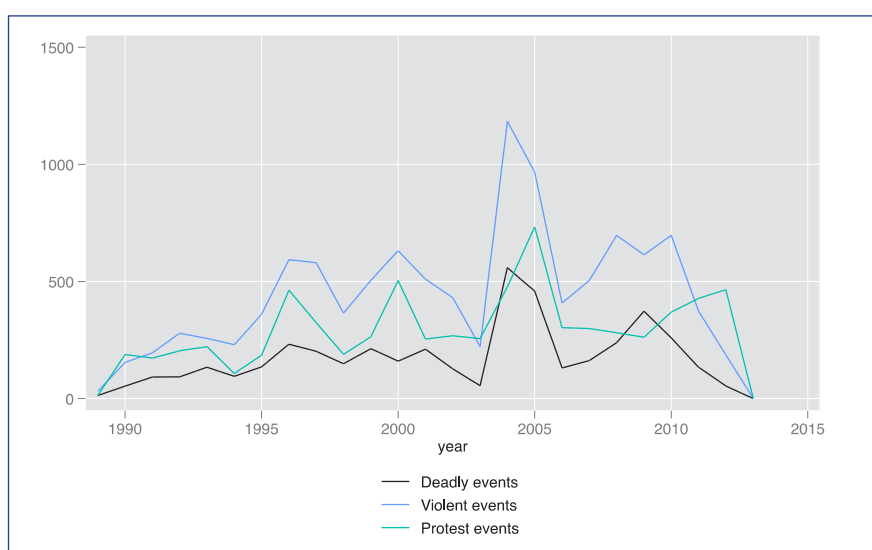


Figure 15 shows changes in electoral instability over time, distinguishing between lethal and nonlethal violent events, and protest events. The figure shows significant fluctuations in instability over time. Similar to other event data on political violence, such as the Uppsala Conflict Data Program Georeferenced Event Data (UCDP-GED) or the Armed Conflict and Location and Event Data (ACLED), such peaks are influenced by particularly contentious elections in particular years (Raleigh et al. 2010, Sundberg and Melander 2013). In particular, the peak in all types of contention in 2004 is a result of highly contentious elections being held in Iraq, Egypt, Afghanistan and Ukraine held in that year. It is also notable that electoral contention drops towards the end of the period, especially in 2011 and 2012.

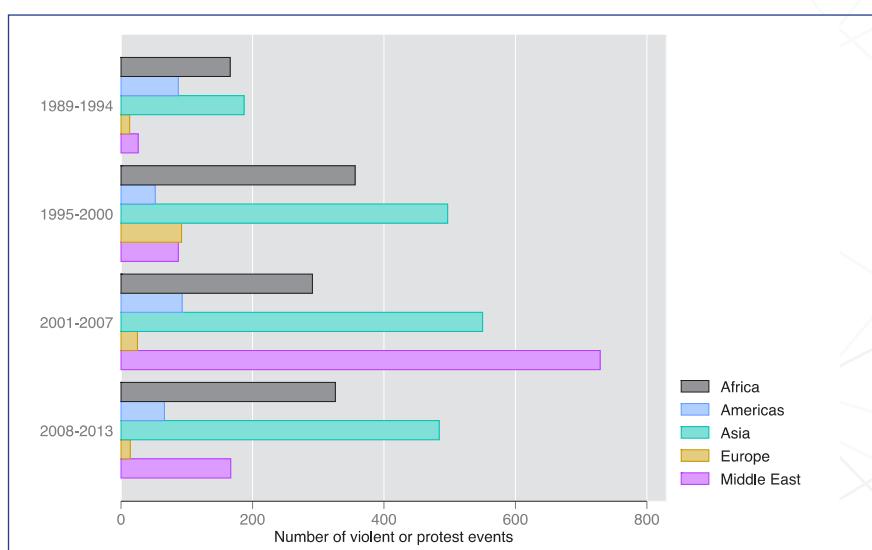
Finally, Figure 16 depicts both regional and temporal variation in contention. I compare electoral instability over six sub-periods, beginning in 1989 (since elections held in 1990 also include some instability in 1989) and ending in 2013 (since elections held in 2012 could experience post-election instability in 2013). I observe an increase of electoral instability in the first years of the post-Cold War period. Electoral contention in Europe peaks in the years between 1995 and 2000 because of highly contentious elections in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Russia. Likewise, violent elections in Bangladesh and India lead to an increase of contention in Asia in 1995–2000. From 2000 onwards, instability increases again because of contentious elections in Haiti and Peru in the Americas, but also in

Egypt, Iran and Zimbabwe. Contention decreases thereafter in most regions except Asia (especially elections Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Philippines in 2001), and Africa (violence during Kenyan and Zimbabwean elections in 2002). From 2001–2007, instability peaks overall because of highly contentious and violent elections in several countries (especially in 2004, as noted in figure 15). After 2008, we observe an increase in Africa, again because of violent elections in Kenya and Zimbabwe. Contentious elections in Afghanistan, Egypt, India, and Iraq lead to substantial instability in Africa and the Middle East, but contention decreases toward the end of the period, especially in 2011 and 2012.

**Figure 15** | Temporal variation in electoral instability, 1990–2012



**Figure 16** | Regional and temporal variation in electoral instability, 1990–2012



*The benefits of disaggregation – Evidence from India and Nigeria*

The above description shows that there is a lot more geographic and temporal variation in electoral instability than what aggregate data on political stability would suggest. To further demonstrate the benefits of disaggregation, it is useful to compare country-year indicators of electoral instability to disaggregated measures in particular countries. I choose India and Nigeria, two large developing countries that together make up 20 per cent of the world population. Both countries have held contentious elections in the past and are currently preparing for elections in 2019, and concerns about instability have already been raised.

To compare election-year and disaggregated measures of electoral instability across elections in India and Nigeria, I use data from the National Elections in Autocracy and Democracy (NELDA) dataset (Hyde and Marinov 2012). These data are widely cited and used and contain two indicators that are comparable to measures in ECAV; first, a dummy variable coding the presence or absence of election protests and riots, and second, a dummy variable indicating whether deadly violence occurred during elections. Table 3 below shows the incidence of riots and protests and deadly violence in both countries across all national elections from 1990–2012 (the period covered by NELDA and ECAV). The data show that almost all elections experience rioting, protests, and deadly violence in both countries. In fact, instability seems to be worse in India where all but one election experienced rioting (the 1996 elections), and no elections took place without deadly violence. Intuitively, observers might have had greater concerns about electoral violence in Nigeria. Crucially, though, these data cannot tell us how intense violence was nor how large the areas affected by instability were.

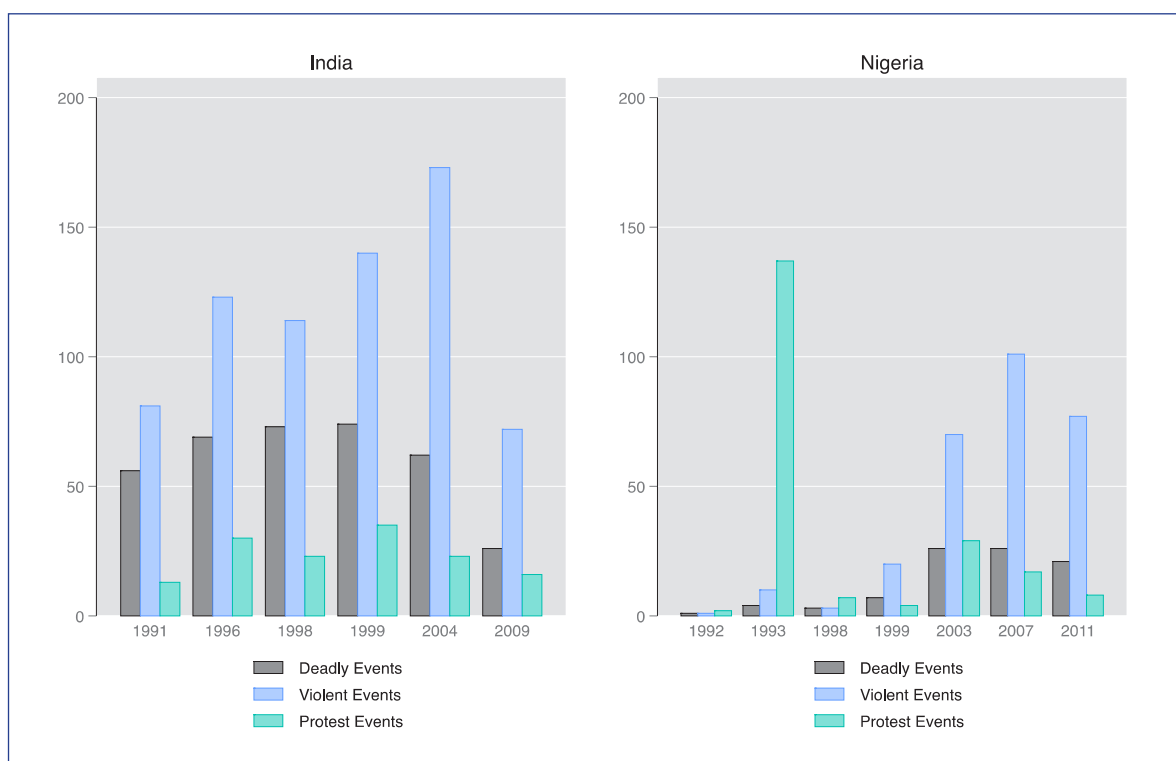
**Table 3** | Electoral instability in India and Nigeria across elections, NELDA data

India			Nigeria		
Election year	Riots and protests	Deadly violence	Election year	Riots and protests	Deadly violence
1991	yes	yes	1992	no	yes
1996	no	yes	1993	yes	yes
1998	yes	yes	1998	yes	yes
1999	yes	yes	1999	yes	no
2004	yes	yes	2003	yes	yes
2009	yes	yes	2007	yes	yes
			2011	yes	yes

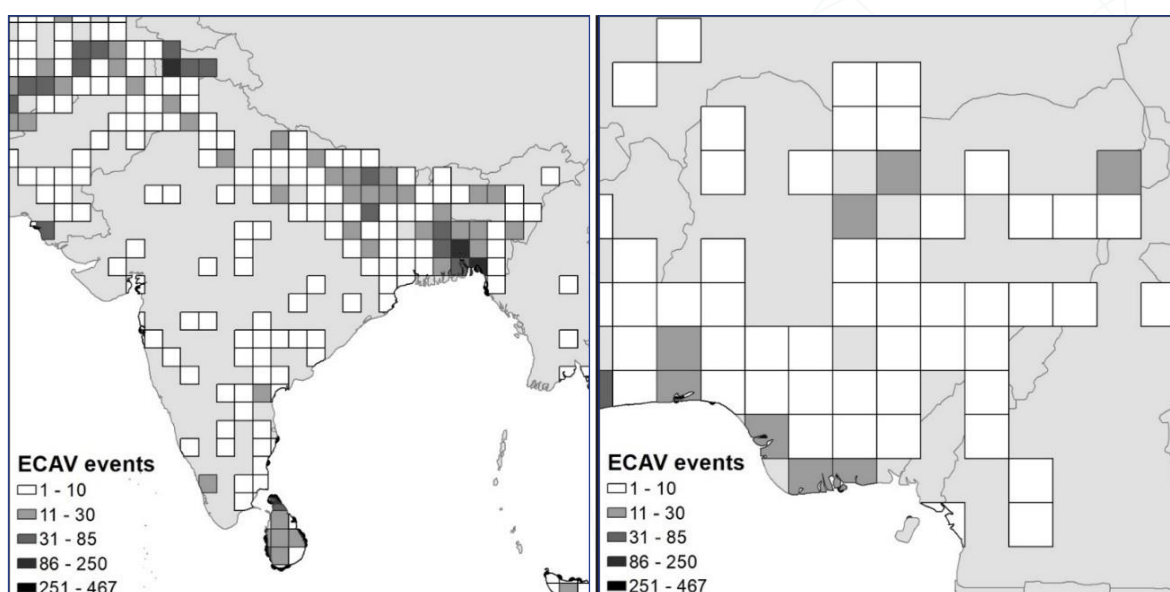
What patterns of instability emerge if we disaggregate violence temporally with data from ECAV? Figure 17 shows the incidence of instability across the same elections as in table 1 over time. India experiences more instability than Nigeria in absolute terms, but this is unsurprising considering that India's population of 1.4 billion is approximately seven times larger than Nigeria's 190 million people. Adjusted by population size, India would have a lower incidence of instability than

Nigeria. In addition, we notice that deadly violence in India is declining, which is a good sign and confirms intuitions that electoral processes are more protected in India. In Nigeria, however, no marked declines are apparent.

**Figure 17** | Electoral instability in India and Nigeria over time, ECAV data



**Figure 18** | Electoral instability in India (left panel) and Nigeria (right panel) across space, ECAV data



I next disaggregate incidents of election violence and protesting in both countries across space. As in Figure 14, the squares are locations with at least one event of electoral instability. The squares are approximately 50x50km in size but appear larger in Nigeria because it is a much smaller country. Figure 18 shows that large parts of India (left panel) experience very little protesting and violence, and that the contention that occurs is concentrated in border regions with separatist rebellions. The map suggests that India might be experiencing more violence intended to disrupt elections rather than elites trying to influence outcomes. For Nigeria (right panel), electoral instability is more spread out and covers a larger part of the territory, again confirming that we should perhaps be more concerned about contention in Nigeria than in India. The map also shows some hotspots in areas with ongoing armed conflict, such as in the Niger Delta or Northern Nigeria.

### *Beyond disaggregation: linking micro and macro*

Disaggregated indicators of electoral instability thus provide a different and more comprehensive picture than aggregate election-year indicators. However, disaggregation may be insufficient for understanding the broader dynamics of electoral instability since actors or events at the macro-level (whether national, regional, or international) will also have effects on how violence plays out (Balcells and Justino 2014). Aggregate factors such as the overall capacity of a state, for example, do matter for how much instability we expect to see and how such instability plays out on the ground. For example, Somalia is a case with extremely low aggregate state capacity experiencing high violence and lots of crime. To the extent that there is a national government, it is neither capable nor willing to intervene against instability. In contrast, India has much more capable national and state-level governments that are able to intervene against violence. In situations where these actors mount little or no response, such as when Hindus rioted against Muslims in Gujarat in 2002 and over 1,000 Muslims were killed, inaction by the state government presumably means that there were benefits for allowing violence to continue (Berenschot 2011, Dhattiwala and Biggs 2012).

Importantly, establishing these links between micro-level events and macro-level dynamics will require new and improved theories rather than collecting more, better, or different data. For work on elections and instability, such theorising could focus on parties as crucial actors linking elites with citizens. A focus on parties could help explain how electoral instability plays out on the ground but also when it is beneficial for elites. For example, the diversity or narrowness of parties' social support could help us understand whether politicians benefit from election instability. In turn, party organisation could help us understand the intensity of violence, whether it is targeted or not, and why a lot of election violence is carried out by nonstate actors. For example, parties with local organisations can most likely rely on trusted local affiliates to engage in targeted violence, while those without a local presence outsource violence to less-committed and poorly controlled thugs and militants.

Beyond electoral instability, theories that take micro-and macro-level factors seriously are also promising in other areas. For example, work on organised crime could benefit from linking macro-level factors, such as the overall capacity of the state to combat crime, and combine it with micro-level factors, such as local economic and political governance patterns. This could lead to theoretical arguments that highlight the weakness of the central government as important for determining the equilibrium level of piracy, but suggest that within these weak states, criminal groups do not necessarily organise in the weakest areas. Criminal actors need access to infrastructure and markets for successful criminal activity, suggesting that areas of intermediate state strength are most attractive for crime in weak states. More theorising along these lines should be prioritised in the future.

### *Conclusion*

International Relations scholarship defines stability primarily by what it is not, focusing on conceptual and operational definitions of instability rather than its converse. Traditional indicators of instability have privileged aggregate indicators of instability that do not allow for disaggregated measurement across space or over time. Yet as this paper has argued, focusing on electoral instability offers conceptual and methodological advantages over scholarship that limits its scope to civil war or protesting in the aggregate while also keeping the scope manageable. Disaggregated measures introduced in this paper show different and more nuanced patterns of electoral instability than aggregate measures. Using data from a recent event data project on electoral contention, this paper shows that most countries do not experience contention across most of their territory, nor do elections have similar levels of intensity over time. Disaggregated data are thus crucial for better measurement. However, because the actions of governments, opposition elites, and international organisations still matter for outcomes, future research should prioritise theories that help connect micro-level indicators with macro-level dynamics. Linking micro-and macro-level dynamics avoids the pitfalls of privileging either micro or macro. For example, a promising theoretical approach for studying violence during elections could be to focus on political parties as important meso-level actors that help link government or opposition incentives for violence at the macro-level to how violence plays out at the micro-level. Political elites intent on using violence that have control over parties with local organisations would seemingly have advantages in executing violence over those who have to rely on hired thugs to engage in violence. Such an approach thus allows us to go beyond tired macro narratives of predatory elites on the one hand, but on the other hand also avoids focusing on local-level patterns as primary determinants. Incentives and opportunities for violence and crime frequently emerge from interactions between micro-and macro-level factors. As just illustrated, elites may face similar incentives for using violence, but may differ in the extent to which they control local actors capable of executing violence, which would likely produce diverging patterns and forms of violence. With increasingly disaggregated indicators of electoral instability, it is possible to develop and test such theories.

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### 3. Report of the Working Group I: Metrics of Stability in a Multi-Dimensional Perspective

by Stefano Costalli\*

Civil wars, terrorist campaigns and massive flows of refugees represent major challenges to the national security of many countries and important sources of disorder for the whole international system. External interventions and peacekeeping missions have multiplied in the last decades and empirical evidence shows that carefully designed interventions can at least mitigate the severity of the most dangerous crises, if provided with appropriate resources. However, this relative success can be appreciated only abandoning the ambitious approach elaborated in the 1990s aimed at establishing Western-style democratic institutions in countries whose internal features would have not naturally favoured the development of such institutions through internal processes in the short run. The international community and NATO have progressively moved towards a more realistic approach in which (re-)establishing stability has become the central goal of contemporary missions in crises areas. As a result, defining and measuring stability have become crucial issues to guide and assess the action of military forces and civilian personnel on the ground. In spite of the growing academic debate and the many policy reports produced by different international organisations, it seems hard to identify a consensus on the meaning of "stability" and on ways to measure it. For these reasons, Working Group 1 began its works considering empirical academic contributions that study different forms of instability and try to assess stabilisation policies. The working group decided to compare and evaluate the different approaches used in the available literature as a starting point to propose guidelines on how to improve NATO's capacity to assess the situation on the ground.

#### *How to measure "stability"? The state of the art*

First of all, the working group focused on the concept of stability, in search for a commonly agreed definition. However, after a review of the academic and policy literature on security crises, conflicts and international interventions, the working group acknowledged the absence of a widely accepted definition of "stability". Three are the main conceptual problems affecting the available literature that directly or indirectly deals with stability.

1. In many cases, stability is simply not defined or only implicitly defined.
2. Stability is a multifaceted "good", whose quality can be affected by numerous different phenomena such as civil war, terrorism, electoral violence, and human rights violations. However, most contributions tend to focus only on the relations between some of these phenomena and stability, missing the complete picture.

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3. Stability is often defined through negative definitions, that is as the absence of some negative political or military phenomena. Negative definitions, though, are problematic for various reasons: first of all, they oversimplify complex phenomena making them dichotomous while reality on the ground is often a matter of degrees and sudden abrupt changes seldom occur. Second, a negative definition of stability implicitly suggests that the causes of stability and the causes of the absent phenomenon (war, terrorism etc.) are the same, while real causal links might be partially different. Third, relying on a negative definition of stability implies that any absence of the negative phenomenon is equally good and desirable, while not all stable conditions are equally desirable from a normative perspective.

Two additional conceptual problems affecting the available literature concern the fact that, in most contributions, stability is implicitly conceived – even if not defined – at the country level and as a mono-dimensional issue. On the contrary, a state involved in a security crisis rarely shows the same level of stability all over its territory. Prevailing security challenges in the contemporary international system often involve non-state actors and in asymmetric conflicts the situation on the ground can change in a few kilometres' range. As a result, it is important to change the level of analysis and evaluate stability at the sub-national level, developing new spatially disaggregated data and intensifying the use of the ones already available. Likewise, it is crucial to understand that stability is a multidimensional issue that goes beyond the military sphere to touch the political, economic and social dimensions of the country at stake.

The conceptual problems mentioned above also affect empirical analyses. In fact, many empirical studies of instability rely on country-level indicators that are often composite or strictly related to violence. For instance, some analyses use the World Governance Indicators elaborated by the World Bank, a series of composite indicators developed to provide a comprehensive view about the quality of countries' governance. These indicators are based on data gathered from a number of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organisations, and international organisations. The problem with this type of strategy is that on one hand it allows a thoughtful evaluation of the situation, but on the other hand these measures are too blunt a tool to be useful in formulating specific policy reforms or interventions in particular country contexts. Suffice it to say that the "Political stability and absence of violence" indicator is composed of 19 individual variables aggregated to construct a single measure. Clearly, such a measure (and other similar indicators) cannot satisfy the necessities of NATO, which needs a much more detailed mapping of the situation as well as a clear control over the different components of complex indicators. Tailored data are also recommended to solve problems related to the so-called "politics of data gathering". This refers to the fact that using data gathered and selected by other organisations exposes NATO to their decisions, which usually depend on specific organisational interests. In other words, NATO needs to base its assessments of stability on data of higher quality and go beyond data on violence to account for the complexity of stability.

In fact, most of the high-quality data produced in the last years by research centres, international organisations and armed forces deal with violent episodes. For instance, some of the most interesting and innovative indicators developed by academia look at violence against journalists. Recent research has found that killings of journalists are reliable predictors of increasing repression and human rights violations. However, personnel on the ground know that the level of political violence is only one component, though important, of stability. On the one hand, criminal violence is often coupled with political violence and it is necessary to keep track of both components. On the other hand, when violence is widespread the context is no longer stable and therefore it is crucial to evaluate stability in advance considering other dimensions. For instance, sudden price shocks on the market of a primary good such as bread can cause abrupt local instability and bursts of violence. It is therefore essential to have high quality data and information on other dimensions to keep track of these mechanisms. Most of all, it is crucial to produce and use spatially and temporally disaggregated data, to accurately grasp the evolution of the situation on the ground.

### Mutable situation on the ground, mutable metrics

The working group unanimously agreed that countries are not uniformly unstable or violent and for this reason NATO needs more refined indicators. Disaggregated data allow more accurate and valid measures of key concepts and stimulate the production of theories that account for the micro-foundations of the mechanisms leading to stability and instability. The political economy of conflict as well as the dynamics of violence can remarkably change among different regions of the same country.

NATO has already made some efforts to work in this direction, but the organisation's attempts to tackle complex situations have also produced complex procedures and dispersion of precious information. Many documents about measuring stability have been produced, suggesting different approaches and proposing different indicators. Unfortunately, these documents lack consistency and this circumstance creates serious problems when it comes to developing strategies and assessing their impact in the long run. Moreover, several different bodies with partially overlapping jurisdictions have dealt with the task of measuring stability, but this common activity has rarely produced synergies. Rather, it has apparently produced competition and duplication of work.

The working group also highlighted that disaggregating data is a way to obtain big data and recent debates both in the academic and in the policy environment have stressed the enormous potential of this approach to study complex phenomena and predict their development through the use of powerful computing techniques. Nonetheless, big data also imply big responsibilities because mistakes may have more dangerous consequences than in the pre-big data era. For this reason, bias in gathering and interpreting the increasing amount of data can become a real risk and a real political problem. In other words, the working group agreed that shifting to disaggregated data is key and it is a promising way to increase the quality of

data, but not all good data are equally good. As a matter of fact, metrics nowadays tend to overwhelm their consumers, represented by decision-makers in the policy world.

Filtering data and information has become a crucial activity and any organisation facing this challenge needs to choose between two basic alternative strategies. The most popular approach nowadays suggests relying on complex statistical models and computationally intensive techniques with the help of powerful computers. This strategy allows using the largest amount of information, with the goal of producing more precise knowledge of the phenomena and more accurate predictions. However, the main downside of this approach is that policy makers tend to lose control of the process and it is hard to disentangle the weight and role of specific issues. If politics has to keep its strong role, balancing interests at home and in the area of crisis (or in the international system at large), selecting a limited amount of indicators is crucial. In order to select the right indicators among the many available, NATO needs to be guided by theory. Only carefully elaborated theories from the social sciences can propose the selection of meaningful information.

Put otherwise, some members of the working group argued that only well-developed theories can avoid a simplistic “more – better” approach. NATO needs to decide how to measure stability after thorough evaluation of why measuring stability, possibly with the aim of making interventions become tailored. As a matter of fact, all members of the working group agreed that flexible and adaptive interventions are needed to increase the effectiveness of NATO missions. Finally, an appropriate selection of indicators guided by theory can also tackle the decisive link between prevention and stability, which seems clear but often overlooked.

### *Proposals to improve the metrics of stability*

After a careful analysis of currently available approaches to measuring stability, including the most recent developments and debates, the members of the working group identified the following lessons learned and proposals to improve the metrics of stability.

1. First of all, before gathering more data and developing better indicators, NATO should make efforts to reduce internal fragmentation and duplication of tasks, improve coordination among its branches that work on the assessment of stability, create synergies and consistent procedures. Without these organisational improvements, attempts to develop better metrics might get lost and frustrated.
2. NATO should also act to improve coordination with other international organisations dealing with various dimensions of stability before actual security crises break out and violence becomes rampant. Coordination with other international organisations in times of stability would favour agreements on data gathering and monitoring procedures, attenuating the challenges linked to the so-called “politics of data-gathering”. Moreover, it would increase inter-organisational trust in moments of crisis, improving co-operation.

3. The members of the working group suggest NATO to stop looking for the golden definition of stability or for the optimal level of stability. Repeated reviews of the literature showed enduring and structural difficulties in reaching an agreed definition and the appearance of such a definition is not foreseeable in the near future. In the end, the concept of stability and its right level are political decisions and it is probably time to openly acknowledge it.
4. As a consequence of this, NATO should focus on trends over time, on processes leading to the improvement or deterioration of stability irrespective of its right level, as well as on the impact of NATO policies on the situation at stake. In fact, some members of the working group stressed that this latter activity might be even more important than measuring stability per se.
5. NATO should also develop theories on how its own policies affect the local context across multiple dimensions. These theories should be based on the careful evaluation of the micro-foundations of phenomena in order to guide the collection of disaggregated data. However, theories should also integrate the "meso" level of non-state actors and the "macro" level of national dynamics.
6. Consequently, NATO should gather data based on these theories and the new process of data collection should start with trying to leverage more on the data NATO member states already possess. In fact, the members of the working group suggest NATO to make all possible efforts to develop policies of information sharing, among its member states and with other international organisations.
7. As a last point, the members of the working group highlighted the importance of collaborating more with academia in the process of data gathering and data analysis. Improved collaboration with academia can produce innovative and potentially fruitful procedures, such as issuing calls for data collections and/or research projects based on fine-grained data analysis.

### *Conclusion*

The diffusion of intrastate conflicts, terrorist campaigns and massive flows of refugees have dramatically increased the need for stabilisation missions and the current features of the international systems are not likely to change in the near future. In order for these missions to be effective, it is essential to dispose of appropriate methods to measure stability and assess the effectiveness of missions' actions. For this reason, the working group began its works with a review of the academic and policy literature, in search for a commonly agreed definition of stability. After this exercise, the working group concluded that no widely accepted definition of stability exists yet, and the available ones suffer from major shortcomings. Often, stability is defined as the absence of negative phenomena such as civil wars or terrorist attacks. Given this persistent and well-known state of affairs, the working group suggests NATO to focus on temporal trends and develop ways to carefully assess the impact of its policies on the stability of target countries, instead of trying to define the optimal level of stability. In order to improve this measurement effort, the working group encourages NATO to work collaboratively with academic institutions and other international organisations. More refined theories on the multidimensional causes of stability and instability linking micro and macro phenomena have to be developed. These theories have to guide the

collection of more spatially and temporally disaggregated data. The systematic collection of disaggregated data is essential to perform timely and detailed analyses of the situation on the ground, but well-defined filtering criteria are necessary to navigate the increasing amount of information that would be originated if these proposals were implemented.

## 4. Organised Crime and Political Instability in the Sahel-Sahara Region

by Francesco Strazzari\*

Political turmoil in the Sahel-Sahara region has captured the attention of academics, analysts and policy-makers over the past two decades. Between 2011 and 2012 the collapse of Libya and Mali shed light on the fact that the Sahara Desert can no longer be considered a geopolitical insulator and rang the alarm bell about regional instability dynamics. Seven years on, while large portions of this broad region are swept by violent mobilisation, mainstream security thinking appears to be mainly concerned with designing a security model that is premised on how to enforce effective border controls and curb mobility. The shaping of a regional security model is affected by several factors. In the case of North Africa, the fight against terrorism (and counter-insurgency), by leading both external forms of intervention and assistance to states is today an important one.<sup>4</sup> External assistance programs, for example, invariably seek to increase regional cooperation and build border management capacity to fight against trafficking. The latter is often depicted as a security problem resulting from converging corruption, crime, and terrorism threats<sup>5</sup> that have a truly global impact.

Several explanations of ongoing instability dynamics have been identified and labelled, ranging from poor governance (e.g., the rapacity of ruling elites) to ethnic and kinship-based rivalry as well as the rise of religious extremism (local jihadist groups more or less affiliated to global terror constellations). Rampant organised crime is often cited in this context as a key destabilising factor. The standard narrative has long been one whereby the immense Sahara space and the semi-arid regions along its shores are depicted as “ungoverned spaces” – i.e., areas where no authorities are exercised and that, accordingly, have become home of terrorists, bandits and criminals (Rabasa et al. 2007). The soldering of organised crime and terrorisms sometimes referred to as narco-terrorism (Björnehed 2004).

This narrative typically evokes a rush to solutions to avoid that the spectre of the narco-terrorist, after haunting impervious areas that are climatically hostile to human dwelling, can move unhindered, develop his own ghost army, and get to capture the state itself. Contrary to that narrative, the present paper considers the

<sup>4</sup> At the same time, trans-Mediterranean migrations appear to have become a key factor shaping international and local responses, with an European strategy that has gradually externalised border control to third countries in North Africa, along lines that were drawn with Turkey earlier on.

<sup>5</sup> For example, see the speech of the US Senior Director for National Security and Diplomacy Anti-Crime Programs, David Luna (2017).

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"spectralization of the criminal"<sup>6</sup> as part of the problem and seeks instead to shed some sober light on the phenomenon organised crime: in other words, its aim is to bring the problem down to its context and therefore to reality. This analysis seeks to address how organised crime and political institutions interact with one another, and – in doing so – mould original forms of extra-legal governance. It contends that organised crime is to be understood not so much through the lenses of crime and justice literature, but rather through those of political economy and comparative historic sociology. It argues that organised criminals often do not act as agents of insecurity, but rather as security providers and contract enforcers, agents who "deliver" and make things go in a certain predictable way.<sup>7</sup> As with "radicalisation", part of the problem is that while organised crime is seen as a major problem by external actors, it appears not to be a priority in the perceptions of the local population. Organised criminals do not emerge from a power vacuum: often they stem from saturation of competition and/or power practices that are either regarded as oppressive or are not able/willing to deliver goods.

### *The criminal phantom in the Sahel region?*

Organised crime has to do with the practicing of governance, the structure of political systems and the resilience of local/national/regional orders. Great variation can be observed in the relation between organised crime and political stability across space and time. Depending on how predatory, parasitic and symbiotic forms of protection and extraction<sup>8</sup> evolve in a given territory, organised crime may not necessarily feature a confrontational relationship with the state. True, criminal activities typically take place in an environment that does not provide guarantees in terms of certain regulation mechanisms, and where the breaking of a contract can easily lead to violence and unpredictable escalation: nonetheless, several social contexts rely much more on informal practices and governance mechanisms than on formal rules and procedures, even where the latter are omnipresent. There are no reasons to assume that organised crime, in its offering security and profitability to risky investments while constituting itself a risk, is bound to trigger violence, and even less to pave the way to chaos (Snyder and Durán-Martínez 2009). The main implication of this observation is that analytical frameworks developed only on the basis of episodes that catch our attention (e.g., violent incidents) are misleading: for a dog that barks and bites there are many dogs that do not, and yet thrive. Organised crime is more about ships that cross the sea at night with lights off, than about stereotypical representations of mafia-style shootouts.

<sup>6</sup> The expression refers to widespread representations of criminals and terrorists like a "radical other", a spectre that displays fluidity and flexibility, coming from remote dimensions that do not allow political analysis.

<sup>7</sup> One may argue that urban contexts characterised by violent competition among gangs represent an exception, but to a closer scrutiny even highly volatile settings see the rise of cartels, as the case of Libya's capital Tripoli illustrates (see Lacher and al-Idrissi 2018).

<sup>8</sup> The notions of protection and extraction are anchored in Charles Tilly's analysis of state-making and organised crime, as well as Diego Gambetta's study of the rise of the Sicilian mafia. For theoretical models see also von Boemcken (2013).

Whereas organised crime in sub-Saharan Africa has been the object of in-depth analysis and extensive research,<sup>9</sup> virtually no comprehensive study addresses the definition, the social meaning and the role of organised crime in North Africa within the context of illicit economies (Shaw and Mangan 2014). In other regions, research has managed to combine individual specificities with cross-case comparisons and generalisation, bringing about consensus on the fact that the phenomenon should be defined in light of its economic, social and political context. In particular, different ideas of space and corresponding territorial practices historically characterise the meaning of borders in African history: on the one hand, “paper borders” drawn by colonial powers, inherited by post-colonial states and reinforced today as part of the fighting against organised crime and terrorism; on the other, very much evident in the Sahel-Saharan region, “sand borders”, coinciding with local social organisation and economic survival through circulation of people and commodities (Lefebvre 2015).

The specificities of organised crime in North Africa remain relatively unclear to date. Perception surveys show that legal and scholarly definitions tend to diverge sharply from local understandings and practices. Serious methodological challenges – which include the poor quality of data available – make the study of organised crime in North Africa very difficult. While new research initiatives seek to enable evidence-based debates on organised crime in the African continent,<sup>10</sup> the UNODC itself, which for years has produced detailed reporting, no longer disseminates comprehensive data: much of what we have, therefore, is partial and fragmented evidence that is to be taken very cautiously.

Once one looks at the problem from a comparative historical perspective, it is clear that organised crime is to be understood as a deeply rooted practice of governance originating from (peculiar) trajectories of state formation and development? Part and parcel of this story is the emergence, the consolidation and the deterioration of remote governance – i.e., the question of the (cost of) political control of distant, sometimes recalcitrant and rebellious peripheries or borderlands (Vorrath 2017), whose marginal economic and political value is considered not crucial. Here, a standard practice that one often encounters in history – but that is by no means confined to the colonial experience – are forms of co-optation of (ethnically- or clan-based) *big men*. The latter are prominent thanks to illegal economic activities, but their conduct is typically condoned in exchange for political alignment: political docility flows along patronage and clientelist chains. The fragile foundations that underpin this tacit “stability deal” are usually tested when “new facts” intervene – e.g., exogenous shocks such as price changes, the advent of new technologies, the

<sup>9</sup> Over the past ten years, a significant body of literature has developed, addressing especially West Africa and Nigeria, in a Political Science perspective (Mazzitelli 2007 and 2011, Ellis 2009, Reno 2009).

<sup>10</sup> For example, ENACT Observer, implemented by the EU Institute for Security Studies and Interpol, in affiliation with the Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime (<https://enactafrica.org>).

emergence of new political priorities, and/or the rise of new actors. The availability of cheap communication, transport and firearms, for example, is likely to deeply impact upon the control of territory in a geographical context where economic value is mainly extracted by circulation – as opposed to production.<sup>11</sup>

In the case of North Africa, one should consider the existence of partly overlapping sub-regional economic complexes:<sup>12</sup> as a minimum, one can distinguish a complex that is oriented towards the Mediterranean Sea and its northern shore, and another encompassing the Sahara region (i.e., the shores of the desert) connecting the Maghreb (and Mashrek) states with the Sahel and Sub-Saharan Africa. Traditionally, states along the Mediterranean coast are considered relatively strong states, that are studied by scholars focusing on the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA). Organised crime and corruption are among the factors that are likely to affect economic performance and potentially derail democratic transitions. By contrast, crime indicators regarding states in the Sub-Saharan Sahel belt are debated through the lenses of state fragility and poverty/development dilemmas: in this context, the problem of organised crime is often discussed in terms of state collapse, banditry and warlordism. By proposing a narrow “crime for gain”,<sup>13</sup> often moralistic approach, this debate is polarised between the aforementioned images of “ungoverned spaces” and “state capture” by criminal networks. Ultimately, this debate overlooks “the livelihood-sustaining and security-providing aspects of alternative forms of non-state governance – including those that we might label ‘organized crime’” (Cockayne and Lupel 2009: 10).

Several factors may prove to be critical in explaining how organised crime thrives or not. Among them, one should consider how effective is the state’s monopoly of coercion, the degree of administrative capacity (e.g., the administration of justice, but also – more generally – the provision of public goods), and conflict management. Low effectiveness in these areas is likely to be accompanied by high levels of corruption and – once a certain degree of uncertainty and insecurity is reached – by the emergence of violent entrepreneurs whose mission, in its essence, has to do with the provision of protection and contract enforcement. A criminal activity is highly likely to thrive under the armed protection of organised criminals when, while being illegal and heavily sanctioned, is considered socially legitimate and/or proves to be able to generate large money flows. A flow of cash in a highly segmented and economically marginal social contexts typically nurtures social mobility examples and expectations: it affects legitimacy and it builds new forms of political influence. These kinds of situations are likely to be found in border regions, where the presence of sharp economic differentials feeds

<sup>11</sup> An example is the area of cultivation of kif (cannabis) in the Moroccan mountainous Rif region.

<sup>12</sup> Much has been written in the past twenty years on the significance of regional economic complexes: see for instance Ellis and MacGaffey (1997) on sub-Saharan Africa, Grégoire (2011) on Nigerien Sahara, Kohl (2010) on transnational mobility in the Sahara region, Bourgeot (2011), Retaille and Walther (2011) and Scheele (2012) on the regional connectivity in the Sahel-Saharan region.

<sup>13</sup> The concept of “crime for gain” was functional for scholars to single out profit-making criminal activities as doorway to organised crime (Naylor 2003, van Duyne et al. 2006).

informal economies like, for example, the smuggling of illicit goods whose price is subsidised on one part of the border, such as gasoline, milk or bread/pasta – all deeply rooted activities in the Sahara space. In peripheral or remote regions central authorities are more likely to strike informal power deals to ensure loyalty, in exchange for a blind eye that is turned on activities that are conducted either against the law or in a grey area that exists beyond the law.

A couple of examples may illustrate this point beyond reasonable doubt and call for attention on the existence of state-sponsored networks. The area of Tarkint, in northern Mali, has long been known as an important hub for trafficking. Back in 2009, when the inhabitants of the sparsely populated North witnessed a soar in robberies and criminal activities, the area became known for the so-called Air Cocaine affair, which drew international attention not only on how Sahelian routes had become part of international drug smuggling as a result of displacement from elsewhere, but also how Western African coasts were being avoided. For grotesque that it sounded to external observers, the *affair* and how it was nationally handled suggested that drug trafficking had become a high-level business involving state, non-state and transnational actors.<sup>14</sup> Anti-narcotic officers in Bamako would then confirm the importance of politics and business in the capital city for how commodities circulated, beside stressing how little equipped they were to fight the phenomenon.<sup>15</sup> Ten years after, in 2018, the party of Mali's incumbent President Ibrahim Boubakar Keita (IBK) recorded 100 per cent of votes cast in Tarkint, with an implausible voter turnout of nothing less than 100 per cent. Likewise, in neighbouring Niger, a country that Western presence is rapidly transforming "into one of the world's most strategic security hubs" (Parkinson 2018), several reports and scholarly literature have drawn attention on how transport companies that are key to smuggling activities across the country are run by Arab businessmen (including the famous CherifAbiDyin, also known as Cherif Cocaine). They play an important role in the social pact that, despite regional turmoil and a track record of political instability in the North, has stabilised the government (Raineri 2018).

Organised crime is highly sensitive to changes in political authority that may alter patron-client relation and those protection mechanisms that lower business risks, thereby affecting room for manoeuvre and the actual mark-ups in illicit markets. Violence is highly likely to flare up and possibly escalate when uncertainty about "who protects whom" grows, and this may happen due to various reasons. Among the most common reasons, the multiplication of actors along the supply chain, as newcomers tend to resort to violence to conquer their market share, or a change in counter-crime priorities and implementation mechanisms, which in turn may have favour some vis-à-vis others, thus altering existing equilibria, and rekindle competition criminal groups. Structural factors too may play a significant role:

<sup>14</sup> For smuggling routes, *éclaireurs*, *coupeurs de route*, and *droits de passage*, see Raineri and Strazzari (2015).

<sup>15</sup> Author's interview with officers from the Direction Nationale de la Police Nationale, Bamako, October 2013.

the proliferation of firearms, when translated in easier access for selected groups, or in generalised increase in availability, is likely to affect protection dynamics, and/or underpin the emergence of some groups at the expenses of others. Across the Sahara, for example, smuggling commodities have long been an important dimension of economic life (see Retaille 1993). Only in the past two decades have smuggling activities morphed into trafficking under armed escort. The initial rise of banditry and kidnappings at the expenses of tourists and NGO/humanitarian actors in the Sahara by the 2010s announced this passage. Those groups that managed to get hold of arms, controlling arms wheeling and dealing, on the other hand, rose in status. Among them, one could mention the Tebu, which today control much of South Libya routes and check points (with respect to Libya, see Strazzari et al. 2015).

To see how sensitive *contraband* activities are to changes in political authority, one may glance into the case of the Tunisian border city of Ben Guerdane, where the vagaries of border patrolling on the Libyan side, as well as new priorities following power changes in Tunis, have had an impact on the local balance of power, triggering angered responses, and even union-like strikes by smugglers. Likewise, one can mention the case of the Nigerien town of Agadez, where well-oiled patronage mechanisms have so far curbed economic frustration.<sup>16</sup>

These examples illustrate that organised crime cannot be understood if state responses are not factored in: criminalisation has an immediate impact on prices and profits, which typically go up. Higher risk and prices tend to restrict competition among less exposed and better organised criminals, who will seek to protect their profit by inhibiting state interdiction, oil corruption and collusion mechanisms, and divert repression towards either smaller criminals that can be sacrificed, or toward competing criminal groups, so as to conquer their market shares. Summing up, changes in profitability (e.g., price, risk of interdiction, availability of a given commodity/activity due to displacement from elsewhere) are important to understand how a territory is affected by organised crime. One should expect *organised* crime to take root where criminal know-how, resources and organisation are in demand and profits are high. That often means offering specialised services to protect commodities where the risk of disruption due to interdiction becomes higher, and/or where the risk due to long-distance transportation is high anyway. Far from points of high risk along supply lines, or under circumstances of low profitability and little competition for scarce resources, criminal activities are not necessarily (well) organised.

<sup>16</sup> Following the end of the tourist industry, the entire region converted to rent extraction from migrations. Agadez became a major hub for trans-Saharan crossing, with migrants moving to the region to work in the migration industry. The clampdown on migrations has generated social discontent, that appears to be partially compensated by the rush to gold mining in the desert started in 2014 (a phenomenon that is observed on Chad's border with Libya too, albeit with distinctive security implications). An economy of armed protection and banditry has emerged in North Niger, with an increase in violence in the Agadez region (de T  ssieres 2018).

It should come as no surprise that local elites seek a rent from the fact that their country (or territory upon which they claim control) is crossed by illicit commodities. Yet, what often plays a key role is not so much rent-seeking *per se*, but the profitability of a given business vis-à-vis other sources of funding and enrichment. For this, the "international factor" is often decisive. There are three basic reasons for this: first, organised crime makes use of banking systems that are integrated with the developed world, where profits are hidden; second, routes and prices are in part determined by demand that comes from rich markets; above all, history shows how the push for criminalisation, and the capacity to enforce it, often comes from the international level. Migrations across the Sahara are a case in point: if one looks at Niger, activities and services that until very recently were literally escorted (and extorted) by state officers were declared illegal overnight. An entire booming industry of migration services, itself a driver for migrant labourers who travelled to Niger to take part in that economy, was shut down. Taxing the flow of migrants became increasingly difficult. At the same time, a large number of migrants that were part of "circular migrations", seasonal workers that had no intention of crossing the Mediterranean to reach Europe, but rather would work in neighbouring countries, contributing to resilience at home, were caught in the interdiction mechanism, with outcomes that are still to be assessed. By responding to international opportunity and pressures, national governments may seek to capture rents by allowing selected, discrete types of activities to take place, or to capture international/security aid by mounting campaigns for the eradication of crime and corruption.

### *Intimate connections as governance on the cheap*

A new generation of research has sharpened the focus on the intimacy that often links – rather than oppose – state apparatuses and criminal actors devoted to plundering resources or circulating illicit commodities. Varying degrees of state interdiction and/or indulgence is a factor to which actors that run criminal activities are highly sensitive. However, there is more. It may well happen that the economic and political profits that can be made available through protecting transnational illicit economies are such that state authorities become systematically colluded with the organisation of criminal activities. Such a collusion may be realised by co-opting "big men" and "strongmen" in their patronage networks, so that they become less and less distinguishable from state officials (*mimesis*). An extreme situation is one where organised criminals are able to control enough resources to make a very direct investment on politics – that is, they run for power.

Once again, the "international factor" is very much part of the story, especially when committed to a stabilisation agenda that imposes strategic and tactical choices. The emergence and the consolidation of intimate connections between organised crime and political power is likely to become particularly significant – by scale or intensity – when political instability, that can be to some extent propelled by a regional threat (e.g., jihadist militancy and terrorism) is accompanied by an increase in weapon circulation and militarisation, with growing forms of international intervention and pressure. Organised crime can be(come) a model

of social mobility and prestige. In terms of social consideration, old smugglers and informal economies tend to be swept away by new, more aggressive and rewarding criminal careers. Across the Sahel-Saharan region we observe today how informal economies (e.g., smuggling across borders that are literally less evident than a line in the sand), that have long constituted a survival strategy for the many in a context where only the very few experiences social mobility, have now come under armed protection. At the same time profits granted by criminal activities, including the trafficking of illicit goods such as narcotics, discourage alternative economic initiatives, including those informal economies that some observers consider a breeding field for organised crime and terrorism. As with gold, drugs are extremely remunerative commodities whose value chain is not too difficult to protect from a logistical point of view, once a cohesive and well-organised network is activated. Drug trafficking and supply lines are less visible than – for example – the transportation of migrants. They do not need the same territorial and social stability that other productive activities – e.g., the cultivation of *cannabis*, the production of hashish – impose to protect the investment. Thus, while the latter creates visible phenomena as entire border towns or neighbourhoods inhabited by migrant communities, the presence of drugs is often signalled only by the mushrooming of villas and other conspicuous investments in absence of economic activities that justify the origin of wealth. This phenomenon was observed in Mali's northern cities.

Inevitably, profits stir competition. Criminal sectors lack legal avenues for dispute resolution, and protection quickly assumes the form of racketeering, which in turn attracts arms, eventually leading to a progressive para-militarisation of society and the triumph of militias. What militias need, to consolidate their grip on illicit activities and their pillaging of local resources, is to be somehow recognised as legitimate. Here, once again, international actors play an important role, given the way their aid and intervention are linked to normative codes and expectations. It should come as no surprise, for example, that virtually all armed groups that are signatories of the Algiers settlement of 2015, the keystone of Mali's peace process, are heavily involved in criminal activities (UNSC 2018b). Being legitimised has boosted recruitment, creating a grey zone of activities and territorial control upon which nobody, under conditions of jihadist insurgency, has an interest in shedding light. When discretely discussing these dynamics, international officers engaged with counter-terrorism candidly admit that they have to choose their battle, since they cannot wage war against everybody at the same time.

This appears to be the case, along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, with the militia cartel that consolidated its control of Tripoli in 2017–18, controlling the city's economy, and acting in absence of condemnation on the part of the internationally-backed government – at least until the violent crisis that broke out in September 2018. As with Mali, once again reports by the independent UN Panel of Experts (e.g., UNSC 2018a) provide detailed documentation about the existence of areas of tacit international acceptance. If, on the one hand, one finds leaders of rebel groups that are named and shamed by the Panel on Mali under the protective wing of Paris, on the other one finds smugglers who are named and shamed by the

Panel on Libya invited under the protective wing of Rome.

Organised crime is ultimately about the effectiveness of the monopoly of force and the reality of power dynamics in a given territory. The fact that some form of latent control or direct collusion with the organised criminal world can reveal itself useful for stabilisation purpose is an expectation that should surprise no one who is familiar with historical trajectories of state making and unmaking, including the history of colonialism. Strategically speaking, striking a balance with local big men embodies the expectation of avoiding generalised counter-crime strategies that might fight back by pushing criminal actors to embrace armed rebels or terrorist actors. However, the degree to which tactical arrangements with criminal subjects who “deliver” in stabilisation terms are possible, fruitful and sustainable, remains to be seen. Among the costs, one finds the accusation that radical (e.g., Islamist, but not only) challengers often raise, about foreigners who intervene and choose the side of “big men” – that is, the side of criminal activity and blatant corruption.

### Conclusion

When it is not portrayed as merely a tool in the hands of terrorists (and therefore a counter-insurgency problem), organised crime continues to be seen primarily as a question of law enforcement, at best as a judicial matter. Little effort is made to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, its political economy and its ambivalent, non-linear relationship with political violence and system stability.

Instead of simplistically considering organised crime as a substitute for the state in conditions where the latter is weak or captured, and the territory is ungoverned, our focus should arguably shift toward micro-political economies and “hybrid” orders, so as to detect how recent evolutions in smuggling and trafficking networks not only have effects on local communities, but are also a crucial actor at the intersection of war economies and political power: “They are integrated with, or dependent on, militias and other local providers of protection, while control over key routes can provide crucial incomes to local and national political actors” (Gallien 2018: 19).

Understanding the challenge posed by organised crime in North Africa requires systematic reflection and granular analysis of protection-extraction dynamics and social change in very different urban and rural contexts.

Tackling extra-legal governance means shedding light on state-society relations and the making, the unmaking and the re-making of the state, focusing on dynamics of protection and extraction, on winners and losers. All of this demands strategic thinking and nuanced responses: one needs to sharpen the focus on those grey areas where collusion and connivance are the rule, be that in densely populated cities or in remote semi-arid regions. Hence, we need to look into international and local practices, and scrutinise how relations systems emerge and stabilise: we need to examine what becomes the norm, rather than just deviance.

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## 5. A Development Research Perspective on Addressing Irregular Migration from Sub-Saharan Africa: Implications for Defence Institution Building and Beyond

by Benjamin Schraven\*

Since the peak of the so-called European migration crisis in 2015 the topics of (irregular) migration and forced displacement have been dominating public and political discourses in Europe as well as other parts of the world. After 2015 the external dimension of the European migration discourse has increasingly focused on the Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Africa as the number of irregular (Sub-Saharan) migrants arriving in Europe by sea remained high. Ever since, Africa related initiatives on the EU level or on national levels have vastly increased in terms of numbers and financial volume. The general approach seems to be two-folded: on the one hand, development cooperation is regarded as a central tool in addressing forced displacement and irregular migration. The idea is that alongside measures of employment and business promotion create adequate economic perspectives for (potential) migrants to stay in their countries of origin. Supposedly, a highly dangerous trip across the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean will become increasingly unattractive because of these measures (Schraven et al. 2018). On the other hand, migration control comprising of measures of border management and cooperation with security forces is regarded as a way to mitigate the flow of irregular migrants in transfer countries. In this context Defence Institution Building (DIB) has become a key element as it is not only meant to develop professional defence sectors and institutions, but it is also supposed to contribute to regional stability (Kerr and Miklaucic 2017).

Irrespective of DIB, many critics accuse the EU of a militarisation of development cooperation: in the context of their programs focusing on migration management and control, the activity field of border management and the accordant cooperation with military and security forces – also in countries ruled by authoritarian regimes – has vastly increased (Jakob and Schlindwein 2017). To what extent these accusations are justified or not, remains to be seen. In any case, the programs mentioned above reflect an EU tendency to “securitise” migration – in particular migration across the Mediterranean – and this tendency goes back to the 1980s and 1990s (Eylemer and Semsit 2007). Interestingly, the 1990s are also a time when another policy approach to migration has its origins: an approach which seeks to manage migration in order to maximise the benefits for all parties involved, namely migrant, country of destination, country of origin (de Haas 2010). This “migration and development” approach is reflected in important global policy goals and processes as the “Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration”. But what are actually important elements of a “migration and development” approach – both from a scientific and policy angle? And does

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this approach not actually contradict wide areas of the European response to irregular migration from Africa so far? What are its implications for DIB and for a collaboration with military and security forces in (irregular) migrants' countries of origin or transition, respectively? This paper wants to provide a brief overview on the European efforts to limit (irregular) migration from Africa, the scientific debate on the interlinkages between development and migration as well as the complex root causes of migration processes. Based on that, some general conclusions and policy recommendations will be formulated.

### *European efforts in development cooperation and migration control to address irregular migration from Africa*

The public and political discourse concerning the root causes of forced displacement and irregular migration from Africa and how to address these is characterised by several (mis-)conceptions, preconceived ideas and narratives. For instance, one important conception is that an unprecedented mass migration is looming and that the ongoing trans-Mediterranean migration is only the onset of a new African mass exodus, respectively.<sup>17</sup> Another important preconceived idea is the European perception of Africa as a somewhat homogenous continent, primarily associated with poverty, hunger, armed conflicts, terrorism, repression or failed states (Schraven 2019: 10). This mélange of factors is often regarded as the central root cause of forced displacement and irregular migration from Sub-Saharan Africa towards Europe, with poverty and a lack of perspectives constituting a causal centre of gravity. This perception, however, clearly contradicts important insights from migration and development research (see below). A third, very powerful conception relates to a felt need to take immediate action in an almost unprecedented way both in the area of development cooperation – to provide (potential) migrants with perspectives to stay in their home countries (see above) – and in the area of migration control to prevent (irregular) migration as far as possible (Schraven 2019: 11).

Basically, these conceptions came up long before 2015. Looking back at the 1990s, the determinants for international and European development policies changed significantly. During the Cold War development aid was frequently used as an instrument of sanctioning a partner country in the global South or guaranteeing that it would stay a loyal partner of the own bloc, respectively (Hartmann 2012). The caesura of 1989/1990 then also meant an increasing need to redefine and (re-)legitimise development policy and cooperation. Promoting sustainable development, making development cooperation more efficient but

<sup>17</sup> In this respect, the perception of a particular African mass exodus is questionable as for the time period between 2009 and 2017, the share of citizens of African countries in the overall number of persons applying for asylum in the EU has never been higher than 35 per cent. In 2015, this percentage even went down to 15 per cent and in 2017 it increased to 34 per cent. See EUROSTAT website, *Asylum statistics*, [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Asylum\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Asylum_statistics). Furthermore, by far the most of the African migration processes are happening within the African continent (Flahaux and de Haas 2016).

also the promotion of good governance, respect for human rights and democratic standards became important building blocks for a new development policy, which is also prominently reflected in the Millennium Development Goals of 2000 (Debiel et al. 2007).

However, after the events of 11 September 2001 and the following “war on terror”, development cooperation has increasingly been branded as pre-emptive measure against terrorism. Likewise, this trend just as well as the increasing irregular migration from Africa towards Europe during that period has fed into a further “securitisation” of migration (Faist 2006). The EU has taken action in that regard. In 2005, the EU developed a Global Approach to Migration (GAM), which later in 2012 got the name Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM). Although GAM/GAMM contained objectives like a better organisation of legal migration or a maximisation of the development impacts of migration, the emphasis was on the reduction of irregular migration. Already prior to the development of GAM, Frontex was founded in 2004. Its central task is to support EU member states with the control of the EU’s external borders as well the repatriation of irregular migrants. Since the 2000s, Frontex has also engaged in third countries via liaison officers. In 2006 the EU also launched its first interregional dialogue process with West-African countries the so-called Rabat process, with a strong focus on irregular migration and its prevention. The East African equivalent – the Khartoum process – was initiated in 2014 (Kipp and Koch 2018: 9–12).

Since 2015 issues related to the external dimension of forced displaced and irregular migration have definitely become the top agenda – also due to struggles with the Common European Asylum System and European migration policies. Several initiatives and programs have been launched since then. An important milestone was the 2015 European Agenda on Migration. Its short-term priorities were

to prevent further losses of migrants’ lives at sea by providing additional funding to Frontex joint search and rescue operations, to the safe and legal resettlement of people to Europe, to the Regional Protection and Development Programmes and to the most affected Member States located at the EU’s external borders.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> See European Commission Migration and Home Affairs website: *European Agenda on Migration*, last updated 2 November 2018, [http://web.archive.org/web/20181102061844/https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration\\_en](http://web.archive.org/web/20181102061844/https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration_en). For the medium-term perspective of the European Approach on Migration, four pillars were defined: (1) Reducing the incentives for irregular migration: the focus is on addressing the root causes behind irregular migration in non-EU countries, dismantling smuggling and trafficking networks and defining actions for the better application of return policies; (2) Saving lives and securing the external borders: this involves better management of the external border, in particular through solidarity towards those Member States that are located at the external borders, and improving the efficiency of border crossings; (3) Strengthening the common asylum policy: with the increases in the flows of asylum seekers, the EU’s asylum policies need to be based on solidarity towards those needing international protection as well as among the EU Member States, whose full application of the common rules must be ensured through systematic monitoring; (4) Developing a new policy on legal migration: in view of the future demographic challenges the EU is facing, the new policy needs to focus on

With regard to development cooperation and migration management, the EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (EUTF for Africa) is of central importance. It was agreed upon in the Valletta Summit of November 2015, in which African and European leaders discussed the Mediterranean migration crisis. The EUTF aims at implementing activities in 26 countries across three regions of Africa: Sahel and Lake Chad region, North Africa and the Horn of Africa. It focuses on: (1) economic development programs (job creation, vocational training, promotion of self-employment opportunities); (2) food and nutrition security; (3) migration governance and management, which certainly can be regarded as the centrepiece of the EUTF activities (and beyond)<sup>19</sup> and (4) overall governance and in particular "promoting conflict prevention, addressing human rights abuses and enforcing the rule of law".<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile – as of September 2018 – 4,1 billion euro have been pledged under EUTF.

These European efforts go also hand in hand with national measures. In particular Germany has initiated several Africa policy initiatives. These include the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development's "Marshall plan with Africa" certainly being the most prominent one (2018). Other initiatives include the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy's (2017) "Initiative Pro! Afrika" or a fundamental revision of "Germany's guidelines for Africa" for the whole German government by the Federal Foreign Office (2018).

Already in the 1980s migration has largely developed into a security issue in (Western) Europe. The "political construction of migration increasingly referred to the destabilizing effects of migration on domestic integration and to the dangers for public order it" (Huysmans 2000: 751). This "securitised" way of looking into migration issues has largely influenced the EU's response to the Mediterranean "migration crisis". Although the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM), adopted by the European Commission in 2011 as a general framework document in the area of migration with third countries, basically is based on four pillars (regular immigration and mobility; irregular immigration and trafficking in human beings; international protection and asylum policy; and maximising the impact of migration and mobility on development) the emphasis is certainly on the second pillar. For instance, the EU's Migration Partnership Framework (MPF), introduced in 2016 as a concrete tool for addressing migration flows, has the central aim to establish cooperation with partner countries on "keeping migrants out and sending them back" (Castillejo 2017: 1). Cooperation with security forces play a major role in this regard, which includes capacity building efforts – also in

attracting workers that the EU economy needs, particularly by facilitating entry and the recognition of qualifications.

<sup>19</sup> This includes "addressing the drivers of irregular migration, effective return, readmission and reintegration, international protection and asylum, legal migration and mobility, and enhancing synergies between migration and development". See European Commission website: *EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa*, [https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/content/homepage\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/content/homepage_en).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

ongoing missions that were implemented prior to 2014/2015 such as the European Union Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP) in the Sahel. Lebovich (2018) observes a general criminalisation of all migration processes across the Sahel and disruptions of intraregional migration processes, which constitute an essential livelihood strategy in the region. Furthermore, the EU has contributed to create a strong "security apparatus that will likely remain in place for as long as the issue remains a political hot button" (Lebovich 2018: 7). It is currently too early to draw conclusions with regard to the overall effects of the European development cooperation and migration control/management related efforts. Many observers are concerned that the measures in the area of border control and cooperation with security forces have led to a "militarization of development cooperation" and a (re-)legitimation of authoritarian regimes. But there are indications that these judgements at least premature (Koch et al. 2018).

### *Migration and development – a "positive" relationship*

But do the underlying (European) assumptions that development policies and migration control are effective measures to bring migration from Africa to a halt? An important starting point for looking at the interrelation between migration and (socio-economic) development is the "migration hump". The term "migration hump" was coined in the 1990s (Martin and Taylor 1996). It is based on the observation that growing per capita income in developing countries is typically accompanied by higher rates of emigration. The explanation is that increasing per capita income is often related to improved levels of education and training, but that those benefiting from this find only limited opportunities for appropriate employment in their local labour markets. Higher income levels ease out-migration since migration is associated in particular with financial costs as travelling costs and costs for documentation or visas need to be covered. Obviously, when income levels are rising, more people are capable of bearing these costs. Furthermore, rising demands and expectations subsequently make migration a more attractive proposition. Emigration rates only fall again after a specific level of socio-economic development has been reached. The graphic illustration of the migration rate dependent on the socio-economic development of a country takes the form of an upside-down U, resulting in the term "migration hump". The emigration rate only subsequently declines when the countries concerned enter the area of "upper middle-income countries", as defined by the World Bank classification. These are countries whose per capita gross national product in 2016 was ranging between 3,956 and 12,235 US dollars. A complete migration hump cycle or for a country to grow economically into an upper-middle-or-upper income status, respectively, can take a very long time period. For very poor countries such as Burundi, Chad or Niger, this might take much more than one hundred years of significantly rising incomes and increasing migration rates before emigration rates would decrease (Clemens 2014).

But the *migration hump* cannot simply be explained with the circumstance that in context of rising incomes more people can afford to migrate, as migration is always associated with financial and other costs. There are also other contributing

factors such as demographic ones: in developing countries in a situation of strong economic growth, (still) high birth rates and decreases in child mortality due to better health systems often lead to additional population growth. The result is a (growing) *youth bulge*, which is an extraordinary share of children, youths and young adults that may be accompanied by growing youth unemployment. In turn, this might increase the migration likelihood, as younger people are much more likely to migrate than middle-aged or elderly people. Furthermore, processes of economic transformation might also change the significance of certain economic sectors (in particular the agricultural sector). The need to adjust to these changing circumstances might result in both internal migration and international migration. And economic growth and increasing incomes often lead to rising inequality. The experience of not holding pace with others in comparison with their economic and social status (the phenomenon of *relative deprivation*) may additionally increase the likelihood of emigration – just as well lacking access to credits or financial markets. This access remains difficult in many developing countries and even emerging economies. Migration, particularly in phases of severe economic growth, might therefore be an attractive strategy for gaining investment capital. But there are also “external” factors that explain a migration hump as immigration barriers in richer states. These might comprise of formal (e.g., visa and immigration regulations) and informal barriers (such as the recognition of educational qualifications). These barriers are often higher for (potential) migrants from poorer countries compared to migrants from middle or high-income countries. In other words, when countries progress socio-economically, the obstacles for emigration to richer countries become lower. Last but not least, there are also network or emulation effects: the larger the size of a diaspora, the group of immigrants originating from a specific country of origin, the easier it is for potential migrants to find out about the employment and housing situation in the destination country. This can facilitate further migration (Clemens 2014; see also Martin-Shields et al. 2017).

The relationship between development and migration is not a one-way-street as these two processes are rather mutually reinforcing. Remittances, which are financial transfers of migrants to their families and relatives in developing countries or emerging economies, are, according to the World Bank, more than three times higher than all official development aid altogether (World Bank 2018). Most importantly, these money transfers do not only promote consumption and investment in the migrants’ countries of origin, they are potentially also spent for health or education related purposes – though, economists are facing difficulties in proving a significant effect of migrants’ money transfers on national economic growth (Clemens and McKenzie 2018). Although there are also negative consequences of remittances, e.g., a (potentially) increasing inequality, the positive effects of remittances – as well as other migration related interactions like knowledge transfers – are evident and constitute popular research subject at least since the 1990s (de Haas 2005).

With regard to the effectiveness of measures of isolation or attempts to limit migration and to improve border control, development and migration research scholars have likewise been very sceptical. De Haas (2011) compared these measures

in the EU context to a “waterbed” approach: once pressure is applied somewhere along its external borders, migrants immediately will try to move to another route of passage. By forcing irregular migrants to take ever more dangerous routes, the EU’s policies may in fact be directly contributing to the loss of lives (de Haas 2011).

In contrast to the still widespread overall *sedentary bias*, which reflects the (inappropriate) idea that measures like development cooperation can effectively curb migration (Bakewell 2008), international institutions like the World Bank and also national development cooperation agencies during the 2000s developed a field of activity under the label of “migration and development”. This comparatively small field of activity focuses on shaping migration processes in areas such as remittances or diaspora cooperation in order to maximise the benefits and minimise the negative aspects of migration (Schraven 2019). The culmination point of this development is the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration of 2018, which caused heated debates after the US and other countries (e.g., Australia and Hungary) withdrew from the process. The starting point for the Migration Compact – as with the Global Compact on Refugees – was the General Assembly high-level meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants in September 2016 following the so-called European migration crisis of 2015. The Global Compact for Migration, which is not legally binding, essentially comprises 23 goals, places particular focus on the protection and on the rights and improved living and working conditions of migrants and their families. Combating the exploitation of labour, human trafficking and discrimination as well as expanding the options for regular migration represent key elements of the compact. Especially civil society organisations were successful here in promoting their goals in the negotiating process. Moreover, the compact calls for an improved data management regarding international migration processes, promotes the tackling of economic, environment-related and political causes of forced migration and stresses the goal of “integrated, secure and coordinated” border management.

### *It is not only the economy, stupid: Complex causes of (irregular) migration and forced displacement*

In contrast to views of Africa as a part of the world torn by conflict, hunger or repression (see above), the development trends in Africa for the past three decades have rather been positive or at least mixed. Similar to other parts of the world, extreme poverty has gone down from 57 per cent of the population living from less than 1.90 US dollar a day in 1990 to 41 per cent in 2017 (yet, about half of the African countries are still low-income countries). The same is true for food insecurity: in 1990 roughly one third of the overall African population had to be regarded as undernourished – a share that went down to less than one quarter in 2015 (World Bank 2017). Similar advancements can be observed for other areas like education and health, although progress is comparatively slow and due to population growth, the absolute numbers of malnourished, illiterate or extremely poor people are partly even higher today than they were in 1990. When it comes to violent conflicts and wars, a rather positive trend can particularly be observed in West Africa – with the exception of Nigeria and Mali. The region has become more

peaceful in comparison to the 1990s and the early 2000s, when West Africa was still affected by severe civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone or Ivory Coast. But in other regions there are pockets of violent conflicts. The Horn of Africa region (especially Somalia) as well as Central Africa (especially South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic) are still massively affected (HIIK 2019). At the same time, the number of local conflicts with a rather low intensity of violence (vandalism, riots etc.) is on the rise.

The picture is also mixed with regard to the political development on the African continent. Doubtlessly, the African continent has become more democratic (evidence suggest that development cooperation might have played some role in that regard).<sup>21</sup> 22 African countries allow for broad political participation whereas 27 countries are characterised by low political competition and limited civil liberties and 6 are closed political and societal systems (Schraven et al. 2018). Although the number of military-led coups d'états has gone down in the past 25 years, Hounnikpo (2010) still concludes that democratisation processes in Africa so far have failed to address the issue of military interventions as an essential feature of African politics. Civil control over military and security forces appears to be a severe challenge for Africa's democracies.

A lack of societal participation for whole population groups significantly increases the danger of destabilisation and (armed) conflicts (Lewis et al. 2018). Although highly authoritarian countries can usually be regarded as very stable (Dixon 2009), Reynal-Querol (2005) comes to the result that societal inclusiveness significantly reduces the likelihood of civil war. And armed conflicts are certainly the main reason for forced displacement in Africa (and beyond): Among the top ten refugees' countries of origin in the world are four highly conflict-ridden countries in Africa – South-Sudan, Somalia, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (UNHCR 2018). But violent conflicts as well as lacking state capacities<sup>22</sup> feed into a migration phenomenon that is often labelled *mixed migration*. As the term implies, it describes migration processes where root causes of forced displacement like conflicts, legal uncertainty or repression are highly intertwined with "classical" migration motives like the pursuit of better economic opportunities (Angenendt and Koch 2017). Although much more research on the specific motives and decision processes of irregular migrants from Sub-Saharan countries trying to reach Europe is needed, a high percentage of these migrants certainly falls under the category

<sup>21</sup> Resnick (2012: 14) concludes that in the African context aid played an important role in facilitating the rise of multi-party-systems since the 1990s – at least in some cases. She identifies three types of influence that include the use of economic aid as leverage, the precipitation of domestic discontent through aid's economic conditionalities and a facilitation role of both economic and democracy aid ensured that multiparty elections occurred as smoothly as possible. At that time, irregular migration from Africa did not have the same prominence as today.

<sup>22</sup> Although most of the African countries (41) can be regarded as stable, most of these are characterised by very weak state capacities. Therefore, the delivery of public services and the achievement of development goals constitutes a huge challenge for these countries (Gravingholt et al. 2018).

of mixed migration. Based on an analysis of migration flows from Africa to Europe between 1990 and 2014, Giménez-Gómez et al. (2019) conclude that in addition to economic factors, political persecution, human rights violations or conflicts have significantly influenced individual migration decisions. The authors conclude that often “asylum seekers from Africa [...] have a combination of political and economic motivations to claim refugee status. Hence, categorizing African immigrants as the bogus asylum seeker in general terms would be highly misleading and could result in misguided migration policies” (Giménez-Gómez et al. 2019: 28). According to Crawley et al. (2016: 38–41), who conducted interviews with irregular migrants who could actually enter EU soil, come to the result that 66 per cent of the migrants interviewed in Italy and Malta made reference to factors associated with “forced migration” – ranging from conflicts to repression or terrorism – when they talked about the reasons that made them leave their country of origin.

Thus, the promotion of human security, good governance, democracy and conflict prevention should not be regarded as an almost meaningless “folklore” of Western development cooperation. In a more functionalist view, it should rather be perceived as a vital way to address or even prevent future processes of mixed migration and forced displacement – though this demands a real long-term perspective and lacks guarantees for success.

### *Conclusion*

The development/migration research perspective contradicts some important elements of the European efforts to address irregular migration from Africa towards Europe, which are largely based on securitised views on migration. Those European efforts are largely built on measures of migration control and development cooperation strategies aimed at creating economic perspectives and stable political and societal conditions, which would render any attempt to irregularly migrate to Europe superfluous. But the relationship between (socio-economic) development and migration is basically a positive one. An increase in average income and employment in developing countries increase will result in increasing emigration rates; at least until a certain level of economic development has been reached. Furthermore, irregular migration from Africa cannot only or mainly be explained with poverty or a lack of economic perspectives; to a large degree, it is mixed migration. This means that classical migration motives (as the aspiration for better economic perspectives) are intertwined with root causes of forced displacement such as conflicts, repression or weak public institutions.

Two major conclusions can be drawn with regard to how Europe should adjust its approach to the “Mediterranean migration crisis”: if the (increased) European support for economic growth and human development in Sub Sahara Africa are somewhat successful but inevitably would lead to an increased desire for more regular migration, Europe would need to consider broadening the opportunities for regular migration from Africa. Following a “migration and development” approach, such migration processes would need to be accompanied by measures of development cooperation (e.g., skills partnerships, language training,

intercultural training) in order to make such migration processes beneficial for all parties involved – the migrants and their families, the countries of origin and as well as the destination countries. The other important conclusion is that the EU has indeed some tools that can address the outlined root causes of forced displacement and mixed migration. In other words, it has measures, which can promote democracy, human rights and good governance. These include for instance budget support, which is essential for several African countries. This has been subject to democratic or human rights conditionality. Moreover, the EU is an important partner in democracy assistance or election observation in Africa. These and other measures should be intensified – although one certainly needs a long-term perspective in this context and there are no guarantees that these outlined measures are necessarily successful. Of course, democratic transition needs to be supported by the African societies based on strong civil society actors and institutions.

Taking that into consideration, there are also important messages with regard to DIB and the cooperation with military and security forces in Africa in general. Under the umbrella of the European attempts to address the root causes of irregular migration, this cooperation has largely increased in recent years. These efforts have apparently contributed a lot to establish strong security apparatuses (in particular in the Sahelian region). Furthermore, they have led to an increasing criminalisation of all kinds of migration – including internal or intraregional migration processes. Future activities in this area should not regard aspects such as human rights and civil control over a state's security apparatus as an annoying add-on to the list of elements of cooperation. Instead, these issues should be strengthened and perceived as a functionalist measure for stabilisation and the prevention of future conflicts and migration crises. Last but not least, there is the strong need for a better coordination between migration control on the one-hand side and governance structures and policies addressing intraregional migration flows as well as development policies on the other hand. A further or even increased disruption of regular migration flows within the Sahel or other African sub-regions as a result of highly securitised European attempts to limit irregular migration towards the EU are also a major disruption of livelihood opportunities. In the end, this might also (further) delegitimise both the EU as well as national African governments in the eyes of local populations.

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## 6. Report of the Working Group II: Defence Institution Building and the Challenges of Organised Crime, Corruption and Illegal Migration

by Enrico Fassi\*

Discussion in Working Group 2 (WG2) was based on two papers illustrating the current *mainstream view* of the connections between, on the one hand, organised crime and terrorism, and, on the other, development and migration, as well as the relation between these phenomena and stability of institutions in the Sahel region. The account not only provides a thorough description but also a critical evaluation of the mainstream views singling their inconsistencies and biases.

The mainstream narrative identifies a convergence between organised crime and terrorism that results in the erosion of the state's effectiveness as a security provider, to the point that the two aspects have been increasingly regarded as versions of the same problem. In particular, this narrative refers to organised crime as a major destabilising factor, one that demands a security response provided by the state and/or the international community. This is maintained to be true especially in the Sahel region, described as an area of "ungoverned spaces". The argument made in the WG2 is that this mainstream approach grossly overlooks the perceptions of local actors about the different roles of criminals, terrorists, migrants, smugglers, and states.

According to some participants, a stronger focus on the extra-legal instances of governance already present in these territories is needed – in particular, the complex interactions between organised crime and weak states. Policy responses based on the mainstream approach risk becoming part of the problem, leading to undesirable consequences of the securitisation process and increased border controls (coupled with specific technological developments – e.g., the growing "surveillance" industry) due to impinge on the Sahel's local political-economy dynamics. The western-sponsored border-control agenda alters existing socio-economic and political equilibria, empowering certain domestic and foreign actors. However, the mainstream picture fails to provide a clear understanding of what happens at the local socio-political level when the *informal* (suddenly) becomes the *illegal*.

Migration too, according to the mainstream narrative, is for the most part a destabilising, negative factor for both the countries of the region and Europe. As a consequence, migration is largely viewed as being conceptually opposed to development, and the latter is thus used to prevent the former – often coupled with measures of migration control which led to a "militarisation of development cooperation".

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In fact, as emerged in the discussion, the dynamic between migration and development is much more complex than assumed in the mainstream view: some studies show that migration may actually increase also with higher levels of development because of the expectation gaps. Moreover, the root causes of forced migration are complex and mutually intertwined: they are often economic in nature, but at the same time political and security-related. That being the case, the international community should commit more seriously to their human rights/good governance/democracy promotion agenda, because these aspects are particularly relevant in the domain of migration policy, but also security cooperation. Although one might question if the whole idea of a “migration control agenda” is sustainable (or even possible), a developmental approach to migration is still badly in need of harmonisation with security-based ones.

### *Ongoing efforts and lessons learned*

Having discussed and criticised the mainstream view (*pars destruens*) the ensuing section focused on how to address these problems (*pars construens*), in particular through the analysis of the efforts made by the EU and NATO in terms of defence capacity-building in the region and the expected impact of such efforts.

The example set by the EU emerged as being quite significant given the similar challenges the Alliance has been facing in this area. EU policies towards the Sahel gained relevance in recent years, especially since 2014, with the emergence of the “migration crisis” and the rise of anti-immigrant sentiments across Europe. The pressure for a more robust involvement of countries of origin and transit in the EU’s external governance of migration, however, resulted in a policy shift that added to an increased securitisation of the region.

In this process, three steps could be identified:

1. the *securitisation* of EU borders, presented as a necessary measure to protect the integrity and the functioning of the Schengen area, as well as the EU integration process;
2. the *externalisation* of the EU borders to the countries of the southern shore of the Mediterranean and the Sahel (“as far as Agadez”);
3. the *securitisation*, in turn, of these third states’ “sensitive borders” through the framework of migration partnership (signed by Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal) and other instruments (such as the Trust Fund for Africa). The ultimate goal of these initiatives is to reduce (ideally to stop) migration flows directed towards Europe, and according to its proponents, these policies prove to be quite effective.

However, there are also a number of negative externalities stemming from these initiatives. These approaches require a stronger cooperation of the EU and/or its member states with regimes whose credentials in terms of democracy, human rights protection and also development, are at least questionable. At the macro level, this process reinforces these governments in their role of security provider (especially for the EU) and pillars of stability and order, possibly at the expense of

the international community's approach, based on an effort to strengthen these countries' *resilience*, which was to be a EU's and a NATO's goal. At the micro level, the vast economic resources allocated by the Union to the border control/surveillance industry in these countries – frequently in areas characterised by very low administrative capacity and limited accountability mechanisms – have certainly affected the border regions' political economy, increasing local disenfranchisement, resistance and opposition. Moreover, among the unintended socio-political consequences of the emphasis on border security are also the increased riskiness and cost of border crossing for migrants, which ultimately reinforces the strongest (most "professional") criminal groups active in the smuggling business. That being the case, it is far from certain that EU policies actually enhanced these states' or their populations' security and stability.

NATO's approach towards the security challenges characterising the Sahel, North Africa and Middle East region largely overlaps with the EU's, as the former also regards terrorism, illegal trafficking of arms, drugs and people, poor governance and weak states institutions as pressing security concerns. In order to project stability in this region and increase the ability of these countries to address their security challenges, NATO too has launched several cooperation activities in the field of Defence Institution Building (DIB). The most relevant is the Defence and Related Security Capacity Building Initiative (DCB), a demand-driven scheme aimed at supporting countries requesting assistance from NATO. The initiative includes various types of support, ranging from strategic advice on defence and Security Sector Reform (SSR) and institution-building, to the development of local forces through education and training, to advice and assistance in specialised areas such as logistics or cyber-defence.

NATO DCB packages are operational in Iraq and Jordan, have been recently launched in Tunisia and are requested by Libya as well. In Iraq, a Training and Capacity Building activity started in 2016 in areas such as counter-improvised explosive devices (C-IED), demining, civil-military planning support to operations, military medicine and medical assistance, advice on SSR. Moreover, at the Brussels summit in 2018 it was agreed to launch a NATO Training Mission Iraq (NTM-I) to support the country in its efforts to build more effective national security structures and professional military education institutions. In Jordan, the initial DCB package agreed in 2014 was revised in 2017 reflecting the progress made and addressing the evolving security needs of the Jordanian Armed Forces. As for Tunisia, at the July 2018 Brussels summit the Allies approved new DCB assistance measures – concerning cyber-defence, C-IED, and transparency in resource management – that will be implemented mainly through education and training activities, as well as exchange of expertise and best practices.

All these activities highlight some of the challenges the Alliance is facing in its effort to project stability to the region: some are local, while others concern NATO as a whole. Among the former, there is the acknowledgement that local partners have to deal with compelling security issues and SSR at the same time. The result is that the management of current problems is very likely to take precedence over

reforms. Moreover, the fragility of existing institutions and scarce political will to reform them emerged as an almost constant element of the region. In addition, while some participants focused on the fact that NATO pressure for reforms could reduce the feeling of national ownership by the partners, others emphasized the deeper cultural and political challenges associated to the very idea of civil and democratic control of armed forces.

During the discussion, it emerged that NATO's specific challenges with DIB in the region seems to be related to three factors. The first is NATO's lack of the specific expertise needed to address the issues of both migration and organised crime – two issues that seem to contribute so significantly to the security dynamics of the area. Second, the general orientation of NATO DCB initiatives is largely short-term as of focus, instruments and responses, and it is far from clear how these instruments can become long-term solutions to structural problems such as terrorism, migration or the challenge of criminal groups. Finally, as in other international organisations there is the tendency to rely on a one-fits-all approach, whereas NATO DCB package needs to be able to adapt to different national conditions and cultural/political sensitivity of local actors.

### *Implications for NATO*

Session three focused on the implications of previous analysis for NATO. There was a broad consensus among the panellists on what the key challenges for the Alliance are, but also a certain disagreement about its potential role. For some, NATO is principally a security provider, and in order to be effective it should focus on defence. Consequently, the best NATO could do in the migration-organised crime area is to provide defence expertise to countries outside the Alliance. For others, NATO needs to embrace a much more comprehensive vision, including an understanding of the dynamics of social-economic-political change in the MENA countries and in Sahel, in order to contribute to regional security.

At the same time, WG2 members convened on a number of specific challenges: state-building; resources; strategic objectives; international cooperation; human factor and research.

First, there was a substantial consensus on the relevance of the challenges posed by fragile states, that still characterise the regional security complex. Moreover, they seem to become even more complex if one factors in the illegal/criminal dimension as "co-constitutive" of the State – a dimension that cannot be taken out of the picture without losing meaningful aspects of local power/security dynamics. There was also a shared view that the idea the international community should rebuild failed states has been largely abandoned – as it is still unclear whether it has the capability to do that. NATO thus should not engage in such long-term, risky efforts – a significant change in terms of policy orientation compared to previous decade.

This “realistic” assessment of the possibility to deal with the causes of the security challenges under scrutiny is closely linked to the issue of resources, a very serious concern for the Alliance. The question is whether NATO members are ready to commit all the resources needed to deal with the complexity of the challenges. More specifically, there were doubts about the sustainability of the effort required from NATO to address the multifaceted security dynamics of the region. Time emerged as a crucial issue in relation to resources, at the political, strategic and operational level. Among others, it was widely recognised that NATO needs better knowledge of local social-political dynamics. However, meeting this demand would involve the deployment of more personnel for significantly long periods – a quite demanding engagement for which resources are scarce.

According to some of the participants, even more important than finding the resources to support NATO activities in the region, is whether or not the Alliance has the clear strategic objective necessary to carry them out – meaning by strategy the specification of the ends as well as of ways and means to reach them. NATO should make its goals clearer, and define more precisely “what NATO wants”, both within the Alliance and outside. Especially in its interaction with third actors and the external environment, there is an evident need for NATO to make a communication/public relations effort – which could improve the currently rather negative perception of the Alliance in the region. Defining an ambitious long-term strategy on specific areas is always difficult for NATO: the consensus-based decision-making favours lowest common denominator outcomes. The capacity to define a clear strategy thus seems to be strongly related to the overall level of cohesion within the Alliance. To some extent, the “projecting stability agenda” is already a significant response, but it cannot be denied that the political climate in the US and in Europe respectively, as well as their mutual perception and relationship, has changed greatly in the last few years. This has wider and often severe consequences for international liberal order, and the role NATO plays within it through its overarching commitment to multilateralism.

The WG2 also pointed out a number of specific challenges to international cooperation and coordination that NATO needs to address to improve its effectiveness in the region. There is a need for more and better coordination on the migration/organised crime/development/security nexus between NATO, the EU and the UN. Consequently, what is probably needed is more, but also different, cooperation. Classical assumptions about burden sharing and division of labour between the EU and NATO might also be questioned. As the former is increasingly turning towards a securitising approach to migration and development issues in the region, the significance of the traditional complementarity between EU approach (mainly civilian/development/democracy/human rights-oriented) and NATO one (mainly military/security-oriented) seems to decrease. As a consequence, the UN might provide more substantial resources as far as the many non-military aspects of security in the region are involved.

One of the main challenges facing virtually every international actor seems to be posed by the involvement of local counterparts. International organisations in general have an inherent bias towards cooperation with the “government” – irrespective of what that entails in any given context – and NATO is no exception. A key challenge for the Alliance in the region stretching from Sahel to North Africa and Middle East is to develop a dialogue and a relationship with local civil societies and non-state actors. In particular, NATO needs to improve the selection of its partners at the societal level, identifying more effectively those who are both willing and able to advance reforms. Acquiring a better knowledge of local contexts also seems to require more advanced information sharing mechanisms and practices. However, this is an area subject to several security (i.e., classified information) and political constraints. Ultimately, information sharing in sensitive domains demands a high level of trust that is difficult to build. Nonetheless, NATO should try to gain a better, more accurate understanding of the identity of the actors that it is already working with in different context (e.g., by improving its military sociology expertise). This also implies a stronger focus on human factors – which, inside NATO, means to more and better training, while outside the Alliance involves the ability to listen to local demands, identify and comprehend local perceptions, understand local, non-governmental challenges and positions.

Finally, the discussion called attention to an analytical challenge relevant not only for the Alliance, but also for the academic/think tank community that works with the organisation. On the one hand, some observers expressed the need to reduce expectations in terms of what the Alliance could effectively achieve with its out of area operations, in this regional security complex and elsewhere. In this perspective, it has to be accepted that there is always the possibility for the situation to go very wrong, in political and military terms: bad decisions might be made, and unforeseen consequences are an inevitable part of the process. As a result, viable, realistic “relative success” should be looked for – although how to measure impact and success, particularly on the long run, remains an open question. For example, the expectation of a fully-fledged “Weberian State in the desert” might be misplaced: state-building has proven very difficult and insisting on this agenda risks giving the rigor mortis to the nation-state, adding more unnecessary rigidity to the often already severe conditions in which people live – or survive. This might also entail dropping the excessive criminalisation of informal political economy, that is trying to come to terms with the evidence that local states must adapt to the extra/illegal governance that already exist – and works – in specific regions. Similarly, we might also accept the notion that there are limits in terms of institutional learning: lessons learned by NATO or other institutions in specific contexts might be actually implemented only to a certain extent when transferred to totally different contexts.

Nonetheless, there is also a need for more conceptual clarity on the relationships between states, organised crime, corruption, terrorism, smuggling, migration and development. More work needs to be done on the taxonomies with which both the academia and policymakers are working with. This would help define more clearly challenges and threats, trying not to oversimplify the picture but to come up with

a finer-grained view of socio-political dynamics – that is, mechanism of social change – behind security challenges. Especially, avoiding misrepresentations of threats is of paramount importance, because the legitimacy of specific policy responses ultimately depends on how accurately the Alliance and every other relevant international actor approach these crucial aspects.

## 7. The Regional Security Complex and a Zero-Sum Game Approach: Implications for NATO

by Dario Cristiani\*

The outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011, spreading from Tunisia to the rest of the Arab world, created the conditions for the emergence of a number of significant changes in North Africa and Middle East. This wave of revolutionary changes, whose results did not match most of the expectations in many cases, interplayed with a number of broader, structural dynamics. One was at play in the Levant – the emergence of a geopolitical rift narrated in sectarian terms between Iran and Saudi Arabia, which brought the entire Arab and Islamic world into a new sort of Cold War – and another one in the Sahel – with the Sahelisation of Algerian terrorism creating the conditions for the strengthening of strategic connections between the Maghreb and the Sahel.

Against this backdrop, the outbreak of Arab Spring triggered what we defined as geopolitical horizontal and vertical contagion.<sup>23</sup> As for the former, the Tunisian revolution triggered a dynamic of horizontal contagion, as the wave of revolutions moved eastwards soon involving Egypt, Libya and Syria. The Syrian civil war was particularly important, as it became the catalyst for the emergence of the Islamic State (IS), which became soon a strategic competitor for Al-Qaeda and its regional franchises. Concerning the latter, instead, the collapse of the Libyan regime sent its shockwaves to the Sahel. The interplay of this event with long-standing local grievances brought to the collapse of the Malian regime and the emergence of a proto-Islamist state in the country's north. The interplay of these geopolitical dynamics concurred in crafting the conditions for the emergence of what we defined the "greater North Africa security complex". In this new complex, the strategic dynamics of the Sahel, the Sahara, and the Maghreb are increasingly more interlinked, at the expenses of the strategic links between North Africa and the Levant.

The risks stemming from this broader security complex are now of particularly importance for European countries, as the securitisation of the migration issue concurred to shifting the structurally *mobile boundaries* of the Mediterranean, as they are not – solely – defined by physical geography,<sup>24</sup> but more often by social, political and economic factors. From this point, for many European countries,

<sup>23</sup> The focus here is on the political effects in the broader MENA region and the Sahel/Sahara. This contagion does not refer to social classes, economic and interest groups, etc.

<sup>24</sup> This is in line with the approach envisaged by Fernand Braudel concerning the existence of a "Mediterranean world", whose extension stretches well beyond the coasts of the basin, and whose boundaries are defined by factors that are not strictly geographic.

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these boundaries are now located deeper in the Sahelian belt, and this is shown by more pro-active engagement that some of them have in this area. However, while the strategic links between these areas are denser and deeper, territorial control and political power in many of its territories is increasingly fragmented.

These dynamics of fragmentation characterising the security complex also triggered a greater increasing competition among European countries and among a number of regional powers, such as Morocco and Algeria, who are now competing for influence not only in the classic Maghrebi strategic arena but also more profoundly in the Sahel.

It is this evolving geopolitical reality that NATO, as an organisation, must face in the Mediterranean. While the organisation has worked to create several tools to deal with the threats emanating from the region, it still lacks a common vision on what these threats are. In addition, the emergence of Russia as a major Mediterranean player in the past few years has also added a more classic dimension to the problem of strategic stability, as risk reduction with Moscow is also acquiring a more southern dimension.

This evolution adds a more classic, symmetric dimension to NATO's risk perception in the Mediterranean and makes the distinction between a southern and an eastern dimension of NATO security increasingly obsolete. From this point of view, these two dimensions are increasingly connected and part of the same, broader security equation. Providing the Southern Hub with clearer functions and adequate resources, also strengthening its autonomy, will thus be vital, for NATO, to address this broader security equation.

### *The horizontal contagion: Fragmentation and pluralisation in North Africa and the Middle East*

The southern shore of the Mediterranean has witnessed a number of significant changes over the past few years, particularly following the outbreak of the so-called Arab Spring revolutionary movement (Dalacoura 2012). The wave of revolutions that swept across the region following the beginning of revolts and protests in Tunisia changed its *regime geography*, and opened space for the emergence of new actors, not only at a domestic but also at a broader, regional scale. The beginning of the protests in Tunisia, one of the most significant regional allies of Western countries but also one of the most oppressive regimes of the entire area, triggered several dynamics whose impact went well beyond the borders of Mediterranean Africa.

However, the Tunisian revolution and example acted as a trigger. Its revolution helped to ease the *threshold of fear* across the region. Its experience created a valuable example for other peoples and showed that also those leaders perceived to be particularly stable thanks to a massive domestic coercive apparatus and unquestioned external support by global powers were instead vulnerable. However, this wave of revolutionary uproar acquired a proper regional dimension only once

it arrived in Egypt, given its cultural, demographic and geographic centrality. From this moment onwards, the scale of the Arab Spring revolts became entirely regional, before getting a new shift of scale once a revolution started in Libya on 17 February.

This was the moment in which the Arab Spring started turning into an actual global issue not only because of its impact on the region, but also because of the heavy involvement of external powers. Against this backdrop, the Libyan conflict has been the first, fully internationalised conflict of the Arab spring. External countries became heavily involved once it became clear that Gaddafi would have crushed the revolt recurring to every possible means. The Libyan conflict, and its consequences, would play a very significant role in triggering the dynamics of *vertical contagion*, as analysed later in this work. However, it was another conflict that became the catalyst for the “return wave” of the *horizontal geopolitical contagion*: the Syrian conflict.

Syria followed suit as the crackdown of the regime on a number of young students writing anti-graffiti regimes triggered a rebellion that soon also acquired a deeper, sectarian connotation (Phillips 2015). This conflict was fundamental as it represented the catalyst for two dynamics that brought to a significant, deepening fragmentation of the regional landscape: the (re)emergence of multipolarism in the Mediterranean and the fragmentation of the Jihadi camp.

On the one hand, it was the trigger for the (re)emergence of multipolarism in the Mediterranean, with Russia, Turkey, Iran, Gulf countries all playing a much more significant role in determining the strategic direction of the conflict and became more relevant in shaping Mediterranean dynamics. This (re)emergence of multipolarism in the Mediterranean is also deepening further the degree of external penetration in a region historically characterised by the significant influence of external players (Huber 2013). These dynamics occurred in a region that, despite the dense transnational links highlighted before, is traditionally characterised by weak regional integration and absence of cooperation among its different economic and social actors, a feature that Paul Aarts captured with the definition of “region without regionalism” (Aarts 1999).

The region became thus increasingly characterised by “intense competition between, and hedging by, the region’s powers made for a troubled strategic landscape with sustained conflict exacting a rising humanitarian cost” (IISS 2017: 159). These dynamics interplayed with other developments that characterised the wider region over the past decades, for example the geopolitical rivalry increasingly narrated in sectarian terms between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

On the other hand, the Syrian civil war became the new magnet for Sunni Jihadists from all over the world, particularly after the split within the Al-Nusra front and the emergence of the Islamic State (IS) (Holbrook 2015). The emergence of a new type of radical Hanbali Salafi actor, whose ideological features (Bunzel 2015) were much more radical compared to the Qaedist doctrine of Jihad, did not only have

an impact in the territories in which it established its presence initially, but it also became the catalyst for the emerge of a broader split and significant dynamics of competition in different areas of the world.

The North African theatre, from this point of view, was one of the most affected. The IS rise increased the competition for recruitment, centrality and Jihadi operations with the local franchise of Al-Qaeda. It also brought a new dimension of competition that was exploited by a number of local radical actors, which launch their bid for leadership against the old local leaders of the Jihadi camp. Thus, the revolutionary dynamic triggered by Tunisia and that moved horizontally across the shores of the Southern Mediterranean, returned to North Africa to a certain extent in the form of a new competition within the world of Jihadism. It returned in the form of a new, more radical organisation that would attract fighters from all over the Arab world, and beyond, and that would soon represent a direct threat also for the countries of this area.

### *The vertical contagion: The greater North Africa security complex*

Against this backdrop, another Arab Spring revolution led to what we can define the vertical contagion. As already anticipated, the conflict in Libya with the collapse of the regime in August 2011 and the death of the "Brother Leader" on 20 October 2011 freed a number of forces that deepened even further the connections between the Maghrebi and the Sahelian strategic theatres, interacting with other dynamics that were already at play in strengthening this dimension. The collapse of Libya had an evident impact on the Sahelian region. Indeed, its shockwaves led to the outbreak of the Malian crisis (Guichaoua 2015), with the takeover of the north of the country from Islamist forces that created a proto-Islamic state, a rise that was later interrupted by the French-led military intervention in 2013 (Chivvis 2016).

This specific dynamic interplayed with a longer-term development characterising the area: the rise of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) as a proper regional actor in the Sahel, moving away from Algeria. Its operational core moved openly to the Sahel/Sahara region. Such a shift has been so significant that some observers are now arguing that the group has lost its grasp on the Kabilya, its historical stronghold (Ghanem-Yazbeck and Lounnas 2018).

The Sahel/Sahara was, initially, just an area of logistic support and fundraising. Since 2003, however, the group started operating in these territories more consistently, particularly after the famous kidnapping of 32 European tourists in 2003. This event represented the symbolic beginning of a new operational phase. In the following years, the group found shelter in North Mali and grew in the region driven by the relative impunity enjoyed by its militants (Guichaoua 2015: 322), thus bringing this area firmly in the operational domain of regional Jihadism (Safir 2016: 47).

This dynamic was particularly significant after 2008, once the wave of strategic suicide bombings and violent Iraqi-style terrorist attacks (Le Sueur 2010: 161–2)

against Algerian security forces declined as the Algerians took countermeasures. For the Algerians, taking this group away from the major urban centres in the north was essential. By then, although remaining a significant security threat for Algeria, AQIM's violent campaign declined in the north, while accelerated in the Sahel (Layachi 2014: 132).

Differently from the Maghreb, in this geographic area AQIM operational capacities remain very significant with more than 100 attacks recorded in the areas only in 2017 (Weiss 2017). This strengthening was also favoured by the reorganisation of AQIM units in the region under the banner of Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) (Crétois 2017), sanctioning the full return of Mokhtar Belmokhtar's group within the formal AQIM's ranks (Mémier 2017).

This greater focus on the Sahara, the Sahel and West Africa was also the result of the emergence of the IS challenge in the region. IS represented a formidable magnet for Maghrebi youngsters – for instance, Tunisians and Moroccans. The arrival of IS fighters in Libya created the conditions for the creation of a local IS hotspot that represented a territorial and ideological source of strategic concerns for AQIM and its offshoots. The increasing Sahelian activism was then a response to this Maghrebi challenge. These territories provided a greater strategic depth to an organisation that needed to show to its militants, but also to the people from the wider region, that it still represented a major regional Jihadi actor.

The geographic shift in response to the pressure from Algeria, and the strengthening of AQIM's Sahelian and West Africa outreach as a result of the competitive pressure from IS concurred to make the strategic connection between the Maghreb and its southern neighbourhood denser. From this point of view, it is possible to envisage a dynamic characterised by the widening of the North African security complex, what we could define as the Greater North African Security complex, in line with some recent trends emerged in the literature (Martinez and Boserup 2017).

However, while the Sahel and the Maghreb have always been characterised by the presence of significant economic and social links, their strategic connections became even more significant over the past years. As shown above, in the aftermath of the Arab revolts of 2011, this distinction between the Maghreb and Sahel security dynamics seems increasingly obsolete, as the security interdependence between the two regions has intensified considerably.

In their seminal work, Buzan and Wæver noted that while Arab states regularly intervene in Africa, "the Arab world's primary security concerns have been with Israel, each other, and the West" (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 258). However, this picture has now changed, particularly following 2011. Such a change occurred for almost all the States of the Arab world, but this shift was even more significant for the countries of the Maghrebi area: "very little of African security dynamics penetrates back into the Middle East, so the flow [was] largely one-way" (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 258).

In this new and broader regional security complex, regional powers are now increasingly competing for influence beyond their classic theatre of geopolitical interaction, as in the case of Morocco and Algeria (Lefèvre 2016). They are by far the two most relevant powers of the Maghrebi area (Zoubir 2000), and the deepening strategic relations characterising the Maghreb and the Sahel pushed them to search for new ways of exerting influence, although remaining true to themselves.

Morocco decided to “return to Africa” and mend ties with the African Union (Louw-Vaudran 2018), relations put in jeopardy by the approach of the organisation on the Western Sahara issue.<sup>25</sup> Algeria is increasingly aware of the risks posed by instability at its eastern and southern borders, but it wants to tackle these problems avoiding direct military intervention, in line with its foreign principles still anchored to its fierce anti-colonial and anti-imperialistic approach to interference in third countries.

While both countries are concerned with the dynamics of fragmentation stemming from Libya and the Sahel, they kept their zero-sum game approach to the region. Given their rivalry, they continue to avoid cooperating to tackle these problems. In many cases, they actively worked to exert influence on local actors and processes in open competition one against another. This was the case for Libya, with the two different diplomatic tracks taking place one in Algiers and one in the Moroccan town of Skhirat. In the Sahel as well, both countries avoid cooperating on counter-terrorism policy, each one pursuing its own specific approach, in many cases perceived through the lens of this rivalry.

### *Exporting divisions? Europe and the increasing competition in the area*

Such a zero-sum mentality is not only at play among Maghrebi powers. This approach has also notably characterised the intra-European diplomatic dynamics in the region, particularly in the aftermath of the eruption of the Arab Spring. As the wave of revolutions outbroke, it was clear that a number of divisions were emerging between European countries, despite the rhetoric call for European unity. This was particularly true in the case of Libya. The UK and France were immediately keen in supporting the revolt against Gaddafi. Italy and other countries adopted a much more cautious approach in the early days of the rebellion (Hanau Santini and Varvelli 2011).

Against this backdrop, NATO as an organisation played clearly a significant role in this process as, without it, the UNSC 1973 Resolution would have been impossible to enforce. However also within NATO, the process was hardly linear. It was characterised by a significant plurality of views on how to deal with the Libyan

<sup>25</sup> Morocco returned to the African Union in 2017, after it left the Union in 1984 following a row over the status of Western Sahara. However, King Mohammed VI has tried to implement a more proactive African foreign policy over the past few years, based on cultural and economic penetration in Africa, particularly the Sahel and West Africa. As such, mending ties with the AU was considered essential to this aim.

quagmire. The United States, especially, were not immediately keen on engaging directly on such an issue. This approach was consistent with the overall attitude taken by the Obama administration since its very early days concerning military engagement abroad, particularly in the North Africa and Middle East. Only after weeks the US decided to provide the necessary military and strategic support for the implementation of the no-fly zone. Yet, it decided to “leading from behind” and adopted a much lower profile compared to the past (Lizza 2011).

The end of the Libyan Jamahiriya, the death of Gaddafi, and the collapse of the electoral and democratic process that happened between July 2012 and May 2014 altogether brought Libya progressively on the brink of collapse (Gaub 2014). In this increasingly fragmented scenario, European powers soon started diversifying their positions. On a rhetoric level, all the European countries supported the UN-backed Government of National Accord (GNA) in December 2015, headed by Fayeza Sarraj. Still, France and the UK turn to be particularly supportive of Khalifa Haftar in the east, while Italy became soon the most important ally of Sarraj and of some of the groups backing him. Since then, it became clear that European countries were playing their own, narrower games in Libya leaving very little room for cooperation. The competing agendas of Italy and France represent a clear example of this zero-sum mentality characterising the European approach to the region as well (Saini Fasanotti and Fishman 2018).

The widening, and deepening, of the greater North African security complex also brought this intra-European rivalry further south, in the Sahel, an area historically in the sphere of influence of France but in which now also Italy and Germany are trying to operate, in line with the vertical broadening of the regional security complex envisaged in this work.

### *NATO and the evolving reality of the Mediterranean*

This shifting geopolitical reality characterised by the broadening of the regional security complex in North Africa embracing the Sahara/Sahel and the presence of a zero-sum game mentality informing the security equation of many local and external State actors with stakes in the region will also bring several new challenges for NATO. These developments are changing the geo-strategic reality of the region called upon the organisation to craft a new response. Indeed, for many in the alliance, Mediterranean security has become an urgent concern in the wake of risks emanating from North Africa and the Levant.

At the Warsaw summit in 2016, the organisation called for the establishment for a “Framework for the south” whose final aim was to strengthen “situational awareness, strategic anticipation and projecting stability through partnership and capacity building” (Becker 2018: 1). This package for the South also aimed at bolstering the Mediterranean Dialogue partnership program, considered central to “projecting stability, specifically by institutionalizing informal links through political dialogue” (Keil and Arts 2018: 3). It has declared the full capability of its Regional Hub for the South, based at NATO’s Joint Force Command in Naples,

whose main formal task would be to coordinate security efforts with partners through information sharing and dialogue (Keil and Arts 2018: 3).

However, almost three years since the establishment of this new framework, the organisation still lacks a clear, shared understanding of what the challenges arising from the Mediterranean are, synthesised by Alessandro Minuto Rizzo in the following way: "There is restraint in [...] giving a clear mandate to the Atlantic Alliance" (Minuto Rizzo 2018).

The factors explaining the lack a clear understanding of these challenges and a coherent strategy are several, and can be summarised as follows:

- Heterogeneity of the threats: in many cases, the diversity of risk blend of external and domestic security threats in a Mediterranean context complicate the efforts to promote a more coherent and unified strategy as they cut across the traditional competencies of national intelligence and security establishments (Lesser et al. 2018: 15).
- Different priorities: in the Mediterranean context, terrorism remains the most urgent threat. Yet, for a number of member states, also socio-economic issues, such as migration, represent a security threat (Lesser et al. 2018: 14). This pushed several countries, for instance Italy, to call upon the organisation to help to manage these problems, which fall well beyond the scope of a classic military organisation. In addition, there is a structural divide between those members of the organisation who perceive that the real threat come from the East and those more concerned with the problems stemming from the southern neighbourhood (Inayeh et al. 2016).
- Lack of actorness: a further problem is linked to the *deficit in actorness* of NATO. As noted by Sven Biscop, NATO is "an instrument", differently from other international organisations with strategic interests in this area, for instance the EU, which is instead "an actor" (Biscop 2018: 87). As such, the evolution of the NATO towards this changing reality will be defined by the interaction of its member states, and not by the organisation itself. Being an intergovernmental organisation in which there is no pooling sovereignty, decisions are necessarily taken by consensus, the organisation itself has very little room to react to these new circumstances, adapt and drive the change.
- The widening transatlantic rift: the strategic reality of the Mediterranean, as noted above, is changing. However, also NATO is changing as, with the rise of a more multipolar world, the ambition to have a unified and coherent NATO view of the world looks more and more like a *strategic chimera*. European and American interests and priorities are simply too divergent to pretend that NATO can operate a consistent synthesis (Biscop 2018: 88). For the US, China and Asia represent now the key priorities in the new American approach centred on the Pacific (Clinton 2011). Indeed, when looking at the broader southern flank of the organisation, Washington is mostly concentrated on the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf, and it maintains only minimal interest for the Mediterranean (Minuto Rizzo 2018).

Against this backdrop of a plethora of multifaceted challenges emanating from the South, the Mediterranean has also turned into a significant area of geopolitical penetration of Russia. Russia has become actively engaged in Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean, regaining an influence it had lost since the end of the Cold War. From this point of view, the problem of strategic stability and risk reduction with Moscow has also acquired a southern dimension (Lesser et al. 2018: 14).

Russia, as well, has its own zero-sum game mentality, particularly when dealing with issues in its so-called "Near abroad". Its Mediterranean presence is functional to this more global zero-sum game. However, in the Mediterranean area, Moscow can also benefit from the zero-sum game characterising the approach of local and European powers, as it increases the opportunities of engagement with regional state and non-state actors.

This southern dimension of the Russian engagement, however, is not limited to the eastern Mediterranean, as Moscow has become increasingly involved in North Africa as well. Moscow is trying to capitalise on the increasing American absence in Libya. It supports Khalifa Haftar in the east but, at the same time, is able to maintain ties with the other actors, from the UN-backed GNA, to the Misratans and Tripoli's militias (Barmin 2016, Kuznetsov 2017). In addition, it is increasingly active economically with all the countries of Mediterranean Africa (Kessler and Zilberman 2017, Saaf 2016).

While the relations with Algeria and Egypt have been historically significant, the recent strengthening of cooperation with Tunisia and Morocco is also particularly relevant. Notably, Russia has strengthened its military relations with Morocco, one of the pillars of the American and transatlantic approach to the region. In addition, Russia has also started providing military and economic support to countries in the Sahel (Blank 2017), thus recognising in its approach the emergence of this Greater North Africa regional security complex in which the strategic links between Mediterranean Africa and the Sahel are more intense.

The issue of military cooperation with Russia also has strained relations among NATO member states. For instance, many members states grew increasingly worried as Turkey opted to purchase the S-400 systems from Russia. Despite the Turkish reassurance that this decision "technical, and not political", many allies considered it politically problematic, undermining the common interest and efforts to stand-up against a resurgent and increasingly aggressive Russia (Keil and Arts, 2018: 5). This strengthening of Russia as a potential source of weaponry for Mediterranean countries is one of the fallouts of the Syrian conflict, as this conflict served Russia to test and promote its weapons (Ülgen 2017) and many Mediterranean actors are interested in deepening relations with Moscow in this domain.

This development has thus concurred to create a somewhat more complex strategic environment in the Mediterranean, as asymmetric threats are now also accompanied by the presence of revisionist states that perceive the Mediterranean as a part of their renewed global engagement. This evolution was summarised by

Jordan Becker: "revisionist state actors have proved willing and able to challenge NATO across domains, regions and functions" and, as such, the south is now not only "a place where allies go to help partners build capacity to mitigate threats from terrorists and VEOs" (Becker 2018: 4).

### *Conclusion*

Geopolitical horizontal and vertical contagions, and the ensuing dynamics – from the emergence of IS and its impact on North Africa to the collapse of Mali and the completion of the Sahelisation of Al-Qaeda – created a denser and broader regional security complex in North Africa, here defined as the Greater North African security complex. This is the evolving context affecting security dynamics in the southern flank of NATO, and against which the alliance is called to operate. However, the presence of diverging interests among the US and Europe and, at the European level, between European countries reduce significantly NATO's coherence and capacities. Being an instrument and not an actor, the organisation struggle to cope with changes autonomously, as its actions are defined by the decisions and the consensus of all of its member states.

The presence of a deep competition between European powers brings several problems concerning the fight against instability and terrorism in the area. First, it undermines the credibility of Europeans when they ask local countries to cooperate in a number of policy areas. Since the European countries are struggling to promote this cooperation among themselves, it would be difficult to ask for other countries, often long-standing rivals, to cooperate. For instance, this would be the case of Europeans demanding Morocco and Algeria to deepen their cooperative efforts, and indeed – over the past years – some of the attempts made by Europeans in this direction were rejected by both African countries.

This is also true when shifting the focus from the inter-state to intra-state dynamics, for instance in Libya, where the plethora of local actors have a little incentive on their own to cooperate, and the requests from Europe to work together to strengthen Libyan security, accountability and state-wide power cannot be taken seriously.

In addition, local Libyan players know that Europeans do not walk the talk, and each country tends to prioritise its narrow interests instead of renouncing to some of them to promote cooperation. In this context, the presence of divergent European interests in the region increase the incentive for local powers to exploit these divisions to extract economic and diplomatic benefits, at the expense of a more unitary approach that would rationalise the use of economic, technical and strategic resources. Finally, zero-sum game mentality would undermine the attempt to exchange information, and particularly in policy areas in which information-sharing is particularly sensitive but crucial, such as counter-terrorism.

This local-zero sum game mentality has also been manipulated by external powers who perceive the Mediterranean as an area to exploit geopolitically, as in the case of Russia. Moscow has taken advantage of this zero-sum game mentality and the

reluctance of several actors to engage themselves in the region to strengthen its Mediterranean profile. While this was evident in Syria, over the years Russia also became more central in North Africa, particularly in Libya and the Sahel.

This presence adds a more classic and symmetric dimension to NATO risk perception in the Mediterranean. While the organisation has tried to work to strengthen its southern outreach, it still lacks a clear and shared perception of what the threats from the region are, apart from terrorism. The Southern Hub, while fully operational on paper, is still struggling to find a proper role and dimension within NATO. From this point of view, NATO's *actorness deficit* and the increasingly divergent strategic visions among its major members is making difficult for the Southern Hub to work according to its mandate. However, providing the Southern Hub with adequate resources and much clearer functions remains essential if NATO wants to tackle effectively the plethora of asymmetric and symmetric threats emanating from the Greater North Africa security complex and that affect not only its southern and but also its eastern flank.

Reinforcing the Strategic Hub for the South could also represent an opportunity for those countries who – for geopolitical and historical reasons – are more concerned with security and stability in Eastern Europe. In many cases, these countries do not have the economic, diplomatic and intellectual resources to cope with Mediterranean challenges. However, as Russia is now a major actor in the Mediterranean and in the Greater North Africa security complex and it perceives its role there as functional to protect its “Near Abroad”, defending the alliance eastern flank is increasingly linked to the strengthening its Mediterranean dimension. From this point of view, these two dimensions cannot be divided any longer and are part of the same security equation, and NATO members states should become increasingly aware of this evolution and provide the alliance with the adequate means and autonomy to deal with it.

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## 8. The Regional Security Complex and the Drivers of Terrorism

by Vincent Durac\*

This paper begins with an overview of the regional security complex in the MENA, with a particular focus on the absence of effective regionalism, the role of regional subcomplexes, and the drivers of state behaviour in the sphere of security. Particular attention is paid to the extent to which perceived threats to regime and state security animate state behaviour. One crucial aspect of this relates to the ways in which regional powers and groups of states have intervened in the political dynamics of other states in the region, particularly in the aftermath of the 2011 Arab uprisings. The paper examines how and why this has occurred and its implications in deepening political instability, radicalisation and the spread of terrorist activity. However, regional political dynamics, in themselves, are but one element in the causes of violent extremism in the MENA region. Thus, the paper moves on to consider some of the key arguments in the academic literature on the causes of terrorism. Increasingly attention has been paid to the ways in which socioeconomic grievance and political closure has contributed to the terrorist threat. Addressing the challenge of human development through improved economic performance, support for democratic reforms and respect for human rights, have been central to the policy responses of the EU to events in the MENA since 2011 and before. However, increasingly, EU policy, particularly in relation to counterterrorism has been reduced to a preoccupation with population movement and is premised on high-level cooperation with incumbent regimes in the region. The final section of the paper considers the potentially counter-productive implications of such an approach on the part of the EU.

### *The regional security complex in the Middle East and North Africa – Instability, conflict and international terrorism*

Regional security complex theory was first set out by Buzan and Wæver in 1983. In its original formulation, a security complex was understood as “a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot reasonably be considered apart from one another”. In its 2003 reformulation, the concept of a regional security complex (RSC) was modified so as “to shed its state-centric and military-political focus and to rephrase the same basic conception for the possibility of different actors and several sectors of security”. Thus understood, an RSC was “a set of units whose major processes of securitisation, desecuritisation, or both are so interlined that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another” (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 44).

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According to Buzan and Wæver (2003: 188), the “Middle Eastern RSC was born fighting” – triggered by the emergence of the state of Israel. At its peak, more than twenty states formed the RSC. But, these numbers, combined with dispersed geography, led to the development of three subcomplexes. The first, and “defining” subcomplex was centred in the Levant between Israel and its Arab neighbours; the Gulf subcomplex formed after Britain’s withdrawal from the area in 1971, and was centred on a triangular rivalry between Iran, Iraq and the Gulf Arab states, led by Saudi Arabia; the third, weaker, subcomplex, was in the Maghreb and was constituted by “a shifting and uneasy set of relationships” between Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. For the Maghreb, as elsewhere, “the border with Africa was blurred” and its security dynamics extended into Chad, Western Sahara and Mauritania while Libya and Morocco, as well as Israel, played a part in the politics of several sub-Saharan states (Buzan and Wæver 2003: 193).

However, notwithstanding the existence of a Middle Eastern RSC, characterised by security interdependence, the region has not witnessed the same level of regionalism – defined by Fawcett (2015: 42) as “the pursuit of deliberate policies or projects by different actors to promote different forms of regional cooperation” – as is seen in other parts of the world. That is not to say that local and international actors have not sought to develop institutions for regional cooperation. The League of Arab States (usually, the Arab League) was founded as early as March 1945. Other attempts at regionalism in the Middle East included the Baghdad Pact, the United Arab Republic and the Federation of Arab States. However, none of these was of lasting significance. The Organisation of the Islamic Conference was founded in 1969 to give expression to the views of Muslim states globally and thus extends beyond the Middle East, while the Gulf Cooperation Council was founded in 1981. Both have had some significance. The GCC, in particular, has provided for security cooperation at the sub-regional level. However, it has not played a similar role across the Middle Eastern region as a whole (Fawcett 2015: 47). Nonetheless, the ideal of a regional approach to security has been expressed, if only rhetorically, over the years. Hosni Mubarak raised the possibility in April 1990 in the context of a broader disarmament plan for the Middle East. In the 1990s, Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan referred to the possibility of a Middle Eastern equivalent to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), while in 2002, then Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia alluded to the need for region wide security in the context of his Arab Peace Initiative (Jones 2010: 106). But, nothing of lasting significance issued from any of this.

Thus, while institutions for regional cooperation have been created, “neither political nor economic regional arrangements have materialised” (Aarts 1999: 911). Ambitions towards regional unity have coexisted with constant conflicts, a lack of democratic tradition and a “sleeping” regional civil society. As a result, as Aarts (1999: 911) famously commented, the Middle East is a “region without regionalism” rendering it the eternal, exceptional case, “out of step with history and immune to the trends affecting other parts of the world”. Salem (2016: 42) goes further and argues that the Middle East has no regional order in any positive sense – it is the least ordered or governed regional subsystem in the world. Unlike in East Asia, Africa,

the Americas or Western Europe, there is no dedicated forum or institutionalised mechanism for the main regional powers to communicate, identify conflicts and defuse concerns or work on building a set of shared principles for regional interaction other than direct or proxy war.

In attempting to make sense of regional political dynamics in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings, Salloukh (2017: 660) emphasises the importance of adverting to the “interplay between domestic and geopolitical battles”, and the need to draw on an eclectic range of international relations theory to do so. Thus, only a combination of realism’s balance of power, regime-security considerations, and the constructivist emphasis on identity can explain certain puzzling trends in regional political dynamics. Such an approach helps explain Saudi policy in the region in terms of its perceptions and prioritisation of ideological threats. Similarly, only a combination of regime security and ideational threats explains the under-balancing of Iran by its regional competitors, in stark contrast to the expectations that a purely realist approach to regional political dynamics might yield (Salloukh 2017: 660).

Echoing this approach, Ryan (2015: 42) argues that the major reason for the absence of regional security cooperation in the Middle East is the persistent reality that regime security is the key priority for regimes in the region. Different states and regimes have different interests, security priorities and, as a result, different threat perceptions. These shape the character of inter-state relations, in particular, alliance-formation and inform intervention on the part of states and regional institutions in the domestic politics of other states. Different priorities also help to explain apparent inconsistencies in the ways in which groups of states in the region respond to perceived threat.

Variable threat perceptions help to explain the shift in the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Iran from rivals to enemies. The consequent regional cold war that has ensued, is now the defining conflict of the Middle Eastern RSC, not least because of its capacity to influence security dynamics in the Levant subcomplex and to a more limited extent in the Maghreb subcomplex (Hanau Santini 2017: 105). The conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran stems in significant part from the US invasion and occupation of Iraq which unleashed dynamics that “restored the primacy of overlapping domestic and geopolitical battles in Middle East IR” (Salloukh 2017: 661). Henceforth, the region became the site of a Saudi-Iranian confrontation fought out not through direct military confrontation but through proxy domestic and transnational actors and ideological competition in the domestic politics of a number of weak Arab states. Hanau Santini points out that the increasing salience of this conflict between a Saudi-dominated Sunni camp and an opposing camp led by Iran should, in terms of theories of balance of power, balance of threat or securitisation, have led to greater level of consistency in the behaviour of the Gulf states. However, as relations between Qatar and its fellow Gulf countries since 2011 and, in particular, the 2017 boycott of Qatar, demonstrate, intra-Sunni cohesion is less than perfect, precisely because they are animated by different threat perceptions (Hanau Santini 2017: 93). The result is an “under-balancing” of Iran that is best explained not by the crude logic of sectarianism that

underpins much policymaking, and some academic analyses of regional dynamics, but by a greater level of alertness to threat perception and security priorities on the part of individual states and groups of states. Thus, as Salem (2016: 42–3) points out, states in the region, such as Iran, Turkey and the GCC countries, have many core interests in common, including regime and state security, regional stability, economic cooperation and regional prosperity. But, while all of the states in the region would benefit from a stable and cooperative regional order, they are trapped by patterns of threat perception that fuel ongoing conflict.

Furthermore, as Ryan (2015: 42) notes, even when Arab regimes do agree to work together against militancy and extremism, they have different security priorities in mind. For Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, the key concern is Iranian influence in the region. For the United Arab Emirates and Egypt (after the overthrow of Mohammad Morsi), the core threat is the Muslim Brotherhood and similar Islamist movements. For Jordan, on the other hand, the Muslim Brotherhood functions as a “loyal opposition” and the threat emanates from the rising Salafi movements in the country as well as the transnational jihadis of Islamic State (IS).

However, regional political dynamics are not explicable solely in terms of power politics. Rather the region, as Gause (2015: 18) observes, is currently in a situation of both power and ideological multipolarity. Iran proposes a transnational Islamist model that it claims should apply across the region but which, in reality, appeals only to its fellow Shiites. Saudi Arabia is threatened by the Iranian model, particularly in terms of its own Shiite minority, and supports its fellow monarchs while discouraging democratic reforms at home and abroad. Turkey, meanwhile, has supported a version of Islamist democratic reform in the Arab world, while Islamic State, though now of greatly diminished significance, proposes a transnational *Salafi* model that shares elements of Saudi’s conservative version of Islam, the Iranian rejection of the current regional system and the populism of Turkey’s AK. This ideological rivalry helps to explain the alliance politics of regimes in the region. Echoing Hanau Santini above, Gause (2015: 16) has pointed out that, by pure balance of power logic, the region should have witnessed the development of a Turkish-Saudi-Israeli alignment concerned to check and roll back Iranian power, not least because a Turkish–Saudi alliance makes sense in terms of the sectarian logic that many see as driving regional politics. However, no such balancing of Iran has emerged. This is because alliance patterns among Sunni states are driven by ideological compatibility and regime similarity and not sectarian concerns. Thus Saudi Arabia is close to the other monarchies and the anti-Muslim Brotherhood regime of Sisi in Egypt, while Turkey has been closer to Qatar, when Doha backed the Muslim Brotherhood, with Morsi’s government in Egypt, and with Hamas in Gaza (Gause 2015: 18).

But, even as regional alliances shift and change, regime security remains key to regional international relations. However, motivated by concern to ensure the security of ruling regimes against internal and external challenges, Arab regimes become trapped in both internal and external security dilemmas. In the latter, they undermine their own security by triggering alarm in their neighbours as a

result of the measures they adopt for their defence. Internally, regimes also face a security dilemma as their security measures create “fortress regimes” ever more distant from their societies, yet vulnerable to popular discontent (Ryan 2015: 43). In the case of the most vulnerable regimes, the results have been catastrophic. Salem (2016: 37) argues that conditions in the Arab world since 2011 brought about a perfect storm of internal and external factors – the Arab uprisings challenged authoritarian rule in six Arab countries while intense competition among regional powers exacerbated those tensions. The combination caused the failure or partial failure of four states (Libya, Syria, Iraq and Yemen).

The 2011 uprisings across the Arab world had largely domestic, if shared, origins. All of the countries concerned had problems of socioeconomic distress and demographic growth in the context of long-standing authoritarian regimes characterised by political closure, corruption and, in many cases, nepotism (Durac 2013). The uprisings in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Bahrain and Yemen were “explosions of frustration” at the ineffectiveness of authoritarian regimes in addressing the socioeconomic challenges of population growth or the demands of an increasingly informed and young population (Clarke and Papadopoulos 2016: 11). However, in several cases, the problems faced by regimes were deepened by the direct or indirect intervention of regional actors. Sectarian concerns, fear of increased Iranian influence in the region, combined with hostility to popular mobilisation, to prompt Saudi intervention in Syria, Bahrain and Yemen. In doing so, it contributed to state breakdown in Syria and facilitated the expansion in the reach and significance of jihadist groups such as IS, at enormous cost to the Syrian population and the region at large. Saudi intervention in Yemen resulted from the failure of the GCC-led transitional process that had assured the resignation of long-standing autocratic ruler, Ali Abdullah Saleh, and the accession to the presidency of his former deputy, Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi. The seizure of the capital, Sana’a by Shia Zaydi rebels (the Houthi movement) in 2014 prompted military intervention by a Saudi-led Arab coalition, whose other most significant element was the United Arab Emirates. To date, tens of thousands of lives have been lost and the country is in the midst of one of the greatest humanitarian crises of the century to date. In addition, what was left of central authority has been decimated along with the country’s infrastructure. The instability that has ensued has proved ripe territory for an array of violent sub-state actors, including Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and IS (Durac 2018b). In Egypt, Turkey and Qatar supported the Morsi regime which came to power in the country’s first free elections in 2011 and 2012. Following Morsi’s overthrow in 2013, the new regime is reported to have received up to 20 billion US dollars from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, motivated in large part by their hostility to the Muslim Brotherhood. Not only were the Saudis the first to back the coup, it was widely rumoured that Saudi intelligence provided funding and support for efforts to bring down Morsi’s government and encouraged popular opposition to his rule (Riedel 2013).

The impact of conflict in these states has been deepened by the extension of broader regional rivalries to them as intervention by regional powers undermined rather than strengthened the control of the central state. A critical result of this

has been to amplify the opportunities for violent extremist and terrorist groups to emerge and to thrive. Violent extremist groups, notably IS, took advantage of the openings created by the uprisings, in Syria, in particular but also in Libya, Egypt and Yemen. IS also took advantage of the situation in an Iraq, already weakened by endemic conflict in the aftermath of the 2003 US-led invasion of the country, and by the increasingly sectarian regime of Nouri al-Maliki, who dominated political life in the country until his enforced resignation in August 2014. These countries – Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen – had poorly institutionalised states and strong regional identities at odds with the asserted national identity (Lynch 2016: 27). In Egypt, the overthrow of the elected government of Mohammed Morsi by the military in July 2013 saw the restoration of authoritarian rule but no end to terrorist activity, particular in Sinai (Horton 2017). In the other three cases, violence led to the emergence of failing and failed states without effective central government, with armed factions enjoying regional power and with ongoing conflict.

### *Drivers of radicalisation and terrorism in the MENA region*

Nonetheless, while the intervention of regional powers deepened the problems of states weakened by conflict and enlarged the opportunities for terrorist activity, this is not a sufficient explanation for the spread of radicalisation and terrorism in the MENA region. There is an extensive academic literature on the causes of terrorism, but limited consensus on the subject. In her seminal article of 1981 on the subject, Crenshaw distinguishes between preconditions – factors that set the stage for terrorism over the long run, direct causes, and precipitating factors. Preconditions include the impact of modernisation; urbanisation; social facilitation – which refers to the social habits and historical traditions that sanction the use of violence against the government, making it morally and politically justifiable; and, the willingness or otherwise of government to prevent terrorism. Direct causes include grievance among sub-groups in society; the lack of opportunity for political participation; and, finally, context – when discontent is not generalised or severe enough to provoke the majority of the population but prompts a small minority without access to power to seek radical change (Crenshaw 1981). While Crenshaw's work has been deeply influential, more critical perspectives have emerged. The first of these concerns the consistent identification of poverty direct causes of terrorism. As Piazza points out, in the aftermath of the attacks of 11 September 2001 and subsequent attacks in Indonesia, Spain, Britain, Morocco and Turkey, national politicians and UN officials were quick to identify poverty, global income inequality, unemployment and low levels of education as key causes of terrorism (Piazza 2006). However, there is limited empirical evidence for a direct link between poverty and terrorism. Uneducated, impoverished people are especially unlikely to engage with a political process, either legitimately or illegitimately, whereas terrorists have levels of educational attainment that are at, or slightly higher than, the societal mean and are less likely to live in poverty than the average person (De Búrca 2014: 27). Similarly, the evidence for a link between resort to terrorism and political exclusion is ambiguous. Dalacoura (2006) has written about the relationship between terrorism and the lack of democracy in the context of the Middle East. She points to the example of Tunisia and neighbouring

Algeria. The Islamist opposition in Tunisia was subjected to proscription and repression in the early 1990s.

So, too, was the Algerian Islamist opposition movement, the *Front Islamique du Salut* (or Islamic Salvation Front) after it came close to winning national elections which had been held during a short-lived phase of political openness around the same time. [...] The key questions here concern whether exclusion from the political system and the experience of repression makes Islamist movements more prone to adopting violent methods and whether [...] political participation encourages them to pursue their objectives through peaceful means. (Durac and Cavatorta 2015: 145)

In the Algerian case, regime repression had the effect of radicalising Islamist opposition, feeding into the brutal civil war that followed. In neighbouring Tunisia, however, it appears that repression and exclusion had a moderating effect and led, not to a violent response, but the growing moderation of Al-Nahda's positions on democracy, the rights of women and minorities (Dalacoura 2006: 522). The conclusion would appear to be that while there may be some association between political exclusion and resort to violence, it is not a direct causal link and more work needs to be done to isolate why some adopt political violence as a tactic and others do not.

The interplay between international and domestic factors has also been cited as a source of radicalisation. Hegghammer (2006 and 2008) focuses on the role that the international level has played in radicalising Saudi men who travelled to Afghanistan during the anti-Soviet jihad and to Iraq following the US invasion and occupation of that country. In both cases, he notes the impact of a "pan-Islamic" nationalism, promoted by the Saudi state in order to boost its own legitimacy (Hegghammer 2006: 54). Thus, the radicalisation of many Saudi foreign fighters was, in part, a response to the situation of Muslims in Afghanistan, Chechnya and Palestine, and, later in Iraq. From the perspective of pan-Islamic nationalism, Saudis who travelled to Iraq were simply moving to a different part of the Muslim world to defend their common Muslim territory.

However, there is a critical difficulty with the concept of radicalisation. As Sedgwick (2010: 479) points out, despite its ubiquity, there is no consensus on its meaning. It has been used in the contexts of security, integration and foreign policy and the term "radical" can mean something different in each context. The Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation set up by the European Commission in 2006 noted that some experts viewed radicalisation as a path that inherently involved violent behaviour, while others saw the mere acceptance of certain ideas which condone or justify violence as an indicator of radicalisation. For some the path to radicalisation is individual while for others it is a collective process (Bakker 2015: 284). The only solution to this, as Sedgwick (2010: 479) argues, is to acknowledge the inherently relative nature of the term and cease treating "radicalisation" as an absolute concept. However, such an acknowledgment clearly empties the concept of any fixed meaning.

Given these critical perspectives on the causes of terrorism, Taşpınar (2009) contrasts two views that have emerged among western policymakers, analysts and academics since the events of September 2011 on the underlying causes of violent extremism. One maintains that the struggle against the root causes of terrorism must focus on social and economic development. Since poverty and ignorance provide a “breeding ground” for radicalism, socioeconomic development appears to be a compelling antidote. The second group rejects the correlation between socioeconomic deprivation and terrorism and sees the fight against terrorism in terms of state actors, jihadist ideology, counter intelligence and coercive action. Taşpınar suggests that the latter view is overly simplistic and misses the significance of relative deprivation as a cause of terrorism. To dismiss social and economic causes of terrorism on the grounds that some terrorists have middle-class backgrounds is misleading. Weak, failed and failing states; ungoverned spaces and civil wars are all in underdeveloped parts of the world. This, while terrorism is not caused by socioeconomic problems, there is a clear “correlation between deprivation and radicalism” (Taşpınar 2009: 78). He adds that in addition to socioeconomic “decay”, the absence of constitutional liberties brings a political dimension to relative deprivation in the Arab world. The Arab world has a young, increasingly well-educated population often with limited prospects for employment. Thus, a class of “frustrated achievers” is being created. Repressive political dynamics exacerbate this frustration. All of these problems illustrate the need to address problems of human development in the Arab world (Taşpınar 2009: 79).

Regardless of academic debates on the causes of terrorism, the view that political violence in the MENA has its roots in socioeconomic distress and political closure underpins the policy of the European Union in addressing the threat of terrorism in the MENA. However, as with EU foreign policy in the region more broadly, the human development focus is in tension with other policy objectives to an extent that may be considered counter-productive.

### *The response of the European Union to terrorism, radicalisation and instability in the MENA region*

The policy response of the EU to the threat of terrorism has evolved significantly in recent years. In the early years of the development of both policy and competences, cooperation on counter-terrorism (CT) took place within an intergovernmental framework (Monar 2007: 292). However, a set of critical events prompted a significant shift from the intergovernmental level to the creation of internal EU institutions and competences in the area of CT. Most significant amongst these were the attacks of 11 September 2001. Within two weeks, the EU adopted its first “action plan” to fight terrorism. In June of the following year, the EU agreed a Framework Decision on Combatting Terrorism. This was followed by the adoption of the European Security Strategy in December 2003, the appointment of the first EU Counterterrorism Coordinator in 2004 and the adoption of the first overall EU Counter-terrorism Strategy (CTS) in 2005. The CTS was updated in 2008 and

revised in 2014. It is based on four pillars – prevention, protection, pursuit and response. The first and third deal with external measures, the second and fourth with internal measures. The prevention pillar aims to prevent terrorism by identifying and countering methods of recruitment of terrorists. Under this pillar, the CTS notes that the international terrorist threat “affects and has roots” in many parts of the world beyond the EU. Therefore, cooperation with and the provision of assistance to countries, including in North Africa and the Middle East, will be vital. According to the strategy, “working to resolve conflicts and promote good governance and democracy” will be “essential elements” of the strategy (European Council 2005: para. 5). The Madrid train bombings of 2004 prompted the European Declaration on Combating Terrorism which gave a mandate to the Council to “include effective counterterrorism clauses in all agreements with third countries”. However, whereas the EU has concluded bilateral Association Agreements with Tunisia, Israel, Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Algeria and the Palestinian Authority, only the agreements with Egypt and Algeria contain counterterrorism clauses, which express vague commitments and contain little that is concrete (MacKenzie et al. 2013: 141).

From the beginning, the development of EU policy in relation to counterterrorism has been accompanied by persistent reference to the link between effective counterterrorism mechanisms and the priority of democracy and human rights, but such reference is omitted in recent interventions by EU institutions. The 2003 European Security Strategy asserted that spreading good governance, supporting social and political reform, dealing with corruption and abuse of power, establishing the rule of law and protecting human rights are the best means of strengthening the international order (European Council 2005). The Counterterrorism Strategy proposed that working to resolve conflicts and promote good governance and democracy were “essential elements” of the strategy (Durac 2018b). The Euro-Mediterranean Code of Conduct on Countering Terrorism of 2005 included an undertaking to “ensure respect for human rights in the fight against terrorism in accordance with international law”. Ten years later, the Council conclusions of counterterrorism called for comprehensive action against terrorism in line with the Counterterrorism Strategy and “in full compliance with international law, fundamental values and international human rights standards”.<sup>26</sup> All of this is consistent with the commitment to the promotion of democratic principles and the centrality of human rights, which has been consistently asserted throughout the elaboration of an EU Common Foreign and Security Policy.

However, the series of attacks in Europe linked to IS which began in 2014 inaugurated a new set of policy responses. From this point on, EU policy with regard to the terrorist threat from the MENA region has been focused on the control of population movement with little or no reference to concern for the promotion of democratic reform or human rights in the partner countries whose cooperation is increasingly central to the EU’s interest in ensuring security. A statement from

<sup>26</sup> See EEAS website: EU Actions to Counter Da’esh, 11 July 2017, <https://europa.eu/ivX66kM>.

the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator of 2015 set out a series of priorities for the Union which began with "border management". The conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council of February 2015 which followed the attacks in Paris in January of that year called for "comprehensive action" against terrorism in line with the 2005 EU Counterterrorism Strategy. The conclusions called for a strengthening of partnerships with key countries. This entailed conducting targeted and upgraded security and counterterrorism dialogues with the countries of the MENA, as well as strengthening political dialogue with the League of Arab States and other regional organisations, and developing counterterrorism action plans with Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, including measures to dissuade and disrupt foreign terrorist fighters' travel as well as to manage their return. The conclusions called for the promotion of fundamental rights as part of the project of countering radicalisation and violent extremism. Once more, there was no reference to democracy or political reform in partner countries (European Council 2015).

EU policy on CT in the MENA region may be critiqued on a number of levels. Significant questions of policy coherence and consistency stem from the ways in which EU policy and practice reflects interests identified in *realpolitik* terms which are in tension with its repeatedly asserted commitment to democratic and human rights norms. EU CT cooperation in the MENA characteristically takes the form of cooperation with incumbent regimes. The requirement to secure high level cooperation means that, notwithstanding its repeated commitment to the pursuit of democratic reform and respect for human rights, the EU must engage with regimes whose record in both of those areas leave a great deal to be desired. More specifically, the regime-led character of counterterrorism cooperation gives to those regimes a significant degree of room for manoeuvre in their dealings with the EU, if not an outright veto power. Given the absence of the incentive provided by the prospect of ultimate membership of the EU, the cooperation of MENA regimes is only possible where tangible benefits arise from their relationship with the Union. However, this means that such cooperation can only happen on partner countries' terms. Moreover, there is no shared consensus on the nature of the terrorist threat or how to deal with it. For the EU, terrorism is seen, at least in part, as a consequence of lack of democracy and economic stagnation. Given the undemocratic nature of incumbent regimes across the region and their responsibility for social and economic conditions, it is logical to deduce that they constitute at least one component of the structural factors that produce the terrorist threat to Europe. Certainly, tackling the democratic deficit in the region and promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as addressing the economic challenge, are essential to effective counterterrorism policy. Indeed, these objectives are, as has been outlined, central to EU policy as articulated over recent years. On the other hand, from the perspective of MENA regimes, terrorism has typically been seen in terms of threat to incumbent regimes best dealt with through repressive means. As a result of the asymmetrical relationship that characterises EU-MENA cooperation in the field of CT, while some gains are made, EU policy and practice tends to strengthen the position of regimes, which, by their authoritarian nature, contribute to the threat which EU

policy and practice are designed to address (Durac 2018a).

Furthermore, there are problems of institutional incoherence that stem from the proliferation of institutional actors and initiatives dealing with CT. This flows in turn from the fact that policy and institutional innovation have, for the most part, developed in response to specific events, rather than as a function of longer-term planning. Problems of coherence also stem from the tension between the objective of developing a coherent policy at EU level and the concern of individual member states to retain control over an area seen as central to national interest. This is reflected in the imbalance between EU initiatives in relation to CT in the MENA and those of individual members states. It is also reflected in the challenge posed to the normative, if inspirationally so, character of EU foreign policy more broadly, by an increasing emphasis on a militarised approach to CT on the part of individual member states.

Thus, for instance, the EU has developed working relationships in the area of CT with both Tunisia and Morocco. However, in both of these cases, the involvement of individual member states is also marked. EU institutions have worked on security sector reform in Tunisia, including providing assistance in drawing up and implementing a programme to provide independent oversight of the police and improve the investigative capacity of the security services under the rule of law. Together with France, the EU has supported the modernisation of the Tunisian judiciary. In so doing, the EU has acted in coordination with a range of state actors, both member states and others, including the seven leading industrialised countries, Spain, Belgium, Switzerland, Turkey, as well as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. In Morocco, the focus has been on capacity-building assistance in operations and training, as well as funding and initiatives designed to assist the population, and, in effect, curb the drivers of extremism. However, bilateral security cooperation is central to Morocco's relationships with European states. Historically close relationships with Spain and France have led to security cooperation while the Morocco has also developed productive relationships in this sphere with other EU member states such as Germany and the UK (Dworkin and El Malki 2018).

More problematic is the nature of CT initiatives in the MENA region undertaken by individual member states which have assumed an increasingly militarised form. These, in turn, reflect the reality that each of the Union's member states has its own institutions to deal with the terrorist threat as well as different perceptions of that threat such that it becomes difficult to identify a common European threat perception (Monar 2007: 301). France, under president Hollande, embarked on what has been characterised as its own war on terror, beginning with its intervention in Mali in 2013, the objectives of which were to "degrade" the power of terrorist organisations and to support the Malian army. The French view was premised on the doctrine of pre-emption, in an echo of the US "war on terror" – to avoid terrorist attacks on Paris, France needed to fight militarily anywhere extremist groups might develop. This logic underpinned subsequent French involvement in the US-led coalition against IS. The German approach, by contrast, has focused on the issue of jihadi terrorism as a primarily domestic issue relevant for police forces, as opposed

to a war than transcends its borders (Samaan and Jacobs 2018: 10). However, as Dworkin (2016) has noted, the militarised approach to CT has become a feature of individual member state responses to the terrorist threat across the EU. "France, the UK, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Italy, Spain and Poland have all been directly involved in conducting or assisting military action against jihadist groups in the regions surrounding Europe". As a result, there has been an increasing "convergence between European and US approaches to military action against terrorists, after many years when they differed" significantly (Dworkin 2016: 2). But reliance on a military approach to CT runs counter to the underlying logic of EU policy and to the view that the threat of terrorism is best addressed in the long run through dealing with structural causes. In the absence of political measures to address the conditions under which terrorist groups flourish, "military action is likely to be both ineffective and self-perpetuating" (Dworkin 2016: 18).

### Conclusion

It is clear then that the MENA is a region characterised by security interdependence but limited regionalism in the sense of the development of effective regional institutions or mechanisms to address security challenges. Key to this is threat perception viewed in terms of potential challenge to regime security. Divergent threat perceptions have driven intervention on the part of states and groups of states in the domestic political dynamics of a range of states in the region, with catastrophic consequences for the most vulnerable of these – leading to a further weakening of failed and failing states and facilitating the spread of terrorism. As the closest regional actor, and one increasingly affected by the threat of radicalisation and violent extremism emanating from the MENA region, the EU has developed a range of responses. However, this have been characterised by inconsistency and incoherence, not least between the EU's approach and those of individual member states. In particular, the tension between a broader commitment to human development, encompassing support for economic development, democratic reform and support for human rights, and a realpolitik concern to secure the cooperation of incumbent regimes in the region, produces a reliance on authoritarian and repressive regimes in the field of counter-terrorism that may be fundamentally counterproductive to the core objectives of the Union (Durac 2018a).

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## 9. Report of the Working Group III: Middle East and North Africa – Instability Factors, Counter Terrorism and International Organisations' Coordination

by Alessandro Marrone\*

The Working Group 3 firstly discussed the state of the art of the regional security complex in Middle East, North Africa and Sahel. In particular, it did focus on how do regional rivalries impact (in)stability, conflicts and international terrorism, and the factors in favour of radicalisation and support to international terrorism. In this context, participants reflected on the role played by either states member of NATO/EU or the two organisations as such to address instability and conflicts in the region. The first part of this WG report will recall the more relevant elements for NATO, in a complementary way with the previous two papers included in this publication.

Then participants discussed which role can NATO play in relation with stability of the regional security complex. In particular, they focused on how the Alliance can foster convergence among its member states on the approach to instability and conflicts in the region, and how can it coordinate with other international actors, namely EU, UN, African Union, to contribute to address conflicts and counter terrorism. Last but not least, in this context participants reflected on how Allies should avoid to unintentionally fuel radicalisation, and support counter-radicalisation efforts.

### *State of the art in the region*

Participants largely agreed on four key elements of the regional state of the art relevant for NATO. First, the ensemble of Middle East, North Africa and the Sahel, is a region without regionalism. In other words, security interests of states in this regional security complex are connected in a way that they cannot be managed one apart from the other, yet there are no effective multilateral frameworks to address them in a cooperative way. National leaderships rather fight among each other for regional hegemony or at least influence, by politically playing the sectarian affiliation as a tool to mobilise people and constituencies.

Second, in line with such character of the regional security complex, the prevailing approach among states in the region is based on realpolitik. Accordingly, international relations are basically considered as a zero-sum game, whereby if one state gains power or security the others lose to a certain extent power and security. Unfortunately, also external actors including members of EU and NATO act in the region on the basis of a realpolitik/zero-sum game approach, as often compete rather than cooperate to advance their national interests and engage local

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actors. The competing roles of France and Italy with regards to Libya are a case in point, as the roles played by Turkey and US in Syria – and all these four nations are NATO members.

Such competition among Western countries obviously leads to a certain degree of incoherence between NATO approach and those of its members, as well as between EU approach and those of European countries. In light of such competition and inconsistencies, some participants have openly questioned whether there is, in real terms, a cohesive, effective and unified NATO approach towards its southern neighbourhood.

A third relevant element for NATO lies in the fact that national identities have been enhanced in several states in Africa and Middle East in recent years, i.e. in Egypt, despite their boundaries have been drawn quite artificially in the 20th century and some of these countries are torn by conflicts. Moreover, states in the Maghreb can be effective in their policies, if the political leadership decides so, more than an external actor can expect. At the same time, the region does see a growing civil society, a dynamic younger generation, significant non-state actors – all of them playing a relevant role different from the state's one. They are controlled and coerced by state authorities to a certain extent and in various ways, depending on the specific situation in each country, yet they remain important actors on their own. Generally speaking, they have a rather negative perception of NATO.

Finally and interestingly, participants considered that in the recent past the Maghreb has become more closely connected to the Sahel in security, economic and migration terms. At the same time, Europe is increasingly connected to both Maghreb and Sahel. In other words, the north-south – or south-north – linkage has become stronger. At the same time, it seems that broadly speaking there is a growing reluctance towards influence from Middle East actors in Africa.

### *Implications for a possible NATO role*

Against this background, participants discussed the implications for a possible NATO role towards the North Africa, Middle East and Sahel. Bearing in mind the Alliance has to serve the security interests of its sovereign member states and it is part of the international community, it is worth to reflect upon whether and how NATO can bring an added value to the stabilisation of that regional security complex. Since 2016, at both Warsaw and Brussels summits, the allied heads of state and government stated the general goal of “projecting stability” in NATO's neighbourhood. Accordingly, the Alliance has adopted at ministerial level the “framework for the south” and the “package for the south”, while establishing the hub for the “strategic direction south” in Naples which has become fully operational in 2018.

In this context, out of the working group reflection, six points are particularly relevant for NATO and its member states in order to develop a better approach to instability and terrorism in North Africa, Sahel and Middle East.

First, NATO has a long-lasting relation with the African Union, which is growing from the operational level – i.e. logistic support or airlift – to the strategic level. For instance, cooperation by the respective centres of excellence of NATO and AU now covers also counter-terrorism. Some participants wondered what impact can be achieved by working with a regional organisation in a region where states, as mentioned before, are not committed to regional cooperation. Others pointed out that working with African Union is a pragmatic way to encourage states in the region to cooperate more among themselves – and it is less controversial for NATO than working with groupings such as the G5 Sahel. In any case, the Alliance and its members have to be realistic about the limited effects achievable by cooperating with the African Union.

In line with this approach aimed to realistically build up cooperation, NATO's long-standing initiative such as Mediterranean Dialogue and Istanbul Cooperation Initiatives present significant room for improvement. They include already structured dialogues with MENA countries, both bilaterally and multilaterally, and the Alliance should improve and tailor the partnerships in these frameworks before looking further south to the Sahel.

Third, when it comes to strategic culture, the Alliance should focus on delivering the message of the primacy of politics over the military, drawing on its history and modus operandi. That means civilian control of the armed forces, institutional checks and balances, and accountability. This approach is particularly important in African and Middle East states where the military is a powerful actor vis a vis fragile civilian institutions. Such a message at strategic level should be accompanied by military education and training of partners at operational level, for example in terms of proportionality, so that the use of force becomes more a stabilising element.

In light of the role of civil society and its negative perception of the Alliance, a first necessary step from NATO side is to better profile and understand local actors before concretely trying to engage them. Such an improvement in terms of cultural awareness could be achieved for example by analysing open source information from social media. A systematic monitoring and profiling, with adequate technical tools and proper analysis from young experts over time helps to understand the sentiment at state and local level regarding a number of security and political issues. Surprisingly, for instance, fan pages of Libyan militias have plenty of information about Libyans' attitudes towards their countries. Of course, this kind of open source intelligence requires a social science analysis to achieve a more solid understanding, and best practices can be drawn in this regard from the peace-building field. The NATO hub for the south should and could play a pivotal role in this regard, although complementary analysis can also be contracted to private companies or NGOs in a cost-effective way.

Fifth, participants underlined the importance of the EU role in North Africa, Middle East and Sahel. Noticeably, NATO-EU cooperation has moved forward since 2016

Warsaw summit, and several of the identified areas of joint cooperation regards counter terrorism and partnership in that region. Such combination implies that the Alliance should constantly look to how to act in coordination and synergy with the EU, often in a supporting role given the nature of the regional security complex and the challenges emanating from that region. If the Hub for the south will really help to coordinate efforts from NATO bodies towards the southern neighbourhood, at least in those circumstances where the zero sum-game approach of its members is weaker, this would greatly enhance NATO-EU cooperation in the region.

Finally, the sixth implication for NATO touches upon its very basics. The Alliance is the only political-military organisation which sees North American, European and Turkish leaders, military and diplomats sitting together. If NATO does not perform its article 4 mandate to be a forum for allies to have a strategic dialogue on security challenges stemming also from Africa and the Middle East, which other organisation can play such a role? Not the EU, which does not see US or Turkey participation, and possibly neither the UK one in the future. Not the UN, because of its broad, global membership. The fundamental political question is whether, in the current decline of the international liberal order, the Western countries would give up the idea to have a multilateral strategic dialogue on important crises such as those in Libya or Syria. Different opinions emerged in the working group. Some participants affirmed that NATO has a potentiality as politico-military alliance to provide strategic thinking about complex security and stability issues, in partnership with third countries, EU, UN, African Union. Others suggested NATO to focus on technical contribution and niche capabilities, which do not touch upon political sensitivities of member states and leave aside strategic dialogue.

However, even such a working-level, niche contribution cannot be fully effective if local actors continue to compete with each other according to a zero-sum game logic. And the West cannot successfully encourage them to cooperate for the sake of regional stability, if NATO members themselves does not cooperate to stabilise the region. In this context the Alliance could act as facilitator to mitigate this zero-sum game mentality, to find possible synthesis, to foster convergence among the main actors over a mid-term horizon. If Allies do not realise they have to search common ground in approaching this region, they will not just avoid a win-win scenario where national interests are promoted in the framework of regional stability and security. They will move towards an increasingly unstable and conflict-prone scenario whereby all Western countries will lose security, stability and influence.

## List of Acronyms

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data
ACT	Allied Command Transformation
ANQAR	Afghanistan Nationwide Quarterly Research
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
C-IED	Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices
COW	Correlates of War
CT	Counter-Terrorism
CTS	Counter-Terrorism Strategy
DCB	Defence and Related Security Capacity Building
DIB	Defence Institution Building
DIE	Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik
ECAV	Electoral Contention and Violence Data
EU	European Union
EUCAP	European Union Capacity Building Mission
EUTF	European Union Emergency Trust Fund
GAM	Global Approach to Migration
GAMM	Global Approach to Migration and Mobility
GNA	Government of National Accord
GTD	Global Terrorism Dataset
HR	Human Rights
IAI	Istituto Affari Internazionali
IBK	Ibrahim Boubakar Keitaù
IFRI	Institut Français des Relations Internationales
IS	Islamic State
JNIM	Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen
MENA	Middle East and North Africa region
MPF	Migration Partnership Framework
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NATO/ISAF	NATO/International Security Assistance Force
NAVCO	Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes
NELDA	National Elections in Autocracy and Democracy
NTM-I	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Training Mission Iraq
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OSV	One Sided Violence
PTS	Political Terror Scale
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
RSC	Regional Security Complex

SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data
UCDP-GED	Uppsala Conflict Data Program Georeferenced Event Data
UN	United Nations
UNU-WIDER	United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
WG1	Working Group 1
WG2	Working Group 2

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