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What is the Threshold for Humanitarian Intervention?

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Could the level of conflict across the World get any worse? Hamas and Israel in Gaza and the on again off again cease fires; the death toll from three years of civil war in Syria has risen to more than 191,000 people according to the United Nations; the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) “has an apoc-alyptic end-of-days strategic vision that will eventually have to be defeated,” says U.S. Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Martin Dempsey and Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott described ISIS “as close to pure evil as we are likely to see”; and Putin’s seizure of Crimea and Russia’s incursion into Eastern Ukraine to protect the rights of those formerly called Russians now elevated by him to the racial status - the Russian race - has given NATO a renewed raison-d’etre so much so that NATO is creating a 4,000-strong “spearhead” high-readiness force that can be deployed rapidly in eastern Europe and the Baltic states to help protect member nations against potential Russian aggression. With all of this as a backdrop, here at home the Canadian military is facing $2.7 billion in cuts next year.

Kaleigh Heard studies the current Syrian conflict’s potential impacts on the regional stability of the Middle East and discusses the necessity to reframe the genocide standard in terms of mass homicide campaigns in order to ensure greater success in preventing large-scale loss of life and also the importance of the inclusion of reasonable prospects (determined by the existence of an identifiable target population), for the successful implementation of humanitarian intervention in contemporary cases of mass atrocities.

Elikem Kofi Tsamenyi explores the link between civil wars and natural resources and the contention that countries that are heavily dependent on natural resources, especially those that possess easily accessible (lootable) resources stand a greater chance of experiencing civil wars. It is suggested that the abundance of natural resources, especially in developing States with very low incomes, exacerbate the risks of a civil war. Moreover, in situations where conflict breaks out, the presence of these resources tends to make it very difficult for the conflict to be resolved, hence prolonging it.

Jacob Stoil examines the vexing nature of the elusive Gaza ceasefire and why it is so difficult to attain.

Dear Friends, I close this Editor’s Desk honouring my dear friend and colleague of over 42 years, Lieutenant-Colonel Jeffrey Dorfman of the Governor General’s Horse Guards. When we were very young those many years ago he was a militia Sergeant and I a regular force Lieutenant. Over the years I watched him progress through the ranks to RSM and eventually being the Commanding Officer and most fittingly and deservedly the Regiment’s Honorary Lieutenant-Colonel. All of this while balancing a rich family life and his business…such is the nature of those who serve in our reserve force. He loved his Family, his Regiment, his Corps—having served as President of the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps Association (Cavalry) and two terms as our President. He was one of the great characters of his generation, a patriotic Canadian whose service reflects his Regiment’s Motto—*Nulli Secondus*—Second to None. I shall surely miss him.

Sincerely,

Col Chris Corrigan (ret’d) CD, MA
Executive Director,
Editor of *Sitrep* and Chair of Security Studies

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**From the Editor’s Desk**

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Discussions surrounding the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention have long been at the top of the international human rights agenda, particularly in the wake of the failure in Rwanda in 1994 and the NATO intervention in Yugoslavia in 1999. Yet, over a decade later, the topic has become ever more confused, with little progress made on concretely determining the legitimacy of military action to protect civilians in foreign territory. For international lawyers the question has changed drastically since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Now the concern is not whether states may use force to protect human rights, but whether the use of force in anticipatory self-defense and instances of atrocity prevention is permissible under international law in an era of new security threats.

The international discussion concerning the preemptive and preventive use of force has necessitated the development of a normative framework to legitimize humanitarian intervention. However, due to the wide range of political views within the United Nations, there still has yet to be any decisive action regarding what such parameters may consist of. “While the genocide in Rwanda will define for our generation the consequences of inaction in the face of mass murder, the conflict in Kosovo raised important questions about the consequences of action in the absence of complete unity in the international community.” This failure to protect has cast in stark relief the dilemma of what has been called “humanitarian intervention”: on one side, the question of the legitimacy of an action taken by a regional organization or independent state without a United Nations mandate; on the other, the universally recognized imperative of effectively halting gross and systematic violations of human rights with grave humanitarian consequences. Therefore, in order for a normative intervention framework to be developed it is integral that such a document contain a fusion of previously developed norms and theoretical frameworks. For such a framework to find success it must be based in the normative works of both Robert A. Pape’s work on a pragmatic standard for intervention and the idealism of the ICISS’ 2001 Responsibility to Protect doctrine. In addition it must also take into considerations both the realist intentions of state actors, particularly those of national self-interest and foreign policy aims, and work towards a balance with the humanitarian interests of the democratic public.

In this paper I suggest that the international community move away from the time-honored tradition of the genocide standard of humanitarian intervention and towards standards which include criteria for mass homicide campaigns and reasonable prospects for military and humanitarian success. This paper will discuss the necessity of reframing the genocide standard in terms of mass homicide campaigns in order to ensure greater success in preventing large-scale loss of life and also the importance of the inclusion of reasonable prospects (determined by the existence of an identifiable target population), for the successful implementation of humanitarian intervention in contemporary cases of mass atrocities. Furthermore, it will be argued that an additional criterion of “demonstrable and imminent effect on regional instability” should be included in the criteria for intervention. This argument will be conceptualized through a study of the current Syrian conflict’s potential impacts on the regional stability of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

This paper will proceed in four sections. The first will discuss the limitations of our current conceptualization of actions that warrant intervention, most notable the genocide standard. While there are many advocates touting different standards for intervention, the enduring standard, since the end of World War II has been the standard of genocide. While there are various limitations such a high standard for intervention, the most notable and fundamental roadblock

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to effective action in instances of mass atrocities is the definition, itself. The definitional qualities of Article II of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (UNCG) will be discussed at length with regards to the limitations it places on the understanding and actionability of humanitarian intervention. The second section will demonstrate the essential nature of the criteria of mass homicide campaigns and reasonable prospects. While Pape and the Responsibility to Protect report have previously defined these criteria, the fusion of such standards is essential for success in contemporary instances of mass violence.

Third, the case of Syria will be analyzed through the prism of the newly identified criteria of “demonstrable and imminent effect on regional stability” with a discussion surrounding the justification of a humanitarian intervention in light of the recent developments between Syria and its neighbours, chemical weapons, and conflict spillover, with an eye to the potential for an intervention under the auspices of a threat to international peace and security. Finally, Canadian national interests in pursuing humanitarian intervention in Syria will be explored, with particular attention paid to the maintenance of international peace and security, cross-border terrorism and spillover violence, and its close relationship with Israel in the face of significant traditional security threats.

The Failures of the Genocide Standard

Humanitarian intervention is defined as the “use of military force by one or more states within the jurisdiction of another, without its permission, to protect innocent people from violence by the target state's government.” Since World War II, the most well-known standard for humanitarian intervention has been genocide- defined by the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide as acts “committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.” In the ensuing years much of the international community has advocated for the prevention of such atrocious violations of the right to existence and considered such genocidal acts to be the standard for intervention. However, due to the inherent language juxtaposition within the UNCG's Article II definition of genocide, the international community's record at preventing and intervening in genocide has been dismal. Although politics surely matter a significant reason why the international community has failed to stop genocide is, in fact, the norm itself. “By setting the bar for intervention so high the norm against genocide puts the international community in a catch-22: by the time it is clear genocide is occurring, it is often too late to stop the killing.” However, while the bar of genocide is set too high to have any recognizable success rate, the international community's response, the ICISS' 2001 Responsibility to Protect report, creates justification for intervention in nearly every instance of the remote possibility of political instability.

The genocide standard has long been a contentious issue, both for genocide and intervention scholars, alike. Like many normative standards, the nature of the issue pertains to the language employed within the norm itself, in the case of genocide- Article II of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. Scholars such as Katherine Goldsmith, Samuel Totten and Michael Barnett have noted an inherent juxtaposition of the language utilized within Article II and discussed at length the limits such confusion imposes on states’ will to intervene. While the aspects of Article II pertaining to genocidal ‘intent’ and the definition of groups are quite narrow, the language pertaining to the definition of destruction and its quantification is invariably vague. This juxtaposition has opened the understanding of genocide to many individualistic interpretations and has led to an extremely active debate surrounding the meaning of genocide and its definitional merit. As a standard for military intervention in humanitarian atrocities this definition is the most substantial roadblock to decisive and effective action.

The debate surrounding genocidal ‘intent’ is the most contentious issue of the Genocide Convention. In international legal interpretations of the Genocide Convention, “intent” is said to describe the “specific intent” or dolus specialis of a perpetrator; effectively conceptualized as the specific intent to commit genocide, or destroy a group, in whole or in part, as such. This understanding of intent is inherently difficult, if not impossible to prove as intent, in and of itself, is a mental process and therefore, short of an admission of guilt there can-
not be much done to determine if such a level of intent exists.

Secondly, the idea that a state is engaged in group-murder is routinely met with disbelief. Historically, the extermination of a group is often beyond comprehension before, during and after the fact as we have seen in the delayed responses to the Holocaust, Rwanda and Darfur. Unfortunately, time is continually wasted based again on the parameters of the genocide standard, which protects only national, ethnical, racial and religious groups from destruction. This pitfall has become increasingly apparent in the context of the Arab Spring as political dissidents experience instances of mass-violence and homicide campaigns however, intervention under the genocide standard does not include political groups or dissidents as a protected class. While it is not questioned that the protection of groups is an important task the international community is faced with, the issue of the Genocide Convention in this respect is that the international community has continually misconceptualized this standard. While the international community has committed overwhelming resources to the protection of the human rights of individuals, both foreign and domestic, there is a fundamental disconnect in ensuring those same rights of existence are ensured for members of groups, each of whom harbors their own right to life. Robert A. Pape's rationale for the inclusion of a standard of mass homicide campaigns was conceptualized with the inherent individualism of the international human rights regime in mind. While such campaigns may not constitute group destruction as defined in the Genocide Convention, such a standard will ensure prompt and effective action, thereby quelling the potential for group murder, or genocide, as outlined by the Genocide Convention.

The final flaw of Article II of the UNCG is the vagueness of what constitutes destruction, and how such destruction can be quantified or if it should be. While outright quantification of the number of deaths which constitutes genocide is both barbaric and inapplicable given the definitional aspects of Article II pertaining to intent, the language concerning destruction leaves the standard open to national and international interpretation, effectively allowing intervening states an ‘out’ when discussions of interventions are raised in areas that do not serve their national or geopolitical interests. As Pape argues:

The skepticism inherent in the genocide standard can lead to a catch-22: by the time potential intervening actors reach a consensus that a group is being deliberately destroyed, much of the damage has already been done, genocide has already been committed and relatively few lives can be saved.

The adoption of standards including that of mass homicide campaigns would “limit the instances in which the international community would need to wait for irrefutable evidence of genocide” thereby increasing the likelihood of effective, robust and ultimately preventative action in the face of mass atrocities.

**Pragmatic Humanitarianism: A Fusion of the Duty to Act and the Responsibility to Protect Thresholds, Just Cause and the Trend towards Mass Homicide**

While there have been many criteria identified to justify intervention by prominent genocide and intervention scholars, of paramount importance are the standards of mass homicide campaigns and reasonable prospects. With the criterion of mass homicide campaigns building on the R2P “Just Cause” criterion and aspects of just war theory, its inclusion is more politically and militarily relevant in the 21st century. While the R2P threshold criteria and just cause criteria do not provide standards for definition of what may constitute “large-scale” loss of life, these criteria are further weakened by other aspects of the standards that sanction protection under circumstances of anarchy and tyranny, both far beyond the accepted scope of humanitarian intervention; the safeguarding of people in imminent danger. This broad scope provides a justification and air of legitimacy for intervention in nearly every instance of suffering around the world and therefore, has been a prime deterrent in the international community authorizing interventions under the auspices of the Responsibility to Protect.

As such, Pape has suggested the standard of mass homicide campaigns, a criterion which will effectually eliminate the necessity of targeted ‘groups’ as understood by the UNCG as a necessary precondition for intervention. Additionally, such a standard will also create a framework which is still somewhat ambiguous and applicable across a variety of experiences, not conceptualized through a memorialization of the experience of the Holocaust, and easily recognizable in practice around the world. The importance of the condition of mass homicide campaigns is, particularly in instances of government crackdowns on civil uprisings the targeted groups are rarely, if ever, considered to be national, ethnical, racial or religious groups. While the targeted subjects of such an attack may have elements of all four, they are often considered a political group, a group conspicuously left out of the Genocide Convention. As Molier argues that, “As a juridical principle, the responsibility to protect is not of much value. Its content is far too broad to have any distinguishing meaning. One can bring almost every measure under this principle and it remains completely unclear under which circumstances the prevention principle would come into play.” Unfortunately, with the UNCG affording protection to so few, a new standard is a fundamental necessity in our contemporary international system.

Such is the case in Syria currently, as civil uprisings continue to devolve towards civil war. Assad loyalists are cracking down on peaceful demonstrators and pro-democracy rebel groups. However, because the Assad government has not demonstrated or acknowledged the specific intent to destroy dissidents, and that political groups are not included in the genocide standard there has been no demonstrable movement.
on quelling the conflict either through military action or targeted foreign aid and economic sanctions. The case of Syria is not unique; much of the debate concerning the intervention, or lack thereof, in the Rwandan genocide stems from questions such as, “How many is enough?” to constitute ‘genocide’ or whether or not the Tutsis were considered an ethnic group or if the violence was actually a two-sided civil war which would disqualify intervention. The historical context of humanitarian intervention reveals a gap between what is lawful and what is morally justified, between strict legality and legitimacy. With the international legal system's understanding of the justification for, and legitimacy of intervention firmly rooted in the Genocide Convention there was, and is, little hope for the protection of humanity in the future. With this capacity gap particularly evident in cases of mass violence internationally it is important that the criteria justifying intervention to prevent such violence not be limited to specific circumstances or experiences but to demonstrable and imminent and calculated large-scale loss of life characterized by instances of mass homicide campaigns.

Reasonable Prospects: A Safeguard for the Interests of Intervening States

With the intervening parties to humanitarian intervention incurring most, if not all, of the risk both economically and militarily there must be safeguards in place for both the interveners as well as those being intervened upon. From an intervening state's perspective, the primary concern is the number of casualties they will incur as a result of an intervention. The most compelling argument made on behalf of national militaries opposed to intervention missions is that of soldiers who are obligated only to protect the interests of the state they are serving, not the population of a far off land. As Kantian ethics argue, a government has no right to sacrifice a healthy person for the greater good. Therefore, the question remains, why an individual serving in the military should be required to sacrifice their life for a foreigner when their oath only requires that sacrifice with respect to national interests. The condition of reasonable prospects safeguards intervening countries against instances of intervention where they could incur large-scale loss of life of their own citizens. Through the sub-criteria of an identifiable target population, favourable terrain and the ease of separating the target population from the perpetrators of violence, minimal effects on the intervening militaries are incurred.

The case of Libya was the ideal test case for the condition of reasonable prospects, as the target population was concentrated wholly in the city of Benghazi and the largely desert terrain making air strikes possible. However, these criteria are more difficult to meet in the case of Syria. While many government and military leaders have called for Libya to be used as a framework for future interventions in mass atrocities it is, by definition, a unique case where all the stars happened to align. Unfortunately, for Syria the condition of reasonable prospects is difficult to meet with the target population largely assimilated in urban settings, making it difficult to separate the perpetrators from the victims for the implementation of military strategies. Additionally, the terrain in Syria, although largely desert, is marred with significant mountain passes and the Syrian military’s sizeable air presence has ruled out the possibility of implementing a no-fly zone over the country. While Syria does meet the criteria for mass homicide campaigns it becomes difficult to justify an intervention when loss of life for the intervening forces is a large concern and the success of the mission overall is doubtful.

UN Charter Chapter VII: Does Regional Instability Matter for Intervention?

While the uncertainty of the legality and legitimacy of humanitarian intervention can be found throughout history, recent examples of the failure of the Responsibility to Protect framework can be found in the varied responses to the pro-democracy uprisings that have characterized the Arab Spring revolutions since early 2011. Of recent concern is the developing civil and regional conflict in Syria and the surrounding states. Syria sits in the heart of the Middle East, “straddling its ethnic and sectarian fault lines, and all of the region’s important powers have a direct interest in what happens in Syria, as do non-state actors like Hezbollah, Hamas, and others.” As human rights violations, state sponsored mass murders and forced disappearances escalate, as does the regional conflict between Syria and Israel, culminating in military strikes on both sides of the Gaza Strip in late 2012 and fears of cross border chemical attacks following the August 2013 chemical attack on Syrian nationals. The prospect of a full-fledged sectarian civil war is a stark reminder that a terrible situation could become still much worse with potentially devastating consequences for neighbors, Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, and adverse implications for the broader Middle East. With spillover violence already rampant in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey due to the influx of Syrian refugees in border regions the potential for a regional breakdown is ever increasing. Since the advent of the Syrian uprising much of the Western world has side-stepped direct involvement in Syria stating that it does not fit the criteria required for an intervention. However, given the recent devolution of Syrian-Israeli relations and the threat of transnational conflict the question is now whether or not regional instability should be a factor within the intervention framework. It is argued that, in conjunction with both pragmatic and normative criteria it is essential to consider the stability of the surrounding region when considering intervention to avoid a larger threat to UN Charter Chapter VII "international peace and security.”

Policymakers have often noted that a requirement of intervention is that it is considered a UN Charter Chapter VII “threat to international peace and security,” lest it be considered a breach of sovereignty. Yet, as we are confronted by horrific images of the depths to which Assad will go to
preserve his power, including targeting civilians, journalists, doctors, aid workers and women and children the Western world is still convinced that such atrocities, when occurring within state borders, do not constitute such a violation of international law. Therefore, because the Syrian conflict has, until recently, been considered a civil conflict within Syrian borders, such an intervention would be considered a breach of Syrian sovereign authority. However, Chesterman argues that, after the Gulf War in 1991, a wide range of situations, including ‘non-military sources of instability in the economic, social, humanitarian, and ecological fields’ were defined as threats to international peace and security as required under Article 39 of the UN Charter. Despite the language against UN intervention in domestic affairs contained in Article 2 (7), it is noted that civil wars, humanitarian crises, and even disruption to democracy were also classified in this way. The Security Council no longer needed to demonstrate clear cross-border effects.

Unfortunately, as the conflict in Syria devolves, serious implications for the Middle East are, in fact, emerging. With Syria situated quite centrally within the Arab world there have already been negative effects felt for countries such as Lebanon, Turkey, Iran, Iraq and, most recently, Israel. Today, the Assad dictatorship’s massive repression in cities and towns in Syria that have risen in revolt has also sparked agitation for intervention in the West. The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon states,

he is “gravely concerned” about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria and the “continued militarization” of the 28-month conflict. Ban cited “horrendous violations” of human rights amid increasing violence and said there was a risk that Syria could turn into a “regional battleground.” Ban also called for more international humanitarian aid for Syria and said more assistance is needed to deal with an ever-increasing number of Syrian refugees in neighboring countries. There are more than 400,000 registered Syrian refugees in the neighboring countries, mostly in Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon.

Within the international community Syria has increasingly been considered an Iranian satellite under Tehran’s growing regional influence, therefore Syria remains a threat to Israel. In this context the sharp exacerbation of the Palestinian-Israeli and Syrian-Israeli conflict is developing against a completely different background than prior tensions. The balance that existed in the Middle East in the security sphere is being subjected to rapid erosion due to the consequences of the Arab Spring. Israel has emerged in the most disadvantageous position. With cross-border strikes between Syria and Israel becoming increasingly more commonplace in the past months, and the use of chemical weapons within Syria there is a large concern that the conflict will devolve into inter-state war in an already unstable region.

National Interests: The Elephant in the Room?

The current situation in Syria will continue to pose significant and extensive threats to Canadian national security, particularly with regards to the Canadian-Israeli relationship. The current unrest and eventual outcome of the Syrian conflict will have “deep implications for the internal politics of neighboring countries, ethnic conflicts in the Middle East, and broader strategic issues.” Additionally, with the heart of the Middle East serving as the hub of cross-border terrorism, such groups are increasingly likely to attempt to take advantage of the political instability in Syria as inter-sectarian violence begins to spill over Syria’s borders as terrorist organizations utilize the existing unrest to mask their own violent agendas. In the midst of this spillover violence there are significant concerns in the wake of a chemical weapons attack against the Syrian people that “such stockpiles of chemical and conventional weapons already directly threaten peace and stability throughout the region.” While the international community is currently working towards the disposal of Syrian chemical weapons this does not negate the dangers that such weapons systems, cross border conflicts and sectarian strife pose to international peace and security. Such issues pose direct threats to Canadian national interests in maintaining a relative stability within the international community and maintaining Israeli security within the region.

It is commonly accepted that, due to popular sentiment in Syria against the existence of the state of Israel, “Assad may see tensions with Israel as a way to rally popular support” in the face of domestic political crisis. With much of the Western world strongly aligned with Israel since its conception post-WWII it is possible that this regional instability will, in fact, force an intervention in Syria in order to stabilize the region and support national foreign policy objectives that concern the protection of Israeli interests. Given that Syria remains a close ally of Iran, both in facilitating much of Iran’s cross-border terrorist networks as well as their international campaign for nuclear armament, the Western world’s concern is great that a conflict between Syria and Israel will degenerate into a regional, if not global, conflict. Accordingly, “regime change in Syria is prima facie in the Western world’s interest as well as the interests of Israel and other friendly Arabic countries in the region, who see nothing but danger for themselves if Iran’s hegemonic ambitions unfold successfully” with the help of Syria and the Assad regime. The Washington Post reported, “The fall of President Assad has the potential to unleash a cataclysm of chaos, sectarian strife, and extremism that would spread far beyond its borders.” However, in the
context of regional strife it is, in fact, the continuance of the Assad regime that poses the greatest threat to the people of Syria and international peace and security.

While national interest in the case of humanitarian intervention is often conceptualized as the ‘elephant in the room’, particularly where Russia and China are concerned, in the case of the “demonstrable and imminent threat of regional instability” national interest may, in fact, have a positive influence on the potential for intervention in previously ‘unimportant’ national and international conflicts. With the threat to Israel imminent, both through the air strikes by Syria in the Golan Heights district, the chemical weapons attack on the Syrian population and Iran’s military power and backing of the Assad regime, there is great concern for Western (particularly American and Canadian) foreign policy interests vested in Israeli relations. The UN Charter permits the use of force under two circumstances: in self-defense (individual or collective) in the event of armed attack against a member state, and as authorized by the Security Council in response to a threat to the peace, a breach of the peace, or an act of aggression. Oddly, the devolving Syrian conflict fits both these criteria. With Israel claiming self-defense in response to Syria’s military strikes on the Golan Heights district to justify their retaliatory actions the criteria of self-defense is satisfied. The second criteria, while not yet sanctioned by the Security Council, identifies a threat to peace, a breach of peace or an act of aggression to be justifications for intervention. With all three of these criteria evident in the military strikes against Israel, the chemical weapons attack on Syrian civilians, and the political atmosphere and relationships between Syria and Iran it is expected that Western countries previously opposed to military interference in the Syrian conflict will now be changing their tune in Security Council deliberations. While national interest, for the most part, has had negative effects on the authorization of humanitarian intervention, regional instabilities; overt threats to foreign policy interests and Western values have the power to motivate such action on behalf of potential intervening countries.

While it is evident that the Syrian conflict will long be a contentious issue stuck between humanitarian ideals and national foreign policy interests, the potential for wider regional conflict has created a threat to international peace and security characterized by widespread security concerns for the Western world. It is not expected that such increased interest will automatically generate an intervention in the Syrian conflict however, it is possible that such instability may place the interests of China and Russia in a contentious place in the international community as the potential for a regional conflict builds. With Russia and China holding veto power in the United Nations Security Council this conflict of interest may result in their abstention from a veto and spur a regional task force, which could assist in the calming of tensions within Syria and the wider MENA region. While the Syrian conflict does not exhibit the usual hallmarks of a solid case for humanitarian intervention the importance of recognizing the suffering of the Syrian people remains. In March of 2013 the United Human Rights Council overwhelmingly passed a strong resolution essentially describing the situation in Syria as a manmade humanitarian disaster, and the international community is aware that it is the Assad regime that has created such horrific conditions for its own people. With national interests now focused in the region the widespread atrocities of the Assad regime are being noted and humanitarian intervention is becoming increasingly likely.

Historically, the quagmire of humanitarian intervention has been one dictated by liberal humanitarian and realist and neo-realist self-interest. What has been proposed here is a fusion or integration of these two schools of thought to better address the humanitarian ideals of the contemporary international community in conjunction with the realist tendencies of intervening states and the Security Council. What is of particular importance is the abandonment of the genocide standard. While genocide is certainly a horrific episode of violence the aim of the Genocide Convention was not to be the sole humanitarian document to justify legitimate humanitarian action. Although a preventative focus is somewhat difficult to define with such a wide scope of humanitarian atrocities to combat, it is recommended that humanitarian intervention policy be reviewed to include additional criteria such as identified precursors to genocide. Additionally, as the international community has agreed to protect international peace and security in Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter the additional criteria of a regional stability assessment is not only relevant but also essential in such a globalized state system. Due to the interconnectedness of the global community states and conflicts that were previously not considered threats to Western interests have drastic security implications today. This shift will require a review of international security programs as well as threat assessment protocols to include countries such as Syria as risk factors. In this way humanitarian investment, intervention and development can become a mutually beneficial endeavor, with development and modernization on the one hand and increased security on the other. Although both realism and liberalism have inherent pitfalls, a combination of both streams of thought with respect to threshold criteria such as mass homicide campaigns, the realist condition of reasonable prospects and the fusion of humanitarian ideals and realist foreign policy interests in the condition of imminent regional instability will help us avoid the situations of inaction in humanitarian atrocities which have previously defined our generation.

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute or its members.
Civil Wars and Lootable Natural Resources: where is the connection?

by Elikem Kofi Tsamenyi

A World Bank study contends that countries that are heavily dependent on natural resources, especially those that possess easily accessible (lootable) resources stand a greater chance of experiencing civil wars. Lootable resources do not require the use of any special equipment or skill in their exploration and are easily moved and liquidated. Of course, this is not to suggest that natural resources in general and lootable resources in particular, are the sole causes of conflict, or that once a country is dependent on income from these resources there is bound to be civil war. Evidence from the literature, however, suggests that the abundance of natural resources, especially in developing States with very low incomes, exacerbate the risks of a civil war. Moreover, in situations where conflict breaks out, the presence of these resources tends to make it very difficult for the conflict to be resolved, hence prolonging it.

To better understand the relationship between natural resources and civil wars, it is important to closely examine the relationship between natural resource and civil wars. This analysis identifies the connection between civil wars and natural resources with regard to their role in explaining civil wars. Discussions are centred on three main broad theories: environmental scarcity; loot-seeking behaviour, and state action/inaction as cause of conflicts in resource rich/dependent states.

Explaining Civil Wars

Civil war may be differentiated from other types of internal and external violence. Fearon defines civil wars as “a violent conflict within a country, fought by organized groups that aim to take power at the centre or in a region or to change government policies.” Civil wars always have the state involved as one of the belligerents, fighting off a challenge to its control by a group or groups, with members of the groups predominantly recruited from within the population. To be considered a war, the conflict must go beyond mere skirmishes or isolated acts of violence. Thus, spur-of-the-moment, unorganized violence such as riots or conflicts between groups in society that may or may not involve the state cannot be considered a civil war. By extension, isolated acts of terrorism can also not be considered as civil wars, even though terrorists’ acts can be an element of civil wars. This is mainly because such riots, disturbances and terrorist activities are short in duration and the use of arms is limited.

Civil wars entail groups departing from legally accepted, peaceful modes of dispute resolution to engage in violence. Several theories explain the phenomenon of civil wars. Mason argues that broad social environments and unpredictable event sequences condition the actual outbreak of war. War may occur or not, based upon turning points. Hence, the mere presence in a state of factors that favour civil war does not mean that there will be an outbreak of war. As such, theories of civil war are probabilistic in their utility and should not be considered absolute. He identifies four different explanations for the occurrence of civil wars: the ‘deprived actor theory’ (DA), the rational actor theory’ (RA), ‘resource mobilization or social movement’ and the ‘state-centric theory’.

The Deprived Actor Theory

The deprived actor theory applies when the deprivation suffered by citizens in terms of economic, social and political wellbeing is high such that the likelihood of an eruption of a civil war becomes higher. Empirical evidence, however, shows there is no direct correlation between inequality and civil war. The lack of correlation between inequality and civil war is mainly because the level of inequality in any country varies marginally over time and while the existence of inequality may make civil war more likely, other dynamics are usually responsible in explaining its outbreak.

A variant of the deprived actor theory is the relative deprivation theory. The chance of civil conflict in a country is higher where a long period of social, political and economic development is followed by a sharp decline in progress. This sharp decline leads to intense frustrations among the population used to a higher level of need maximization and a reduction in level of lifestyle becomes unacceptable. As long as the gap between the perceived ability to meet needs and the actual ability to meet them is small, people are unlikely to resort to arms. However, where the difference is excessive, the likelihood of civil war is higher.

The Rational Actor Model

The rational actor model considers the motivations for individual participation in rebellion. Collier and Hoeffler suggest that as long as perceived grievances are sufficiently widespread to be common across societies and time, rebel organizations can capitalize on them to incite the populace and end up making profits out of the rebellion. It is extremely difficult, however, to know whether individuals and groups
are genuinely motivated to fight in a civil war by grievances they hold against the government or ruling elites. People engage in civil wars in spite of the dangers involved as a result of rational calculations about the benefits they stand to gain. The rational actor theory therefore looks at motivations in terms of individual self-interest in participating in rebellion. Several arguments can be made to support why partaking in a rebellion would be the least desired option for individuals.

First, if the benefits (a successful overthrow of corrupt/unfair and repressive government/ regime) of a successful rebellion cannot be denied those who did not partake in the fighting, people may be unlikely to join in a rebellion when it starts. Similarly, it is assumed by the rational actor argument that the consumption of benefits of rebellion by one does not diminish the ability of others to consume these benefits. Individuals might keep away from the revolt and enjoy whatever benefits may accrue from it, which may include a new, fair and just political order, or the removal of whatever injustices that sparked the rebellion in the first place. The motivations not to partake are also very strong since it is not certain if the rebellion will be successful (simply because rebellions often fail, which can be a function of perceptions of previous failures or perceptions of state power). There is also the possibility that the rebels’ new regime will be as repressive as the current government and nothing may change at all. Perceived injustices might remain or be worsened by the new rebel regime. Thus, rebel leaders' appeal and incitement of the populace through grievances relating to identity, justice, honour and others might not be enough to incite people to violence.

The rational actor model, argues that economic motivations are what usually condition war support and participation. Individuals will join a rebellion based on their calculations of the benefits, particularly economic. Participation is usually decided by mercenary considerations and not necessarily factors such as a belief in the rebels' goals. People will fight so long as they can benefit economically. Once the economic benefits stop coming or appear uncertain, they are likely to desert.

**Resource Mobilization Model**

Resource mobilization theory is derived from the rational actor model. Rather than a focus on individual self-interest, individual rationality is seen as embedded in the social structure, and derived from interactions within society. These social networks have within them their own in-built enticement for participation in collective actions. Community members are aware of and familiar with incentives [in society], who allocates them, and by what criteria. Even though individuals are rational in choosing whether or not to join a rebellion and by extension a civil conflict, their decision is usually dependent on their ties with the community as well. Individuals are aware of, and anticipate the community's reaction to a call for collective action. Rebel leaders, being part of the community, know these communal ties and exploit them to mobilize people for violent action. Rational actors are therefore induced to participate in public action even when there are no individual benefits, so long as they remain members of the community.

The literature on resource mobilization also recognizes the importance of political opportunity in the form of a reduction in state stability and cohesive powers. Rebellion is more likely to succeed in the face of declining and weak states that are susceptible to civil wars. This increases the likelihood of success and also increases the willingness of people to participate if they perceive a chance of success; a state-centric explanation for civil wars.

**State-centric theory**

State-centric theorists focus more on factors that relate to the state in engendering civil wars, unlike the other three theories discussed above. Their main hypothesis is that factors that bring about revolutions, social disturbances, and civil wars are not solely the result of developments in society, but rather a failure of state effectiveness. Simply, successful revolts are a result of actions of the state itself. Rebellions are successful only when there are crises within the state for the leaders of the rebellion to exploit.

**Natural Resources and Civil Wars**

The previous sections explored the plausible causes of civil wars. Except for the rational actor model, these explanations ignore the role of natural resources in civil wars. Apart from the factors discussed earlier, highly popular analyses of civil wars explores the connection between natural resources and civil wars, suggesting such resources contribute to the start, fuelling and sustaining of civil wars.

Natural resources have the potential to promote and consolidate a country’s economic development. As an important source of foreign exchange and an avenue for job creation for many countries, income from valuable natural resources when well managed can lead to sustained development, improved standards of living and increased economic equality. In many countries, revenues from natural resources form an important part of state budget. In most resource rich countries in Africa, for instance, income from natural resources form between sixty and ninety-nine per cent of government revenue. Angola (85%), Botswana (70%-80%), Nigeria (80%) and Libya (99%) are examples of countries heavily dependent on revenue from natural resource exports.

Natural resources dependency however, can be detrimental to peace. Shortsighted and inefficient management of these resources can plunge a country into civil conflict, thereby derailing its developmental process. Often these resources lead to deep-rooted corruption and patronage, with resources as the focus of violent disputes, and in some cases, providing funds for groups that seek to cause civil wars.

As a result of the above, there has been growing interest in the links between natural resources and civil wars for the
past two decades. Research undertaken by scholars suggests that developing countries that are heavily dependent on natural resource commodity face a higher risk of bad governance and civil wars. Incomes from lawful and unlawful exploitation of natural resources, especially lootable ones such as gold, diamonds, and timber have financed civil wars in several countries across the world. Rebels are able to extort the resources and fund their supporters. During the Liberian civil war for example, Charles Taylor was accused of exploiting the country’s natural resources to pay for guns and recruits. Even in cases where states with abundant natural resources initially succeed in preventing civil wars, rents from these resources can weaken state structure and capacity with the long-term effect of bringing about civil wars.

Different types of resources have varied effects on conflict. Some natural resources may be associated with conflict while others may not. Those types of resources associated with conflict are types that are likely to have negative impacts on a peace process since continued conflict may be more profitable to the belligerents than a situation of peace. Several classifications of natural resources exist. Judith Rees classifies natural resources in two ways. First, renewable natural resources such as plants, water bodies, animals, fisheries and forests, can and are usually replenished by human activity or by nature when used. Second, non-renewable natural resources such as mineral resources, oil, and croplands, cannot be easily replenished or replaced once they are used up. These resources are considered to be of a fixed supply.

Scholars such as Alao Abiodun make other classifications, separating natural resources into existence-dependent and comfort-dependent. The former are those needed for human existence and survival and may include resources such as water, cropland and fisheries. The second types are those that make humans’ life on earth more comfortable. These include resources as oil and minerals such as gold, silver and diamonds.

Another classification involves lootable and non-lootable natural resources. Lootable natural resources are those that are highly valued, can be easily mined, carried and converted into money. They can be harvested by simple methods and do not require investing in expensive equipment. Examples include alluvial diamonds, gold, timber, ivory and other gemstones. Non-lootable resources, on the other hand, are not easily mined, and require advanced technological capabilities to access them. These are also not easily converted to liquid cash due to restrictions around their trade. Examples here include non-alluvial diamonds, oil and natural gas. This classification is important mainly due to the financing potential of lootable natural resources. However deep grievances are rebellions are unlikely to start without financing opportunities; these types of resources offer an easy source of finance. Ross argues that the ‘lootability’ of a resource is central to determining the impact on conflict.

The importance of natural resources to politics and inter-group relations cannot be overemphasised. Throughout history, various groups have fought wars with natural resource as the main motivation or consideration. The literature indicates however, that the subject does not lend itself to easy comprehension. Research on the subject has yielded ambiguous evidence relating natural resource endowment to the susceptibility to conflict. The empirical evidence supporting the natural resource-conflict connection is mixed. It is difficult to establish causality between natural resources and violent conflicts or civil wars, even in wars where an obvious linkage appears.

In analysing the resource-civil war relationship, three main approaches are identified; grievances created by the increasing reduction or scarcity of natural resources mainly due to environmental and human factors; economic considerations of individuals who seek to exploit the benefits from natural resources for personal gain, and the weakness and inadequacies of the state resulting in poor management and administration of natural resources.

**Environmental Factors as a source of Conflict (Environmental depreciation/Scarcity)**

Some natural resources, such as freshwater, fisheries, and forests, are vital for life. There has been increased pressure on such resources in most countries due to increasing population size, leading to depletion of these resources. The main concern here is with the quantity and quality of availability of these vital natural resources and the demand for them. Many poor people in developing countries are hardest hit in this regard, as a result of significant dependence on these resources. The depletion of these resources reduces individuals’ quality of life, as the ratio of demand for the resources is greater than the environment's ability to supply them.

Continued environmental scarcity fuels pre-existing grievances such as ethnic, economic and social discrimination, especially in poor countries, and this can lead to violent conflicts. David and Gagne, for instance, argue that environmental scarcities "hampers economic productivity, spawns mass migrations" and imposes other unhealthy effects on economic, social and political growth, which in the long term can escalate into violent conflict and seriously threaten social stability. Consequently, issues of ownership of resources, management and control are crucial in addressing these issues. The politics of ownership, control and management of these resources, according to Alao, remains the underlying cause of civil wars in most parts of the world including Africa.

However, it is not easily established that environmental scarcity induces violent conflict. In fact, the majority of countries in the world experience some form of environmental scarcity. Evidence from Hauge and Ellingsen conclude that environmental scarcity does not lead to violent conflicts, even though in some instances low intensity conflicts may erupt and this may mainly be as a result of other pertinent economic
and political factors rather than environmental scarcity.  

Economics of Conflict (Loot-seeking behaviour as cause of civil wars)

Paul Collier argues that rebel leaders justify their rebellion with grievances against the government. Rebel leaders also attempt to recruit fighters with the promise of addressing these perceived injustices. However, the promise of addressing wrongs, grievances and injustices by the rebel leaders, often fails to attract and retain people to bear arms in fighting against the government. Several explanations can be given for this;

First, as discussed earlier, people will not endanger their lives in partaking in a rebellion when they can choose not to participate and still benefit from the victory of the revolt if it succeeds. ‘Free riding’, individuals refraining from participating in the rebellion but hoping that others do enough to succeed so they can enjoy the benefits of the rebellion, is definitely a more attractive option since one avoids harm and still enjoys the benefits from the struggles of others. A new political order, a more equitable economic system, new and more equitable social arrangements that could result from the revolt are public goods. Second, the fact that the state’s army can easily defeat a rebel group discourages potential recruits from participating in the rebellion since the dangers/risks involved in participating are high. Third, there are no guarantees that the rebel group, once it defeats the government, would act any differently and keep their promises. It might actually be worse than the incumbent government it seeks to overthrow.

Collier argues that this makes grievances an inadequate motivation for participation in a rebellion. Economic gain provides a better understanding why individuals participate in a rebellion. Thus, conflicts come about as a result of the “silent force of greed” rather than the ‘loud discourse of grievance’. This is especially so in impoverished countries where other economic opportunities are either limited or non-existent. These countries are usually characterised by high illiteracy levels with a corresponding high unemployment rate and endemic poverty.

Collier and Hoeffler raise three distinct factors crucial to the greed/grievance hypothesis: the level of per capita income; the rate of economic growth, and if the economy is dependent on primary commodity exports. They argue higher per capita income, increasing economic growth and lower dependence on primary/mineral commodity exports reduces the risk of conflict. On the other hand, endemic poverty and worsening standards of living and dependence on primary/mineral commodity export increase the prospects of civil wars. This connects lootable natural resources to the outbreak of civil wars. Where rebels have access to lootable natural resources such as diamonds, timber and gold, they generate enough income to pay for arms and recruits (which serves a major motivating factor) for both rebel leaders and recruits. Access to these resources contributes significantly to bringing about the war.

Civil war is an expensive proposition. Unless rebel organisations are funded by an external donor/source, they must generate income. The presence of valuable, lootable natural resources solves a lot of the financing issues for rebels. The promise of access to natural resources that can easily be traded for cash is likely to be a more attractive prospect to recruits than whatever grievances might be trumpeted by rebel leaders.

Once fighting breaks out, the rebels usually aim to capture areas that produce these resources. This usually leads to warlordism, as seen in the Angolan, Sierra Leonian and Liberian wars. The rebels captured, controlled and exploited resource rich regions in these countries for significant periods of the war. Profit from the sale and exploitation of these resources are used to attract new fighters to the group and keep old members. Opportunity for self-enrichment therefore motivates rebellion.

Alao, on the other hand, disagrees with the greed hypothesis. He contends that the greed hypothesis downgrades the genuine reasons for which groups have gone to war to seek for better management of their country’s natural resources. Alao, thus, asserts that groups fight to rectify the mismanagement of the natural resources by their governments. Alao further argues that, the greed/grievance theory ignores the vital role of charismatic leadership, citing Jonas Savimbi of Angola’s National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) as one such example. Alao suggests that the fact that the war ended following Savimbi’s death, despite the opportunity for greed by UNITA members, is evidence against the greed/grievance hypothesis.

Alao’s argument in this regard is persuasive. It is apparent that even though greed plays a role in conflicts, other factors usually come to play as well. The assumption that greed is constant with the rebels and never changes is also problematic. One cannot explain the willingness of rebel fighters to sometimes sacrifice for the group if all they are concerned about is personal aggrandisement. However, it is also apparent that most warlords start or premise their rebellions on grievances but end up being predatory and resource grabbing (in the long run) to enrich themselves. Charles Taylor and Foday Sankoh easily come to mind.

State-centric arguments

The state-centric analytical perspective takes a look at political opportunities for rebellion as opposed to economic conditions. State ineffectiveness in governance can lead to conflict, and state weakness may be a decisive factor in explaining the onset of conflicts. Individuals and groups aggrieved by the state may see an opportunity to topple the government if it is perceived to be weak. No matter the grievances groups and individuals possess in a state, unless the opportunity arises for them to express them violently, dissent is always kept low. In this regard, states that adopt rent-seeking policies are especially vulnerable since these states are associated with weak institutions.
Bannon and Collier argue that many resource dependent states have an increased risk of conflict simply because they are usually associated with bad governance, high levels of corruption and poor economic performance. David and Gagne concur, arguing that resource-rich and dependent states are usually rent seeking in nature, resulting in weak institutions. The result usually is slow growth, corruption, and authoritarian political order. These make for unstable domestic polities and greatly increase the risk of conflict. Furthermore, resource dependent states finance themselves with revenue from resources and citizens are usually not taxed. This diminishes their right to demand accountability in governance, which is usually denied them, including the opportunity to speak and be heard in the political sphere.

Because the resource rich/dependent state is increasingly less accountable to the people, it fails to invest in such important sectors as education, health and other social programs. The armed forces, the police and other security apparatus are neglected while investment is made into the resource sector. These states also neglect the development of state institutions for effective state administration. This has the cumulative effect of weakening the state's control over the entire country. Countries that are rich in lootable natural resources but with a majority of the population poor tend to develop governance problems and weak institutions due to high dependence on export of these resources. There are also few economic opportunities outside the resource sector for citizens. Being rentier in nature, resource dependent states tend to be repressive and offer few avenues for citizens to express their grievances.

Subsequently, the gap between the people and government leads to increased grievances that are not redressed. Rebel and opposition groups are able to mobilise support due to state weakness and eventually rise up against the government through violence in order to topple it. Fearon argues that no matter what the grievances may be in a state, once the opportunity for rebellion is non-existent, civil violence/rebellion is unlikely. Hence financially, organizationally, and politically weak central governments render rebellion more feasible due to poor economic performance, weak local policing, incompetent, corrupt security practices, or a combination of these factors.

This is not to underestimate the importance of grievance to rebellion. Indeed, ethnic, nationalist, economic and other social grievances often serve as motivation for rebels and their supporters. But where the opportunity to rebel is non-existent or where engaging in revolt is extremely dangerous, it is highly unlikely to occur.

Resource dependency creates disorganized, corrupt and inefficient public administration, which disrupts the delivery of public services and leads to a negative perception of the state's ability to rule, which then heightens the risk of civil insurrection. State weakness is thus seen as a decisive factor in the onset of civil violence in such states. Fearon and Laitin argue that “political instability at the center may indicate disorganization and weakness and thus an opportunity for a separatist or center seeking rebellion.” The eruption of violence then further weakens the state, eroding all capability of re-emerging to address nation building in the post conflict era.

Conclusion

This paper explored discussions surrounding the onset of civil wars and the possible link natural resources have with conflicts. Grievances, individual greed and rationality, group mobilization and state weakness are crucial in determining civil war onset. Grievances may serve as reasons for the mobilization of groups/collectivities in starting a rebellion. Weak states are susceptible to rebellions mainly because they offer the opportunity for the success of revolt. Greedy individuals may capitalize on all these factors to bring about violent rebellion aimed at satisfying personal economic, political and other interests. This assertion is in line with Lujala et al, who emphasize that rebellion is decided by motivation or incentive, opportunity and identity. Motive comes in the form of grievance against the state of affairs or a desire to get rich. Opportunity has to do with the ability for potential rebels to achieve their aim relative to government weakness. Finally, a common identity is essential for the formation of the rebel group.

Surrounding the link between natural resources and civil wars, three broad linkages are made. First, environmental scarcity hinges on the ownership, control and management of vital natural resources. Continued depletion of these resources and the subsequent inability to satisfy demands could lead to civil wars. Effective management of these resources could reduce their rate of depletion and also address the issue of uneven distribution. How efficiently and prudently these issues are tackled will determine whether civil wars would ensue. Second, economic considerations of individuals in resource-rich, resource dependent states could be a cause of conflicts. Greedy individuals usually aim to control these natural resources due to the large rents that can come from their extraction and sale. This is especially crucial as a source of finance for civil war and serves to sustain it. Natural resources considerations would then be crucial in resolving the war when it starts.

Finally, state weakness serves as an opportunity for rebellion. Resource dependent states tend to be rentier in nature and rulers encourage patron-client relations. This is especially so when the state is captured by a minority dominant class. This hugely decreases state effectiveness and efficiency. Citizens then lose confidence in the state's ability to address their needs and they may resort to violence. Resources can motivate civil war onset. Rebels not only claim poor management of the resources, but also that national authorities are highly corrupt, discriminating and are misusing the money from these resources. Such high levels of corruption lead to great political instability because whoever controls the state/
Why A Gaza Ceasefire Is So Difficult

by Jacob Stoil

From President Barack Obama, to the U.N. Secretary General, to the U.N. Security Council, there has been no scarcity of calls for a ceasefire to end the fighting between Israel and Hamas; yet, there are few signs that these attempts have made significant progress. Previous rounds of the Hamas-Israel conflict have all ended with ceasefires fairly soon after the conflicts escalated. In the last six years there have been four major increases in the tempo of fighting. Operation Hot Winter in March 2008, Operation Cast Lead less than eleven months later, Operation Returning Echo in March 2012, and Operation Pillar of Defense roughly nine months after that, all ended with an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and a ceasefire which returned the situation more or less to the status quo ante bellum. Three of the four ended with a relaxation of border restrictions. So if all of the previous flare-ups ended this way, why is this time around different? Why is a ceasefire proving so difficult to attain?

Part of the problem lays in the pattern. Euphemistically called “mowing the grass”, the Israeli military responses to Gaza flare-ups seek to denude Gaza-based militant capabilities before declaring the job done and returning to the pre-war situation. After many years of this, the Israeli public seems weary and eager for something more definitive. Since 2012, Hamas has stockpiled missiles and built tunnels and other infrastructure. Through its current operations, the Israeli military can probably reduce the stockpiled weapons and tunnels to a level that will deliver another period of respite for the Israeli population, but this will not be enough. Even in the face of mounting casualties and international condemnations, the majority of the Israeli public has remained relatively calm and supportive of the ongoing operations in Gaza. They expect a strategic payoff, a tangible victory that makes their perceived sacrifices worthwhile. For the Israeli public, such a victory must not be ephemeral; it must be immediate and not indefinitely postponed. Without such a victory, at least one recent poll has shown that the Israeli public overwhelmingly supports continuing the operation.

This desire for what many Israelis conceive of as a real victory, combined with their frustrations about the repeated cycle escalations from Gaza, and the recent casualties explains Israeli discussions about reoccupying the entirety of Gaza. While full reoccupation is unlikely, any ceasefire that looks like it fulfills Hamas’ operational objectives, and thus might constitute a Hamas victory, would be unacceptable to the Israeli public. Moreover, as criticism of Israel’s policy of slow escalation has already surfaced from notable individuals, any such ceasefire will likely push Israel to intensify combat operations to a greater level early in any future period of escalation.

Hamas’ reasons for not accepting a ceasefire are largely unchanged since its rejection of the Egyptian ceasefire proposal earlier this month, as I discussed in a previous article at War on the Rocks. For Hamas, a ceasefire must at the very least see Egypt reopen the Gaza border to trade and cease interference with Hamas’ ability to import weapons and financial resources. Failure to achieve these concessions may jeopardize Hamas’ ability to maintain its power in Gaza and perhaps its role as a major player in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, as the conflict continues, Hamas needs an even bigger payoff to justify the war to the population of Gaza. This at least in part explains Hamas’ recent insistence that all its conditions including the release of prisoners be met before any ceasefire can take place. The needs of Israel and Hamas have become so zero sum that envisioning a mutually acceptable ceasefire package is difficult.

The situation in Egypt further complicates any effort to make a lasting ceasefire. Egypt has its own needs and objectives that a ceasefire must address. In practice, Hamas’ ceasefire demands require concessions from both Israel and Egypt. Hamas was allied with the Morsi regime in Egypt. The current el-Sisi government is therefore concerned that a strong Hamas will pose a threat. It fears that an open border with Gaza will allow weapons and money to flow both ways. Weapons from Gaza could find their way to Muslim Brotherhood members opposed to the regime or into the already unstable Sinai peninsula. Finally, the Egyptian regime is concerned that a more open border will allow for spillover. Already during the current round of fighting, Egypt foiled attempts to attack Israel from Sinai. When the Gaza border was more open, militants used Sinai to attack across the Israeli border and Israel retaliated. The net effect not only risked Egyptian relations with Israel, but threatened to further destabilize Sinai. In a regional sense, Egypt also has something to lose from an unshackled Hamas. In the competition among Middle Eastern states for regional power, Qatar and Turkey are attempting to step into the void left by Iran as Hamas’ backer. Both are rivals to Egypt for regional influence. Egypt, therefore, has good reason to be wary of any ceasefire that opens border and strengthens Hamas. In the competition among Middle Eastern states for regional power, Qatar and Turkey are attempting to step into the void left by Iran as Hamas’ backer. Both are rivals to Egypt for regional influence. Egypt, therefore, has good reason to be wary of any ceasefire that opens border and strengthens Hamas. However, given the nature of Egyptian concerns, it may be possible for the United States and members of the international community to provide Egypt with incentives and guarantees to make it feel comfortable taking the risk. If Egypt proves unwilling to make major concessions on the

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border, then the international community would struggle to find anything to offer Hamas and even more so anything they could offer that Israel would also accept.

At this juncture, finding a formula to which all three involved parties would agree is unlikely. While Egypt has its own concerns, Hamas needs a victory and Israel will not accept a defeat. So what other options exist? As I noted above, there have been suggestions in Israel that a unilateral solution involving a reoccupation of Gaza might provide the answer. While the Israeli population might support an expansion of the ground operation, there is no evidence of widespread support for an indefinite occupation. Furthermore, to do so would be tantamount to international political suicide and imperil Israel’s relationship with the United States. A more modest unilateral solution might be the reoccupation of some of the border areas and the Philadelphi Corridor, which runs along the Egyptian border. Such a move would carry significant military and political risks, and in effect, continue the current round of fighting.

There is another way Israel could unilaterally act to effect a ceasefire. If Israel manages to erode Hamas’ capabilities to a degree that resembles a long term strategic impact rather than another round of ‘mowing the lawn’, it may be able to withdraw unilaterally claiming that it accomplished its mission. This could be made more likely with a sweetener provided by the United States or the European Union – though in the current situation the nature of a sweetener sufficient to do the job is admittedly hard to fathom. In any case, this arrangement would be contingent on Hamas not receiving any significant concessions and carries the risk that major rocket salvos or a tunnel-based attack from Gaza could immediately restart the conflict. Even without such an eventuality, if the quiet that such a withdrawal brings proves short lived, then the Israeli public will most likely demand a far greater response to future flare-ups. While a unilaterally declared Israeli ceasefire is unlikely, a unilaterally declared Hamas ceasefire at this stage without Israeli and Egyptian concessions is all but impossible. Hamas simply cannot afford it. On the other hand, any ceasefire agreement that meets many of Hamas’ demands not only runs risk of rejection by Israel and Egypt, but makes it more likely that Hamas will use employ this kind of flare-up to achieve goals in the future and that Israel will respond with more force earlier in the escalatory process. Furthermore, relaxing the restrictions on the Gaza-Egyptian border is a move which in and of itself carries the risk recreating the current the situation however in an even worse form. Relaxing the border restrictions give Hamas a chance to rebuild their capabilities and infrastructure including tunnels. A better equipped, better financed, and resurgent Hamas would having achieved its demands in this conflict would have little reason to avoid future escalation. Moreover, once the escalation happens a Hamas which benefited from a relaxed border would be in a position to make the conflict more difficult which in turn will have a net effect of making the conflict more deadly for
Israelis and Palestinians alike.

An agreement wherein the Egyptian border is open but monitored by an international force, or one guaranteeing that tunnels do not cross under the border into Israel, might allow for sidestepping Hamas, but will still gain little traction with the Israeli public. In general, the Israeli public has little faith in international forces. Very public failures such as the pull out of U.S. and UK monitors from a prison in Jericho have eroded Israeli confidence in such measures. A European Union force is already tasked with monitoring the Rafah crossing, however, it by its own admission, it could not act to prevent smuggling. Moreover, the Israelis do not trust the E.U. Over the years, statements from the E.U together with actions, such as the E.U. countries decision not to oppose the UNHRRC resolution on the current Gaza conflict, have left Israelis with the impression that the E.U. is pro-Palestinian and cannot be trusted as a guarantor of Israeli security. Yet, the E.U. has more credibility in Israel than the U.N. The chance that the Israelis will agree to any formulation that relies on the U.N. is negligible. The Israelis see little difference between UNHRRC, which often appears bias against them, and any other U.N. body. This has been made still worse by the events surrounding the rockets found in UNRWA schools during the current fighting.

There is another path that might provide for some form of ceasefire without needing to meet Hamas’ demands. It is an unlikely road that leads through Ramallah and the Palestinian Authority (PA). The PA could take control of the border areas Israel now occupies and the Philadelphi Corridor in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal. This, however, would put the PA forces in an impossible situation. Eventually they would either have to turn a blind eye to Hamas activities — thus further reducing Israel’s trust of the PA and harming the possibility of an eventual peace agreement covering the West Bank — or confront Hamas. Such confrontation would lead to a repeat of the Palestinian civil war that took place, primarily in Gaza, in June 2007. This is something the PA certainly does not want to see and might not win either in Gaza or the West Bank. Finally, the PA cannot afford to be seen as a tool of the Israelis against other Palestinians. For these reasons the PA will be reluctant to agree to a significant role in Gaza. Furthermore, even if it did, many Israelis do not trust cooperative security arrangements. This mistrust stems in part from incidents such as those at the beginning of the Second Intifada wherein Israelis were killed by their joint security patrol counterparts. Together these factors mean that a ceasefire achieved through the PA is quite unlikely. So if a negotiated ceasefire that addresses the concerns of all of the involved parties is less than probable, and many of the options that bypass one or another of the parties are also improbable, then what remains? The only possibility which seems to exist on the immediate horizon is a series of humanitarian truces. However, unless Hamas can address the problems that motivated it to choose escalation in the first place, or Israel can achieve a tangible victory, these truces will be no more than temporary. Unless something significant changes, Israel and Hamas will continue to engage in a war of psychological and diplomatic attrition. To the victor goes the ceasefire.

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The government controls the resources and can use it to their benefit. Wealth from these resources becomes an incentive for capturing the state through violent means such as funding militias to start a civil war.

Thus, lootable natural resources have powerful political, economic, and social effects on civil wars. Resource abundance can create low-capacity states that are vulnerable to rebel challenge. Grievances such as poverty and discrimination and the presence of natural resources do not in fact generate civil wars. It is the interplay of this factors and state effectiveness/ineffectiveness) that determine their onset.

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