

TERRORISM AND STRATEGIC DISPUTES

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I would start by mentioning the transition we are living through between the end of what we might call the American model of development, based on mass production and intensive use of oil, and the emergence of a new model of development, which is largely based on the transformation brought about by information and communication technologies.

It was Antonio Gramsci who said in the 1930's: "*the old is dying and the new cannot be born*", and in this interregnum we observe many morbid symptoms. The issues we are now discussing - terrorism, conflict, authoritarianism - are all the morbid symptoms of transition. Rather like the transition of the 1920's and 30's, which Gramsci was talking about, we have this great sense of foreboding, that something terrible is going to happen. Actually, I think something terrible is already happening. When you think about some of the things that are happening at the moment - thousands of refugees drowning in the Mediterranean, the bombing of schools and hospitals in Yemen and Syria, the terrorist driving lorries into crowded places in France or in Britain, long-range assassinations (the drones campaign on an industrial scale, which would have been kind of unthinkable a few years ago), the use of chemical weapons, nerve agents, beheading, torture, sexual slavery - all these phenomenon by a wide range of parties are things that people of my generation believed would never happen again. How do we make sense of it?

In previous transitions of this kind, we had a major war: the Napoleonic wars, the wars of the mid-19th century and the wars of the 20th century, all of which ended rather decisively and brought about a restructuring of both the international order and the nature of the State. The problem we face, although I am not sure if it is a problem since those wars were really horrible, is that military means just do not work any longer. This is not just because we have the threat of mass destruction; it is actually because very advanced military technology of the kind possessed by the Russian and Americans is not so different from very primitive military technology, the improvised explosive devices of insurgents and terrorists and flying airplanes into towers.

If you think about it, it has been 17 years since the war on terror was declared and far from defeating terrorism, it is now a much greater problem than it was in 2001. We started with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and, particularly in Iraq, this created a terrorism problem where none had existed previously, attracting jihadists from all over the world. More recently, we have had the global coalition against ISIS and although they have taken the territory again, they have razed cities like Mosul to the ground, making them complete rubble, and they have killed hundreds of thousands of civilians, and now ISIS is reappearing in the liberated areas. People in several places in Iraq feel so much more upset by what the coalition has done because so many more people were killed than were killed by ISIS, which is really troubling. Moreover, the same is true about Assad and the Russians. More than 95% of the casualties in the Syrian war, which are about half a million, have been caused by Russian and Syrian bombing.

You can also make a similar argument about the classic geo-political military responses to authoritarian regimes. When the West says, "*we must be strong against Russia!*", that actually plays into Putin's hands, and we see him strengthening his position domestically. We had a very good example recently in Britain with this nerve gas attack on two people in Salisbury. Theresa May, our prime minister, immediately blamed Russia (probably right, but with no evidence) and decided to expel Russian diplomats. That resulted in tit for tat expulsions and the closure of the British consulate in Saint Petersburg, but who gained from it? Theresa May probably gained politically and so did Putin. All things considered, those approaches don't produce any answers.

What we face now is not a war like 20th century wars, but what I call a new war, which is what we are seeing in Syria or Libya. These are very different kinds of wars. They are not so much deep-rooted political contest between two sides, which is what we think of as war; rather they are an anarchic social condition in which hundreds of armed groups gain from violence itself instead of gaining from winning or losing. These groups gain from violence because it is a way to mobilise political ideologies based on fear, for example extreme jihadism, and also because they get revenue from loot, pillage, smuggling and taxing humanitarian assistance.



Therefore, we have created some very rich warlords.

These kinds of wars are extremely difficult to end. Some argued that classic wars tended to the extreme, as each side tries to win, yet the wars we are talking about tend to persist, as all the parties gain from a situation of violence. I am less optimistic than George Friedman, who believes that this will be over in 15 to 20 years, because these kinds of wars tend to spread and are very difficult to end.

What can we do? I believe that in this interdependent world we need approaches that were traditionally considered domestic approaches, rather than international ones. We tend to think when we deal with problems domestically, we deal them with law, politics and economic measures, whereas with things internationally, it is either war or diplomacy. I have given you reasons why the military approach does not work, but it is also true that diplomacy does not work very well either. You cannot really negotiate with terrorists. How can you mediate among warlords? How can you negotiate with criminal regimes?

What kind of outcome are you going to get? Hence, diplomacy is also problematic. Therefore, we need an approach that is based on justice, political legitimacy and socioeconomic measures.

First of all, in terms of justice, giving the example of 9/11, it was treated by George Bush as an attack on the US as though the terrorists were a foreign state. Supposing he had treated September 11th as a crime against humanity, and not a specific attack against the US, it would have required policing and intelligence responses rather than a military response, which would have meant everything would have been very different. Similarly, today's authoritarian regimes are largely based on criminalised oligarchies and that is especially true since the financial crisis of 2008, when we have seen this enormous amount of wealth occurring to a small body of people and we have seen the way the deficit states have become increasingly dependent on finance and oil revenues, rather than on taxation. They have become effectively rentier states and if you think about both these autocratic regimes and these conflicts, they create a kind of environment in which you have to be a criminal in order to survive.

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There is systematic corruption and in conflict zones you cannot make a legitimate living, you have to either become a criminal or join an extremist militia if you want to survive. Secondly, we also need to think about how you create legitimate economies, in order to reverse this kind of process. Finally, and most importantly, we need to reconstruct political legitimacy. The huge problem is the loss of legitimacy of states and the pervasive mistrust in political institutions, which is what upholds the rule of law.

Contemporary conflicts are fundamentally illegal, in a war crime sense, since they violate international humanitarian law (with the deliberate killing of civilians), human rights law and economic regulations. In the end, reconstructing political legitimacy from the ground up is the key to both reconstructing economies and establishing systems of justice. We can find areas – almost like islands - where political legitimacy exists, even in conflict zones, and building on that is of utmost importance.



How do you rebuild political legitimacy, and who is going to take a lead in all of this? You will find many of the ideas that I have been put forward, for example, in UN documents on peacebuilding, in the documents of the African Union and the European Union. I would point specifically to the European Union's Global Strategy, which was published the day after the British referendum decision to leave the EU. I believe the EU is particularly important in this respect because it is the organisation that has the most to lose from what is happening, especially if you think about the wars in the Middle East. The problem of refugees, the problem of terrorism and the problem of organised crime - these are all affecting the EU first and foremost, and yet oddly enough the EU has been absolutely nowhere in any of these conflicts. What is more to the point, the EU seems to be the only entity with the resources available for reconstruction. Trying to implement what is in the EU Global Strategy could be a very important starting point, and the problem here lies in what we were discussing earlier: the lack of political leadership. It is all there on paper. Partly thanks to Brexit, the EU is now building the tools it needs, because the UK is no longer objecting, but it needs some political leadership that is currently lacking.

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Criado em 1951 como instituição privada de utilidade pública, o IMVF é uma Fundação para o desenvolvimento e a cooperação, tendo iniciado atividade como ONGD em 1988 em São Tomé e Príncipe. A partir dos anos 90 expandiu a sua ação a outros países, com predominância aos de língua oficial portuguesa e aumentou as áreas de atividade. Já em 2017 voltou a alargar a sua ação a novas geografias em África e na América Latina. O trabalho feito e os resultados alcançados tornaram o IMVF numa entidade de referência nos domínios da cooperação e do desenvolvimento.

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