



Intervention Logics

**Der Burundi-Friedensprozess und
was wir daraus lernen können**

Georg Lennkh

**Unpacking the Black Box
of Fragility**

Dan Schreiber and Kulani Abendroth-Dias

**Redefining Rationality within
Nuclear Deterrence Theory**

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Sticky Webs in the Middle East

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Case Study on the OSCE Moscow Mechanism**

Wolfgang Benedek

**India and China:
Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific Decade – Part II**

Velina Tchakarova

The Defence Horizon Journal Special Edition 2/21 **Intervention Logics**

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Masthead

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The journal aims to inform about procedures, background and trends in the aforementioned topics.

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I appreciate the open debate that we altogether conduct around security policy and intervention logics. This TDHJ Special Edition is greatly pioneering in this endeavour and part of finding new solutions. Enjoy reading!

Thomas Greminger

Director
Geneva Centre for Security Policy

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Der Burundi Friedensprozess und WAS WIR DARAUS LERNEN KÖNNEN

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Abstract: Der erste große afrikanische Friedensprozess nach der Wende 1989 – können “the winds of democracy“ alte ethnische Verkrustungen in Burundi aufbrechen? Eine afrikanische Initiative, aber keine afrikanischen Institutionen. Ein Staatsstreich zu viel in Burundi. Die Region setzt Präsident Buyoya unter Druck - und unter Sanktionen. Der tansanische Präsident Nyerere wird Verhandlungen leiten, Mandela von Südafrika folgt ihm nach. Im Arusha-Friedensabkommen fehlen die Rebellen. Buyoya leitet Übergangsregierung verspätet ein, verzögert, die neue AU und VN sind präsent, Rebellen kehren zurück und 2010 wird gewählt. 5 Jahre später flüchten wieder 400.000 in die Nachbarländer. Etwas haben wir falsch gemacht. Wir werden wohl noch einmal anfangen müssen.

Abstract in English: First free elections in Burundi 1993, Tutsi president Buyoya loses, a Hutu, Melchior Ndadaye is elected – and murdered 4 months later. The situation degenerates, Buyoya regains power through a coup. The region forces Buyoya to negotiate with all stakeholders. Tanzania's Julius Nyerere will lead peace negotiations. The EU acts as intermediary, provides finance, and chairs one negotiating commission. When Nyerere dies, Nelson Mandela takes over, Peace Agreement is signed in August 2000. Rebel groups are not yet integrated, the transition starts only 2003, the AU, later the UN send peacekeeping troops. The first election victory to CNDD-FDD, the former rebel group. Peace process frame is dissolved, FLN come back into the political fold. President Nkurunziza now plays “winner takes all”, elections are rigged, the opposition brutally repressed, and the Arusha agreement is put into question.

Bottom-line-up-front: Der Burundi Friedensprozess konfrontiert die gesellschaftspolitische Geschichte des Landes mit dem „Wind der Demokratie“ und einer beweglicheren Geographie in Afrika. Nyerere und Mandela haben Erfolg, von kurzer Dauer.

Problemdarstellung: Warum? Die tieferen Ursachen der Konflikte? Das Ethnien-Problem in einem politisch-rechtlichen Rahmen? Was kann die europäische Rechtsstaatlichkeit im afrikanischen Kontext bewirken? Welche Institutionen braucht Afrika, kontinental, regional, lokal?

So what?: Konfliktprävention in Afrika ist nicht nur ein afrikanisches Problem – Beispiel Migration. Europa und Afrika müssen sich gemeinsam auf die gemeinsame Lösung unserer Konflikte einrichten. Das heißt nicht nur miteinander reden, sondern auch einander zuhören. Das muss zu einer ständigen Einrichtung werden.

Einleitung

Der Burundi-Friedensprozess hatte seinen Auslöser im Jahr 1993 und wurde 2010 für beendet erklärt. Die eigentlichen Friedensverhandlungen fanden zwischen 1998 und 2000 in Arusha statt. Es war dies der erste große afrikanische Friedensprozess und er fand in einer Zeit des Umbruchs statt. Zur Zeit des Abschlusses 2010 konnte er – noch – als Erfolg angesehen werden.

Die Ursprünge des Konflikts

Über tiefere Ursachen und Auslöser des Burundi-Konflikts ist viel diskutiert worden. Die weitverbreitete ethnische Erklärung ist sowohl ungenügend wie auch irreführend. René Lemarchand¹ erklärt, dass Hutus und Tutsis in einem Burundischen Königreich friedlich koexistiert haben. Erst als die natürlichen Wirtschaftsgrundlagen nicht mehr ausreichten und insbesondere während der Kolonialherrschaft (die eine zusätzliche Belastung für die Bevölkerung darstellte), wurde der ethnische Faktor so instrumentalisiert und damit soziale Konflikte und Machtkämpfe zugespitzt. Gegen Ende der Kolonialherrschaft wurde auch der nun einsetzende politische Wettbewerb zunehmend ethnisch definiert.

Die Tutsis entdeckten, dass sie in einer solchen ethnisch strukturierten politischen Landschaft keine Wahlen gewinnen konnten. Die Folge waren eine Politik der Gewalt, massive, völkermordähnliche Ermordungen auf beiden Seiten und eine totale Ethnisierung der burundischen Gesellschaft. Von 1965 an bestand eine mit Waffengewalt gestützte fortwährende Tutsi-Diktatur.

Der Epochenwechsel 1989, die GASP der EU und die OAU 1989

1989

Der Fall der Berliner Mauer war das sichtbare Zeichen des Endes des Kalten Krieges und der Beginn des raschen Zerfalls des kommunistischen Regimes in der Sowjetunion und in Osteuropa. Das brachte auch bedeutende Veränderungen für Afrika. Wie Präsident Obasanjo so treffend schrieb: „The 1990s opened for Africa with great euphoria, for what we called ‘the winds of democracy’ were blowing throughout our continent.“² Wahlen waren angesagt. In seiner berühmten Rede in La Baule erklärte Francois Mitterrand vor dem franko-afrikanischen Gipfel, dass der Westen und Frankreich nun die Demokratie auch für Afrika zum Maßstab nehmen würden, und dass die Entwicklungshilfe auch danach bemessen würde. Die Botschaft wurde gehört. Gab es in den Siebzigerjahren nur 19 Wahlen in Afrika, so waren es über 160 in den Neunzigern. Noch wichtiger aber war ein neuer westlicher Zugang zu afrikanischen Konflikten. Diese sollten nun von Afrika selbst gelöst werden. Nochmals Obasanjo: „... we were taken aback by violent conflicts in many countries, in Somalia, Rwanda, Liberia,

Burundi, wars in Angola and Sudan. Bizarre because purely domestic, and not regarded by great powers as threats to international peace.“³ Die ersten freien Wahlen in Burundi 1993 waren auch eine Reaktion auf die „Winde der Demokratie“.

Die GASP der Europäischen Union

Mit dem Vertrag von Maastricht 1992 ist die Europäische Union entstanden. Die GASP, die gemeinsame Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik ist ein wesentlicher Teil davon. Ihr Aufbau erfolgte schrittweise: Die Bestellung eines Hohen Repräsentanten (Xavier Solana), erste Zellen einer außenpolitischen Bürokratie. aufbauend auf dem „politischen Dialog“ im Vertrag von Lomé. Auf dieser Basis konnte die EU ihren ersten Sonderbeauftragten Aldo Ajello für die Region der Großen Seen und daher auch in Burundi einsetzen.

Die OAU und die Afrikanische Union

1963 gab es in Afrika sehr unterschiedliche Auffassungen über Zweck und Ziel einer kontinentalen Organisation. Ein afrikanischer Einheitsstaat (den wollte eine Minderheit), oder die Bewahrung der Grenzen, die der Berliner Kongress gezogen hatte – was vielen afrikanischen Staatschefs wichtiger war, weil damit auch ihr eigener Machtanspruch gesichert war. Folgerichtig war einer der wichtigsten Grundsätze der OAU die Nichteinmischung in die inneren Angelegenheiten der Mitglieder. Die OAU ist in Burundi unter Betonung dieses Prinzips aufgetreten und hat daher kaum eine Rolle gespielt. So wurde eine „Regionalinitiative“ (RI) wichtigster Akteur.

Unruhen, politischer Mord, Krise, internationale Reaktion und ein weiterer Putsch

1987 putschte sich Major Pierre Buyoya an die Macht (auch er ein Tutsi), setzte über westlichen Druck erste vorsichtige Demokratisierungsschritte – eine Verfassungsreform und die Zulassung politischer Parteien – und rief 1992, überzeugt von seiner Popularität und wohl im Glauben an einen sicheren Sieg, die ersten freien Wahlen im Land aus. Am 1.6.1993 wurde Melchior Ndadaye, der Kandidat der FRODEBU⁴, der großen Hutu-Partei, mit überwältigender Mehrheit gewählt. Auch im Parlament gingen wenige Wochen später über zwei Drittel der Sitze an die FRODEBU.

Auch wenn Ndadaye eine ausschließlich ethnische Definition seiner Partei stets vermieden hatte – tatsächlich waren eine ganze Reihe von Tutsis Parteimitglieder, so musste er doch Zugeständnisse an seine Hutu-Anhänger machen, die über Jahrzehnte keinen Zugang zu Schulen oder öffentlichen Ämtern gehabt hatten, und denen auch wirtschaftliche Möglichkeiten versagt geblieben waren. Massenhaft rückkehrende Hutu-Flüchtlinge wollten auf ihre Farmen, die inzwischen aber von Tutsis übernommen worden waren. Das

löste sehr rasch Unruhen und Protestkundgebungen aus. Im Oktober 1993 ermordete eine Gruppe von Militärs Präsident Ndadaye und weitere Hutu-Politiker, was wieder zu Massmorden an Tutsis und Hutus führte.

Die internationale Gemeinschaft reagierte. Schon im November ernannte der UNGS (Boutros-Ghali) Ahmadou Ould Abdallah (einen ehemaligen mauretanischen Außenminister) zum Sonderbeauftragten in Burundi. Ihm gelang es in Verhandlungen, Cyprien Ntaryamira (FRODEBU) als Nachfolger von Ndadaye zu installieren. Schon am 6. April kam Ntaryamira ums Leben, als das Flugzeug, in dem er (und der Präsident von Ruanda, Habyarimana) von einem OAU Gipfel in Dar es Salaam zurückkamen, bei Kigali abgeschossen wurde. Trotz der Bestellung eines weiteren Präsidenten der FRODEBU, Sylvestre Ntibantunganya kam Burundi nicht zur Ruhe. Die Machtbasis der Regierung zerbröckelte unter der Bedrohung der Tutsi-dominierten Armee. Ethnischer Hass und Gewalt schufen zunehmend tiefe Gräben in der burundischen Gesellschaft. Im April 1995 kam es zu weiteren Massmorden.

Unter dem Vorwand einer Verschlechterung der Sicherheitsbedingungen entmachtete 1996 die Armee Präsident Ntibantunganya, Buyoya übernahm wieder die Macht.

Die Entstehung der Regionalinitiative (RI)

Auf Ersuchen von Uganda und Zaire organisierte das Carter-Zentrum im März 1996 zwei Gipfeltreffen in Kairo und Tunis, an denen auch Burundi, Ruanda und Tansania (so wie weiters Expräsidenten Julius Nyerere) teilnahmen. Zweck war vor allem die Beratung der Flüchtlingssituation in und um Ruanda. Mwalimu⁵ Julius Nyerere wurde ersucht, mit allen Beteiligten nach einer Verhandlungslösung in Burundi zu suchen. Das war der Auftakt für den Burundi-Friedensprozess, bis zu dessen formeller Eröffnung es aber noch mehr als zwei Jahre dauern sollte.

Ende Juli 1996, in Reaktion auf den neuerlichen Staatsstreich, forderten die Präsidenten der RI, nun auch mit Sambia, bei einem Krisentreffen Buyoya auf, Verhandlungen unter der Leitung von Nyerere mit allen politischen Kräften zuzustimmen und zu einer demokratischen Ordnung zurückzukehren. Über Burundi wurden Sanktionen verhängt.

Die Regionalinitiative wurde so zum eigentlichen Leitungsgremium für den Friedensprozess und die Arusha-Verhandlungen.

Buyoya weigerte sich allerdings, in solche internationale Verhandlungen einzutreten und startete seinen eigenen „internen“ Friedensprozess, obwohl es zu diesem Zeitpunkt zumindest eine Million Flüchtlinge und intern Vertriebene gab, deren Vertreter an einem Friedensprozess in Burundi schon aus Sicherheitsgründen nicht teilnehmen wollten.

RUANDA-VÖLKERMORD, ZUSAMMENBRUCH VON ZAIRE

In Ruanda löste der Flugzeugabschuss den Beginn eines (von Hutus von langer Hand vorbereiteten) systematischen Mords an über 800.000 Tutsis (und gemäßigten Hutus) aus. Im Juli wurde Kigali von den Truppen der FPR (Forces Patriotiques Rwandaises) eingenommen. Zu dieser Zeit begannen sich in Ruanda über 3 Millionen (fast die Hälfte der Bevölkerung) Hutus, darunter auch große Teile der ruandischen Armee und der an dem Morden beteiligten ruandischen Milizen sowie französische Staatsbürger unter dem Schutz der französischen Armee („Operation Turquoise“) in den benachbarten Kongo (damals noch Zaire) in Sicherheit zu bringen. Die folgenden Bewegungen von burundischen Flüchtlingen und Exmilizen in beide Richtungen, trugen zu schweren Spannungen in Kivu (Ostzaire) bei. Im Oktober 1996 kam es zu einer Rebellion und der von Museveni und Kagame dort eingeschleuste, aus Katanga stammende Laurent Kabila (eigentlich eine „Erfindung“ von Julius Nyerere) begann, den Osten Kongos unter seine Kontrolle zu bringen um dann, angesichts des schwindenden Widerstands der zairischen Armee, nach Kinshasa vorzudringen und sich zum Präsidenten der Demokratischen Republik Kongo zu erklären. Mobutu setzte sich schwerkrank nach Europa ab.

Das Spiel von Kagame und Museveni war voll aufgegangen. Über ruandische ‚Militärberater‘ kontrollierten sie den Kongo und Kabila so lange, bis dieser nicht mehr mitspielte. Er ließ die Militärberater nach Kigali ausweisen; das war eine Kriegserklärung an Kagame und Museveni und es begann nun das, was inzwischen als der erste afrikanische Weltkrieg bezeichnet wird, ein Krieg an dem neben Ruanda, Uganda und dem Kongo auch Simbabwe, Sambia, Angola, Namibia und Tschad beteiligt waren.

FRIEDENSVERHANDLUNGEN IN ARUSHA, 1998 BIS 2000: STRUKTUR UND TEILNEHMER

Nach zwei Jahren diskreter Gespräche und stiller Diplomatie konnte die Buyoya-Regierung überzeugt werden, an der Eröffnung der Burundi-Friedensverhandlungen am 15. Juli 1996 in Arusha teilzunehmen.

Die Leitung durch Nyerere

Mwalimu Julius Nyerere hat nicht nur Tansania als erster Präsident von 1960 bis 1985 tief geprägt, sondern war auch eine herausragende afrikanische Persönlichkeit. In seinem späteren Leben war er immer wieder als Friedensvermittler gesucht und tätig. Seine unau-

fdringliche und bedächtige Art war auch für den Burundiprozess bestimmend. Man darf aber nicht übersehen, dass Tansania eine wichtige Position gegenüber Burundi einnahm. Eine lange gemeinsame Grenze, eine burundische Volksgruppe und dauernd angesiedelte burundische Flüchtlinge, häufige Kontakte mit Rebellengruppen: Weder Tansania noch Nyerere konnten als neutrale Vermittler angesehen werden. Das ist aber auch für die übrigen Teilnehmer dieser Regionalinitiative nicht der Fall und das gilt wohl auch generell, wenn Nachbarn in Konfliktsituationen eingreifen. Nyerere hatte von Anfang erklärt, dass es sich bei seiner Vermittlung um einen afrikanischen Prozess handle, und dass er sich vor allem als „Facilitator“ sehe, und eben nicht als Vermittler.

Struktur und Teilnehmer

Nyerere stand ein Team zur Unterstützung der Verhandlungen zur Verfügung. Diese „Facilitation“ kam zum Großteil vom Personal der Julius Nyerere Stiftung, aber auch „Freunde des Präsidenten“, Sicherheit und das von den VN gestellte Sekretariat, insgesamt über vierzig Personen, gehörten dazu.

Es sollte fünf Verhandlungskommissionen geben. Die Sitzungen fanden im Arusha-Konferenzzentrum statt. Die VN besorgten die Vorbereitung der Dokumente und die Übersetzung, Verhandlungssprachen Englisch und Französisch.

Teilnehmer waren 19 burundische Delegationen, gestellt von 10 Tutsi-Parteien (UPRONA⁶ und viele kleinere), vier Hutu-Parteien, darunter die größte, FRODEBU, und die als Parteien konstituierten nicht-militärischen Teile der Rebellengruppen (etwa PALIPEHUTU⁷, deren FNL⁸ im Busch kämpften), einigen „unabhängigen“ Parteien sowie Regierung, Parlament, und dem letzten legalen Präsidenten Ntibantunganya, mit zumindest je vier Delegierten, die in den vier Verhandlungskommissionen arbeiteten. Vom Beginn des Friedensprozesses an war die Haltung der burundischen bewaffneten Gruppen ein wesentlicher Grund für die Unabwägbarkeit der Verhandlungen. Die bewaffneten Gruppen, PALIPEHUTU-FLN und CNDD-FDD, weigerten sich, an den Verhandlungstisch zu kommen, solange sie nicht jene Sitze einnehmen konnten, die von den jeweiligen zivilen Flügeln der gleichnamigen Oppositionsparteien eingenommen wurden. Diese waren aber nicht bereit, ihre Plätze aufzugeben.

Nyerere sowie die burundischen Exil-Parteien wünschten die Einbindung internationaler Akteure, die eine neutrale Haltung wie auch finanzielle wie militärische Unterstützung und schließlich internationale Netzwerke einbringen konnten. Nyerere war sich auch bewusst, dass für eine Übergangszeit nach Abschluss eines Abkommens westliche Hilfe für Burundi wesentlich sein würde. So wurde die Leitung der Kommissionen diesen „Internationalen“ übertragen (u.a. Schweiz,

Südafrika, die Gemeinschaft von Sant’Egidio aus Rom, Mosambik, Kanada und, für die EU, Österreich).

Die EU und Kanada waren die wichtigsten Zahlmeister der Verhandlungen, die schlussendlich über 10 Mio.\$ kosteten.

Die VN⁹, die OAU und der RI-Präsident Museveni waren durch Sonderbeauftragte vertreten. Staatschefs der RI und andere interessierte internationale Akteure entsandten Beobachter wie US, B, CAN, Francophonie, ICG¹⁰ und andere. Spezialisierte Journalisten waren ständige Gäste.

Exkurs: Die Rolle und die Befugnisse des EU-Sonderbeauftragten

Aldo Ajello war 1996 als erster EU-Sonderbeauftragter für das Gebiet der Großen Seen bestellt worden. Die EU hatte zu dem Zeitpunkt zwar in so gut wie allen afrikanischen Ländern Delegierte, die der europäischen Entwicklungsverwaltung (DEVCO) angehörten und ausdrücklich keine politischen Vertreter waren. Der politische Dialog blieb den EU-Botschaftern in jedem einzelnen Land vorbehalten. Die Krise in der Großen Seenregion ließ deutlich werden, dass die EU für eine politische Koordination eigene ‚Sonderbeauftragte‘ brauchte. Aldo Ajello hat dafür Pionierarbeit geleistet, denn es gab für seine Arbeit zunächst weder Weisungen aus Brüssel noch Koordinationsmechanismen mit den lokalen EU-Botschaftern oder EZA-Delegierten. Letztlich war es Aldo Ajello selbst, der europäische Politik erst in Gesprächen und Verhandlungen formulierte und nachträglich in Brüssel und dann in den europäischen Hauptstädten gutheißen ließ.

Zur Koordination trafen sich die Vorsitzenden und Stellvertreter der vier Kommissionen, die das Team der Fazilitation vervollständigten, fast täglich mit dem „Mwalimu“. Er konnte gut zuhören, sprach leise und unaufdringlich, wollte über den Fortschritt der Verhandlungen, über besondere Vorfälle hören und das weitere Vorgehen diskutieren. Hier lag der Motor der Gespräche. Darüber hinaus aber gab es unzählige kleine Treffen, im Garten, im Café oder in der Bar des Hotel Mercure, ja sogar beim täglichen Jogging um den Golfplatz, und das war wohl das nötige Öl für den Motor.

Arusha: Die Rolle Österreichs

Österreich hatte die vierte Kommission „Rückkehr der Flüchtlinge, Wiederaufbau und Entwicklung“, gemeinsam mit der Vizevorsitzenden Carolyn McAskie aus Kanada zu leiten. Wir erhielten keine Weisungen. Berichte hingegen wurden regelmäßig geliefert und es gab beinahe täglich Absprachen mit Ajello, der alle vier Kommissionen verfolgte. Nach etwa 700 Stunden Verhandlungen und vorbereitenden Gesprächen wurde ein über 40-seitiges Protokoll vorgelegt. Unsere Auffassung von unserer Arbeit war aber breiter gesteckt. So rekrutierten wir eine „Antenne“ mit Residenz in Bujumbura (zuerst Norman Spitzeg-

ger, dann Walter Ehmeir), die unschätzbare Informationen darüber gaben, was in Burundi wirklich lief. Während des gesamten Verlaufs und auch noch danach, war Burundi Schauplatz für Rebellenangriffe. Vor allem das Bergland rund um Bujumbura war ein Rebellenaufmarschgebiet. Norman Spitzegger berichtete immer wieder über Geschützlärm, der von seinem Haus aus zu hören war. Es war auch wichtig, sich persönlich ein Bild von den Zuständen in den Flüchtlingslagern in und vor allem um Burundi, so wie von der Lage in Bujumbura zu machen. Das alles wurde von den burundischen Delegationen mit Argusaugen beobachtet (Gleichbehandlung von Tutsi und Hutu Lagern). Wir konnten auch Experten der Weltbank (Markus Kostner) oder eine Spezialistin für Landeigentum in Burundi in eigener Initiative beiziehen. Alles das mit direkter Finanzierung durch Österreich und Kanada.

Die eigentlichen Burundi-Verhandlungen in Arusha dauerten etwas über zwei Jahre, mit 10 formellen Sitzungsperioden von zwei bis drei Wochen und vielen informellen Treffen (in den Sitzungs-Intervallen, in denen schwierigere politische Fragen informell besprochen wurden). Die wichtigste dieser Fragen war weiterhin die Einbeziehung der bewaffneten Gruppen, die bis zum Abschluss der Verhandlungen nicht gelang. Einer der entscheidendsten Punkte für einen positiven Abschluss aber war die verfassungsmäßige Absicherung der Tutsis im demokratischen Spiel. Dafür wurden Quoten in die Verfassung genommen, die schließlich auch Buyoyas Zustimmung brachten. Zum Vergleich: Ruanda negierte die Existenz von Ethnien.

Ein kritischer Moment war der unerwartete Tod von Mwalimu Julius Nyerere im Herbst 1999. Seine Funktion wurde schließlich vom früheren Präsidenten Südafrikas, Nelson Mandela, übernommen. Das sollte sich als ein viel einschneidenderer Wandel herausstellen, als viele erwartet hatten. Diese Nominierung signalisierte eine Abwendung von einem rein regionalen Ansatz, aber eben auch eine Anerkennung des politischen Gewichts, das Südafrika sehr rasch auf dem Kontinent erlangte (und sobald Südafrika bereit war, diese Rolle zu spielen). Mandela zögerte lange, diese Aufgabe zu übernehmen, wurde aber schließlich von Präsident Mbeki überzeugt. Dafür erhielt Mandela die Zusage der uneingeschränkten politischen Unterstützung seines Landes für die Verhandlungen. Damit wurde Mandela mehr zum Vermittler. Mandela ließ sehr bald wissen, dass er die Verhandlungen rasch zu Ende zu führen wünschte, was einen markanten Wandel von Nyereres eher vorsichtigem Ansatz hin zu mehr Druckausübung und Ergebnisorientiertheit bedeutete. Dazu passt die Anekdote, die er uns so erzählte: er hätte seinen Freund Schock (Jacques Chirac) am Telefon gesagt, „I need one million“ - und diese fast umgehend erhalten. Mandelas Vorsitz bedeutete auch eine Verschiebung von Einfluss hin zu einer kleinen Berater-Gruppe aus Pretoria, die Mandelas Vertrauen besaß. Später gelang es Tansania, verlorenes Terrain wieder zurück-

ckzugewinnen, vor allem als es darum ging, die Rebellengruppen einzubinden, die ja häufig eine Basis in Tansania hatten.

Die Aura Mandelas erlaubte es ihm, sich direkt mit den extremen Tutsi-Gruppen anzulegen (so dass diese beinahe die Verhandlungen verließen) um seine eigenen, tief verwurzelten Vorstellungen über eine Versöhnung nach einem Konflikt durchzudrücken. Er bezog sich dabei wiederholt auf das südafrikanische Beispiel einer „Truth and Reconciliation Commission“, während es für viele Burundis unvorstellbar war, die „génocidaires“ (Völkermörder) ungestraft zu lassen (ein Beispiel für den sehr länderspezifischen Zugang zu Versöhnung in Afrika). Auch Mandelas Stil war unvergleichlich: So war er bei jeder Sitzung penibel pünktlich. Als eine Gruppe von Delegierten (schon wieder Tutsi) 20 Minuten zu spät kam, herrschte er sie an: „Why are you late? It's people like you who are responsible for Europeans thinking that Africans are always late.“ Wer seine Biographie¹¹ liest, wird finden, dass ihm diese Eigenschaft bei einem Treffen mit Margaret Thatcher fast seine Gesundheit gekostet hätte. Mandelas Ungeduld sowie auch der Umstand, dass es das tansanische Team nie wagte, Mandela vollständig über den tatsächlichen (und nicht immer befriedigenden) Stand der Verhandlungen zu informieren, hat schließlich zur Unterzeichnung eines unvollständigen Abkommens geführt, in dem die bewaffneten Gruppen (CNDD--FDD¹² und FNL¹³) nicht eingeschlossen waren.

Aber so unvollkommen dieses Abkommen auch sein mochte, bedeutete es dennoch einen Wendepunkt für Burundi: Ein Übergangsprozess wurde eingeleitet, Wahlen abgehalten, und trotz einiger gewaltsamer Zwischenfälle glitt Burundi nicht zurück in den 1996 noch vorherrschenden Zustand.

NACH ARUSHA: VERHANDLUNGEN MIT DEN REBELLEN, NEUFORMIERUNG DER FAZILITATION, UND DIE SICHERHEITSFRAGE

Als erster Schritt war daher die Aufnahme von Verhandlungen mit den beiden Rebellengruppen CNDD-FDD und PALIPEHUTU-FLN notwendig. Südafrika wollte eine führende Rolle spielen und es wurde vereinbart, dass Mandela eine Gesamtverantwortung behalten sollte (was er auch bis zur Formierung der ersten burundischen Übergangsregierung im November 2001 tat).

Was die Übergangsregierung betraf, so hatte Arusha keine Entscheidung getroffen, wer die erste Halbzeit der Präsidentschaft übernehmen sollte. Buyoya argumentierte in diesem Stadium, dass die Transition erst nach Abschluss der Verhandlungen mit den bewaffneten Gruppen beginnen könne. Im Juni 2001 gelang es Mandela, die Staatschefs der Regionalinitiative zu überzeugen, dass Buyoya die erste Hälfte der Übergangszeit übernehmen sollte, der Oppositionsführer Domitien Ndayizeye die zweite. Bevor jedoch die Übergangsregierung ihre Arbeit im November 2001 aufnehmen konnte, musste eine wesentliche Vorbedingung erfüllt werden. Das Arusha-Abkommen hatte die Entsendung einer UN-Friedenstruppe zur Überwachung des Waffenstillstands und der Integration vorgesehen, sowie für die technische Unterstützung für Demobilisierung und Ausbildung sowie den Schutz der republikanischen Institutionen und all jener politischen Funktionsträger, die dies wünschten. Dafür sollte auch eine eigene ethnisch ausgewogene Sondereinheit aufgestellt und ausgebildet werden¹⁴.

Da es aber nicht einmal einen Waffenstillstand mit den bewaffneten Gruppen gab, konnten die VN sich auch nicht zur Entsendung einer friedenserhaltenden Truppe entschließen. Auch hier war es Mandela, der seinen entscheidenden Einfluss geltend machen konnte. Es gelang ihm, die südafrikanische Regierung zur Entsendung einer Schutztruppe noch vor jeder allfälligen internationalen Operation zu bewegen, mit dem ausschließlichen Mandat, zurückkehrende Politiker zu schützen und Institutionen zu sichern¹⁵. Das geschah im Oktober 2001, und am 1. November wurde die Übergangsregierung angelobt.

Exkurs Zum afrikanischen Konfliktmanagement

Die Bedeutung dieser Maßnahme lässt sich besser an persönlichen Erzählungen ermessen: Nach der Ermordung Ndadayes kam es in Bujumbura von 1994 bis 1996 zu etwa 500 gezielten Morden an gebildeten Hutus, die im Staat eine Rolle spielten, oder spielen könnten. In Arusha berichteten mir Hutu-Delegierte von einer „Laboratorium“ genannten geheimen Zelle ehemaliger Offiziere, die diese Aktion gesteuert hätte. Der damalige Finanzminister Salvator Toyi, ein Delegierter in der vierten Kommission, erzählte, dass ihm eines Tags sein Verbindungsoffizier zuflüsterte, er, Toyi, sei einer der nächsten auf der Liste. Wenige Tage später verließ Toyi Bujumbura in Richtung Brüssel und kehrte erst nach dem Friedensabkommen zurück. Als ich ihn dann 2001 in Bujumbura in einem Restaurant traf und fragte, ob er denn keine Angst hätte, zeigte er auf den Tisch hinter uns, an dem zwei Soldaten saßen: „Die bewachen mich“.

Im Dezember 2002 wurde mit CNDD-FDD und einem Teil der FNL ein Waffenstillstand unterzeichnet.

Mit der Schaffung der Afrikanischen Union und der AU-Kommission (AUC) waren wesentliche Vorbedingungen für einen neuen Ansatz zu einem afrikanischen Konfliktmanagement gegeben. Die Satzung der AU (der „Constitutive Act“) hält fest, dass Konflikte in Afrika ein beträchtliches Hindernis für die soziale und wirtschaftliche Entwicklung des Kontinents darstellen und es notwendig sei, „Friede, Sicherheit und Stabilität als Vorbedingung für die Umsetzung von Entwicklungs- und Integrationsvorhaben zu fördern“.¹⁶

Das AU-Protokoll betreffend das Peace and Security Council (PSC) und die Sicherheitsmechanismen der afrikanischen Regionalorganisationen (REC's) fordern ebenfalls die Schaffung eines robusteren afrikaweiten Systems der Friedenserhaltung. So beschloss die neue Afrikanische Union, in Burundi ihre allererste friedenserhaltende Mission einzurichten. AMIB (African Union Mission in Burundi) begann im April 2003 mit ersten Truppenentsendungen. Ebenfalls 2003 hat die EU eine Afrikanische Friedensfazilität (APF)¹⁷ zur Finanzierung afrikanischer Friedensmissionen wie etwa AMIB eingerichtet.

AMIB gelangen Fortschritte bei der Entwaffnung der Rebellengruppen, die Fortführung des Friedensprozesses zu gewährleisten und im November 2003 zu einem „Globalen Waffenstillstandsabkommen“ zu gelangen.

Stärkere VN-Präsenz in Burundi

Nun war auch der SR der VN bereit, die Entsendung einer friedenserhaltenden UN-Mission nach Burundi zu diskutieren. 2004 wurde mit Res. 1545 unter Berufung auf Kapitel VII der Satzung die Einrichtung von ONUB (Operation des Nations Unies au Burundi) mit einer Truppenstärke von 6.000 beschlossen. Im Juni 2005 fanden Wahlen statt, aus denen Pierre Nkurunziza CNDD-FDD als klare Sieger mit über 60% der Stimmen hervorgingen, während FRODEBU nur enttäuschende 21,6%, UPRONA 7% und Nyangoma's CNDD 4,9% erreichten.

Überraschend forderte der neue Präsident Nkurunziza schon bald nach seinem Amtsantritt den Abzug von ONUB. Obwohl sich die Sicherheitslage kaum gebessert hatte, beschloss der UN-SR zu Ende 2006 den vollständigen Abzug. Stattdessen wurde nun das BINUB (Bureau des Nations Unies au Burundi) geschaffen, dessen Funktion – insbesondere Beobachtung der Rechtsstaatlichkeit und Einhaltung der Menschenrechte – von der Regierung kritisch gesehen wurde. Immer noch war die FNL draußen geblieben.

Erst im Dezember 2008 gelang es dem 28. Gipfeltreffen der Regionalinitiative in Bujumbura endlich, die FNL zu überzeugen, ihren Parteinamen PALIPEHUTU aufzugeben, so dass ihre Teilnahme an den Wahlen 2010 möglich wurde¹⁸. Im Jänner 2009 gab Südafrika bekannt, dass es seine Fazilitatorenrolle aufgeben wolle und dass die AU-Militärgruppe, die aus südafrikanischen Truppen bestand, bis Ende März 2009 abziehen wolle. Jene südafrikanischen Kräfte, die für den Schutz der leitenden FNL-Politiker verantwortlich waren, würden noch bis Ende des Jahres in Burundi bleiben.

SCHLUSSFOLGERUNGEN

2010 waren sich alle Beteiligten am Burundi-Friedensprozess einig, dass er ein, wenn auch bisweilen zeitaufwendiger Erfolg war. Eine gute Basis für die weitere Entwicklung des Landes schien erreicht.

Heute müssen wir uns eingestehen, dass sich dieser Erfolg schon fünf Jahre später in Rauch aufgelöst hatte.

Schon bei den Kommunalwahlen 2010 gab es Unregelmäßigkeiten, die Präsidentschafts- und Parlamentswahlen wurden von der Opposition boykottiert, Nkurunziza konsolidierte seine Macht, erlangte mit einer übergroßzügigen Interpretation der Verfassung ein drittes Mandat.

Brutale Niederschlagung von Protesten, ein Putschversuch. Ein AU-Gipfel weigerte sich, trotz einer Empfehlung des PSK, einzugreifen. 2015 sind über 400.000 Burundis in Nachbarländer geflohen, die meisten sind noch nicht zurückgekehrt.

Also zurück an den Start?

Burundi war der erste große afrikanische Friedensprozess, und er fand in einer Zeit des Umbruchs statt. 1989 schien auch für Afrika eine neue Epoche einzuläuten. Das Ende von Ost-West Stellvertreterkriegen, das mögliche Ende steriler Diktaturen, eine demokratische Öffnung und Wahlen. Aber auch ganz neue Konflikte, ein Aufbrechen von Gegensätzen, die bis jetzt zugedeckt geblieben waren. In einem gewissen Sinn war Burundi das archetypische Beispiel dafür. Erste freie Wahlen, ein politisches Erdbeben und ein politischer Mord. Die folgende Krise war auch für die Region ein Signal. Afrikanische Staaten wollten ein afrikanisches Problem selbst lösen. Die Regionalinitiative war ein überraschend dauerhafter Ansatz, auch

wenn sie 2010 von AU und EAC übernommen hätte werden müssen. Vermittlung und so dann die Fazilitation, von Nyerere zu Mandela, waren grandiose ad-hoc Lösungen. Auch wenn es noch keine klare Rollenvorstellung internationaler Akteure bei der Konfliktlösung in Afrika gab, hat sich der Prozess an die veränderten internationalen und afrikanischen Rahmenbedingungen angepasst. Natürlich hatte die Ruanda/Kongokrise, und der nachfolgende Krieg Rückwirkungen. Vielleicht gab es gegen Ende zu viele Akteure und eine gewisse Prozessmüdigkeit? Sicher ist, dass die AU auch deswegen ihr Burundi Kontingent zurückgezogen hat, weil sie mit der Sudan/Darfur-Frage finanziell und personell überfordert war. Frappierend war jedenfalls, wie schnell die burundische Regierung ein völlig anderes Spiel begonnen hat.

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“Der Burundi Friedensprozess konfrontiert die gesellschaftspolitische Geschichte des Landes mit dem „Wind der Demokratie“ und einer beweglicheren Geographie in Afrika.”

Hier liegen einige Gründe für das Scheitern, aber es gibt auch Grundsätzlicheres:

1. Ein so komplexes Friedensabkommen kann nur mit genügend ‚good governance‘ umgesetzt werden, also Rechtsstaatlichkeit, Demokratieverständnis, Freiraum für Presse und Zivilgesellschaft. Das hat es in Burundi nie gegeben, und kann wohl nur langsam aufgebaut werden.
2. Die EU-Leitlinie für Konfliktprävention sagt ausdrücklich, dass immer auch den **„tieferen Ursachen“** (root causes) eines Konflikts nachgegangen werden müsse. Nun kann niemand den Verhandlern vorwerfen, das nicht versucht zu haben. Das Protokoll I des Arusha Abkommens sieht die Errichtung einer „Nationalen Wahrheits- und Versöhnungskommission“ schon in der Übergangsperiode vor und fügt eine sehr detaillierte Liste von Fragen zur Aufarbeitung an. Das ist erst 2014(!) mit einem Mandat geschehen, das für diesen Zweck nutzlos war.
3. Ohne inneren Frieden und ohne Rechtsstaatlichkeit kann auch die **Wirtschaft** nicht Fuß fassen – Burundi steht heute im Human Development Index an 185. (von 190) Stellen. Vorschläge existierten etwa für eine Restrukturierung der Landwirtschaft (z.B. Kommasierung). Geschehen davon ist nichts.
4. **Waffen** sind noch immer viel zu leicht erhältlich, auch das übrigens eine Folge des Endes des Kalten Kriegs, als alle osteuropäischen Länder ihre Waffen verkauften. Die vor wenigen Jahren von der AU gestartete kontinentweite Initiative „Silencing the Guns“ konnte nicht wie vorgesehen 2020 abgeschlossen werden und wurde bis 2030 verlängert.

Aber sehen wir uns doch an, wie es anderen Großverhandlungen in Afrika ergangen ist. Der Kongo-Frieden, zuerst in Lusaka/Sambia, dann in Sun City/Südafrika, die Sudan-Südsudan-Verhandlungen mit dem Abschluss in Naivasha/Kenia, der Somalia-Prozess in Eldoret/Kenia, die Darfur-Verhandlungen in Abuja und später in Doha. Große Erfolge waren nicht dabei.

Wenn wir die Arusha Verhandlungen aus heutiger Sicht beurteilen, hätten wir wahrscheinlich weniger Zeit und Platz für ausgefeilte Texte verwendet und uns mehr um die Umsetzung gekümmert. Wie viele von den hunderten von Maßnahmen – die ja fast ausschließlich auf Vorschlägen der burundischen Delegierten fußten, sind umgesetzt oder wenigstens in Angriff genommen wurden? Der Übergang von einem Abkommen zu einer Interimsregierung und weiter zu Wahlen und zur Einrichtung von Parlament und Regierung müsste minutiös geplant sein und bedürfte wahrscheinlich einer Begleitung von außen wie auch einer militärischen Absicherung. Ein Teil davon war in Burundi gegeben, aber die AU existierte im Jahr 2000 noch nicht und auch die EU war für solche Einsätze noch nicht bereit¹⁹.

Wie heikel ein solches Zusammenspiel von politischen Zielsetzungen und operativen Einsätzen immer noch ist, zeigt etwa das Beispiel Mali, um nur eines zu nennen.

Wahrscheinlich müssten wir Friedensprozesse ganz anders auffassen, etwa einfach als veränderte Aggregatzustände in den Beziehungen und gegenseitigen Einflussnahmen in einer Region. Wie könnte Europa dazu beitragen? Wir bräuchten eine dichtere und vielfältigere Präsenz in afrikanischen Ländern, neben den Bereichen Politik und Wirtschaft auch die Kultur, die Wissenschaft und Forschung, das Reisen und Berichten, damit wir auch feinere Temperaturunterschiede registrieren und interpretieren können.

ENDNOTES

1. René Lemarchand, Burundi; Ethnic Conflict and Genocide (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1994).
2. Vorwort in Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, Burundi on the Brink, 1993–95: A UN Special Envoy Reflects on Preventive Diplomacy (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2000).
3. Ibid.
4. Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi
5. Mwalimu, Swahili Lehrer, von Nyerere bevorzugter Titel.
6. Union pour le progrès national
7. Parti pour la Libération du Peuple Hutu
8. Forces Nationales de Libération
9. Berhanu, Dinka
10. International Crisis Group
11. Nelson Mandela, The long Road to Freedom (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1994).
12. Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie; Forces Nationales pour la Défense de la Démocratie
13. Forces nationales de libération
14. Protokoll V, Art. 8 des Arusha-Abkommens.
15. Es handelte sich um eine etwa 700-Mann starke Truppe, die genügend bewaffnet war, um auch ernsthafte Rebellenangriffe abzuwehren – was zu Beginn der Operation auch notwendig war; es gelang ihr, zurückkehrenden Politikern das Gefühl völliger Sicherheit zu geben. Keine geringe Leistung, wenn man bedenkt, dass zwischen 1993 und 1995 etwa 500 höher gebildete Hutu's auf gezielte Weise ermordet wurden.
16. Siehe Constitutive Act, „Africa Union“, abgerufen am 8. April 2021, www.africa-union.org.constitutiveact.
17. Die APF begann mit einem Budget von 250 Mio. Euro; der größte Teil davon wurde für AMIS (Afrikanische Mission im Sudan) eingesetzt; für AMIB wurde ein Rahmen von 20 Mio. Euro vorgemerkt.
18. Die Arusha-Verfassung verbietet ethnische Bezüge in Parteienamen.
19. Der erste derartige Einsatz war die Operation Artemis, 2003 im Ostkongo.

Unpacking the Black Box of Fragility

BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS FOR INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract: Significant progress has been made in our collective understanding of fragility, which has led to gradual adjustments in the way international engagement is conducted in fragile contexts. However, to date, this engagement takes little account of the dimension of motivations and behaviours of national and international actors operating in fragile settings. We seek to lay the foundations for an overarching analytical framework that supports behaviourally-informed decisions in fragile contexts. Our aim is to adapt the toolbox of behavioural insights to the needs of all international stakeholders (from across the realms of humanitarian aid, development, diplomacy, security, etc.) involved in rethinking their organisations' processes to enhance the effectiveness of their engagement in fragile contexts.

Bottom-line-up-front: Taking a behavioural approach to better align our engagement with the social and cognitive features of the fragile operational context can help us avoid past mistakes and common errors and thus enhance interventions for more targeted impact.

Problem statement: International engagement often remains based on untested assumptions about the motivations and interactions between and across international actors and local actors.

So what?: We need to systematically factor in people's biases and motivations into international engagement strategies, in order to find targeted solutions and more nuanced and impactful pathways to conflict transformation and resilience-building in fragile contexts.

INTRODUCTION

“WE THINK, EACH OF US, THAT WE’RE MUCH MORE RATIONAL THAN WE ARE. AND WE THINK THAT WE MAKE OUR DECISIONS BECAUSE WE HAVE GOOD REASONS TO MAKE THEM. EVEN WHEN IT’S THE OTHER WAY AROUND.”
– DANIEL KAHNEMAN, NOBEL LAUREATE IN ECONOMICS.²

Reflecting on her arrival in Liberia, a diplomat remarked in 2019, “I arrived during troubled times, not long after the peacekeepers had left, when the economy was sinking into recession, political tensions were high, and the country was shaken by social unrest. In that context, all our certainties collapsed one after the other.” In military parlance, this type of situation is often referred to as “VUCA”, an acronym that evokes its four interconnected characteristics: volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. “It became really difficult to predict what would happen next,” the diplomat recalled. “The whole social context had become a black box for us. The situation inevitably brought many of our [post-crisis transition] activities to a halt, precisely when we felt our support was most needed.”

Irrespective of their different mandates and modus operandi, international humanitarian, development, diplomatic, and security and defence actors engaged in fragile settings share from the outset a common challenge: their engagement requires an understanding of the motivations and behaviour of people in their context of operation: What makes people tick? Why do they engage in specific behaviour that puts lives and livelihoods at risk? What vision, hopes and fears do they hold about the future? What brings them to the negotiating table, and what assumptions about other stakeholders’ power, interests and behaviours drive them to act the way they do? Most importantly, when a crisis hits, what behaviours do they fall back on to negotiate and survive, and what can be done to safeguard the trust that underpins their co-operation?

It is surprising, then, that formal study and analysis of the biases that guide people’s everyday lives has played little role in guiding international co-operation and decision-making in general, and engagement in fragile contexts in particular. In this article, we argue that building behavioural insights into the lifecycle of operations to guide decision-making in international engagement can produce better context analyses and operational design; help avoid common biases and past mistakes; and thus enhance interventions for more targeted impact. In doing so, we seek to provide an overarching analytical framework within which to embed the emerging body of related case-specific policy literature.³ Our hope is that this analytical framework will help the spectrum of humanitarian, development, diplomatic, security and defence, and international trade actors – both at decision-making and policy level – as they rethink their organisations’ processes to enhance the effectiveness of their engagement in fragile contexts.

The article is divided into four sections. First, we will discuss what we mean by international co-operation and fragility and provide context to the argument that an understanding of human behaviour is relevant to international co-operation for development in fragile contexts. Next, we will present key relevant concepts of behavioural science and behavioural insights, discuss a few common biases that guide all human behaviour, and introduce the idea of behaviourally-informed policymaking. Third, we will offer a working model of how the BASIC toolkit and behavioural insights can be applied to programme-level decision-making, using a real-life example from a fragile context. Fourth, we will discuss limitations and future work that could be done to further unpack this new way of “doing development differently”.

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“Taking a behavioural approach to better align our engagement with the social and cognitive features of the fragile operational context can help us avoid past mistakes and common errors and thus enhance interventions for more targeted impact.”

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION AND THE EVOLVING APPROACH TO FRAGILITY

We define international co-operation for development in fragile contexts as all activities and instruments deployed by international stakeholders, which potentially contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in fragile contexts. Borrowing elements from Lujikx and Benn,⁴ three relevant types of activities and instruments can be distinguished:

1. Activities and instruments that are explicitly deployed in accordance with the definition of Official Development Assistance (ODA), encompassing both development co-operation and humanitarian assistance;
2. Instruments focused on broader policy objectives than development, notably in the areas of peacekeeping and security policy, regional economic integration and foreign policy; and
3. Instruments deployed with a commercial purpose, which have an impact on fragile contexts' development as a side effect.

Global policy related to international co-operation for development in fragile settings is at a turning point. The OECD defines fragility as “the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, systems and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks. The OECD fragility framework measures multidimensional fragility on a spectrum of intensity across the economic, environmental, political, security, societal and human capital dimensions. This multicausal understanding of fragility has already found its way into policy documents adopted in recent years by major stakeholders in the international community – from the World Bank’s Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence to the United States’ Global Fragility Act.

As a multitude of actors is moving to translate this new policy approach into practice, it is confronted with operational challenges.⁶ These operational challenges have been conceptualised as a “dual system problem”, resulting from the interaction of two intertwined complex systems.⁷ The first system is the fragile context itself, whose complex nature can be captured as a “wicked problem”, a systemic web of interdependent societal core issues that escape the simplicity of clear-cut frames of reference or joint problem definitions. The second complex system is the composite effect of the diversity of stakeholders mobilised to address the first one. This is because individual national and international organisations involved in development co-operation in fragile contexts operate with mandates, priorities, objectives and theories of change don’t always align – and may even compete with or contradict each other.⁸ Thus, paradoxically, the system through which international co-operation for development in fragile contexts is delivered tends to magnify the day-to-day complexity of operating in these contexts.

Doing development differently: Human behaviour is at the core of the dual system problem

In response to the “dual system problem”, many international stakeholders are now attempting to implement profound changes in their institutional setup and organisational culture. These changes carry various labels, depending on organisations – from “doing development differently”, to becoming more “fit for fragility”. All involve a recognition of the complex operational environments and the “wicked problems” that need to be managed; enhanced attention for the importance of building durable relationships of trust and shared accountability for results among all actors; and efforts to enhance operational linkages across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.⁹

The success of doing development differently rests on the need to understand and address the social and cognitive biases that can influence decision-making at every level. Across these complex environments are people. In breaking down wicked problems in fragile contexts to their more manageable parts, we need to consider underlying cognitive drivers of behaviour. We also must recognise that fear and breaches in social trust are inherent features of societies facing the premises or the aftermath of violent conflict and understand what this implies for the design of our operations.

APPLYING BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS FOR EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN FRAGILE SETTINGS

The Behavioural Insights (BI) approach is expressly designed for application to intractable problems and evidence-based adaptations. It leverages decades of research to help better formalise and understand how one’s environment and cognitive biases can impact decision-making.

In short, four key behavioural problem drivers can be distinguished: people’s attention is limited and easily distracted; they therefore form beliefs that rely on mental shortcuts and underestimate outcomes and probabilities; their decisions are further influenced by the range of choices offered; and face limitations in willpower that ultimately result in biased decision-making.¹⁰

Crucially, focusing on the drivers of behaviour helps move from attributing perceived intractable issues to blanket causes (such as “culture” and “disposition”) to motivating factors that can be addressed. It can provide context-specific insights into why there may be a lack of trust between actors or why they may be reluctant to take certain risks, which is essential for building more effective and efficient interventions. Applied to fragile contexts, this can help us think about wicked problems and complexity in radically new ways, shifting the focus to root causes of behaviour and, sometimes, achieve breakthroughs in seemingly intractable situations.

How common biases affect policy outcomes

The biases that guide our behaviour on a daily basis were long studied in social psychology and economics before their relevance for policymakers was formalised for mainstream audiences by Cass Sunstein and Richard Thaler in their book *Nudge*.¹¹ Since then, various public and private organisations, such as the Behavioural Insights Team, the Busara Center for Behavioural Economics, the World Bank, and over 60 UN Accelerator Labs have adapted these learnings to support domestic and international development functions, for example to strengthen women's land rights in Uganda.¹²

Box 1. Examples of biases guiding decision-makers' behaviour

No one likes to be told that their judgment may be biased or even wrong. However, given the responsibility that practitioners in fragile contexts are entrusted with for the well-being of others, it is crucial that they are aware how biases can influence processes and outcomes. What we mean by a behavioural approach is essentially the consideration of the below (and other) biases in order to understand the drivers of fragility and to design more targeted interventions.

Availability bias

This encourages decision-makers to use the most readily available information to make a decision. This can lead them to make consequential decisions based on a reductive understanding of the context. In other words, one is limited by the most readily available examples in one's own memory.

Take the fictional example of a decision-maker, receiving the information that members of a group have committed grave crimes in the past. The decision-maker infers that all members of that group are prone to commit crimes again.

Confirmation bias

This is the tendency to seek out, interpret, consider and recall information that confirms or supports one's own prior beliefs or opinions.

Assume that the decision-maker mentioned above is in a position to consider housing options for members of this group. S/he hears that a member of the group has recently committed a petty theft, and immediately concludes that relocating the group to the vicinity of a better-served community might introduce criminal activity into that community. The entire group is therefore allocated housing in a much less serviced area, notwithstanding the absence of recent criminal behaviour by the vast majority of the group. Disturbingly, the decision not to allocate appropriate resources to specific groups based on one's own biases may lead to the undesired behaviour that was to be prevented in the first place, and which may have been avoided otherwise.

Fundamental attribution error

This can lead an individual to unfairly blame others for engaging in negative behaviour by underestimating situational factors.

Building further on the prior fictional example: the decision-maker is now informed that, after a few years of living in the new under-serviced area, one member of the group has committed a crime. The decision-maker assumes that this is due to the group's propensity to commit crimes. In reality, multiple external factors may have led the person to commit the crime, for example a lack of livelihood or funds to feed and clothe their family; influences from members of the wider community in the area where the group has been relocated; etc.

Anchoring bias and priming effect

An anchoring bias is the tendency to fixate on an initial piece of information as a starting point for decisions, and the inability to adjust to subsequent information.

If a decision-maker is presented with an exorbitant offer (say \$100,000) as a starting point for negotiation, he or she will automatically be more inclined to negotiate upwards, using \$100,000 as a reference point, even if he or she was initially willing to accept \$80,000, or if the average rate of the deal is usually set at \$70,000.

An anchor can have a priming effect: even if the anchor figure is outside the realm of reason, it will insidiously influence subsequent

Conflict-affected countries tend to be gradually “forgotten”, regardless of the scale of the crisis, in favour of potentially smaller crises that gain in importance simply because of their novelty. Over time, large-scale losses become the new normal.

Commitment errors

Commitment errors cause one to ‘double down’ on one’s commitment to a decision despite evidence to the contrary.

After the initial decision to launch a large-scale intervention, a decision-maker receives information that it may not have the desired impact. Rather than cutting his or her losses, the decision-maker decides to redouble his or her efforts, justifying the lack of results by insufficient investment or scale. In the end, the intervention may end up producing high-cost, low-impact results.

Awareness of the presented (and other) biases should guide decisions at every programmatic stage, from who is invited to the table; to what solutions are discussed and who is targeted by these solutions; and when, how and for how long results are measured. Engaging with diverse local actors to gain more context, allowing for challenges to the initial design, and adjusting plans accordingly, can help us debias our own thinking (based on availability biases and others above) and help us design more targeted and impactful strategic, tactical, and operational ways forward.

THE BASIC FRAMEWORK: A BEHAVIOURALLY INFORMED MODEL FOR PROGRAMME-LEVEL DECISION-MAKING

The BASIC framework¹⁴ aims to formalise the understanding of human biases in the design, testing, implementation, and measurement of governance and public policy-oriented interventions. We argue that it can complement existing operational considerations that guide and underpin international cooperation in fragile contexts.

Figure 1. The BASIC Framework



Source: OECD, “Tools and Ethics for Applied Behavioural Insights: the BASIC Toolkit”. (2019)

Implications of the BASIC framework for operations in fragile contexts

Understanding the biases that guide our decision-making in bringing proposals to the negotiating table is crucial to building more effective strategies that build consensus. Rather than going back to the drawing board, understanding why someone does not agree with one’s proposal may lead one to change the messenger, build relationships across stakeholders, or change the options – or even the order of options – available. Returning to the example of the decision-maker in Box 1, if s/he finds that there is pushback to the peaceful integration of the target group into a host community, it may be helpful to understand why specifically there is pushback, and work with local actors to address misconceptions, rather than try to convince government officials to move forward without genuine local buy-in.

A behavioural science approach towards international co-operation is at its core a problem-solving method. It is a way for us to learn what works – and what does not. BI by definition does not support one-size-fits-all policies: it is important to “debias” our own approaches when designing policy solutions, to ensure that our own availability biases do not guide us to implement a policy in one context just because it worked elsewhere. This requires us to collect and manage information; to understand our own biases in analysing and discussing the data; and to keep questioning our biases as we move through the design, testing, implementation, and evaluation cycle.

Applying the BASIC framework: a real-life illustration

The challenging resettlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Tanganyika in 2018 provides a vivid illustration of the challenges generated by biases among international and local actors, interacting to address a complex and sensitive challenge. We will show below how the BASIC framework can offer new pathways for joined-up solutions.

Box 2. Biases guiding action: the case of the resettlement of IDPs in Tanganyika, D.R. Congo

As of 2019, the DRC had the largest displaced population in Africa with 5.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). The increasing presence of IDPs around some urban centres in the Kivus and Tanganyika emerged as a political problem, notably linked to tensions between IDPs and host communities.

In this context, national and provincial authorities started to advocate for breaking the cycle of protracted displacement and assist return movements of displaced people, for example those who had fled from conflict-torn rural areas to more stable regions around the capital of Tanganyika province, Kalemie.

The humanitarian community provided assistance to the displaced in more than ten reception sites around Kalemie, despite the fear of the provincial authorities that this population would settle in these sites for good. Aware of this risk, humanitarian workers adopted a strategy for assisted returns in January 2018. This however was then postponed for many months, given the volatile situation in the areas of origin of the displaced populations.

By August 2018, with the national elections looming in the background, the authorities of Tanganyika had become exasperated by a situation that they deemed to be spiralling out of control. Taking advantage of a lull in some areas of origin, and with help from the national government, the provincial governor announced the closure of several large camps for the displaced around Kalemie, hosting over 30,000 IDPs. In support of this decision, the national authorities set up a logistical system to support return movements, by offering, according to official information, free transport and “return kits” to returnees.

The international community reacted with shock and indignation, as it deemed the decision contrary to the rights of the displaced, given the still volatile situation in many areas of origin. Moreover, it criticised the violent methods deployed by the authorities to implement the site closures (not to mention the suspicious occurrence of deadly fires in IDP sites around that time). They felt that more planning was needed to organise the returns. However, little was done to consolidate years of research and consider perceptions of host communities and authorities that may be driving tensions.

For their part, the Congolese authorities were suspicious of the motives of the international community. The Tanganyika authorities took up part of a discourse already commonly heard in the Kivu provinces: they accused the international community of keeping the displaced population of the province in a situation of dependence in order to maintain in place the interests of “the humanitarian industrial complex”, deemed powerful and corrupt.

In this context of growing mutual mistrust, the Congolese authorities refused to give in to pressure from the international community to stop the evacuation of IDP sites. After closing the first three camps at the end of August 2018, the governor of the province doubled down, announcing his intention to close the 10 remaining displacement sites, which were home to more than 80,000 displaced persons.

Table 1. Applying the BASIC framework to the resettlement of IDPs in Tanganyika

STAGE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
Behaviour	Identify and better understand your policy problem.	Objective is to ensure safe and peaceful integration of returnees into host population, with ownership of local authorities. Given protracted nature of crisis, with years of research conducted, consolidating existing work on motivations and perceptions of local authorities, host communities, and IDP intentions to return could help understand local drivers of behaviour. It could also help identify any gaps in data collection allowing to test assumptions. Host population and officials consider that situation is spinning out of control and may not have experience and capacities that international actors do.
Analysis	Review available evidence to identify behavioural drivers of problem.	Both parties misunderstand each other's motivations. No shared goal is identified. Local officials view international community as corrupt and taking agency away from them. They may lack resources, experience, and bandwidth to deal with situation. International community is indignant that local authorities are not protecting returnees' rights and may be engaging and exerting pressures in ways that local officials resent. Commitment bias and lack of information about likely outcomes of decisions could make both sides risk-averse and inclined to "double down" on already made decisions.
Strategy	Translate analysis to behaviourally-informed strategies.	Reformulate envisioned engagement strategies based on behaviourally-informed context analysis, with input from diverse (national and international) actors and new and existing data sources. Understand strategy formulation as iterative process, to be reassessed as new information becomes available.
Intervention	Design and implement an intervention to test which strategy best addresses problem.	Facilitate transportation of most vulnerable and accompany return movements by supporting community development and conflict prevention in return areas, linking humanitarian, development and peace strategic objectives. Emphasise benefits returnees present to host communities in return areas and officials to encourage buy-in. If current interventions are not addressing behavioural drivers identified in stages B, A, and S in "BASIC", consider more radical departures from past practice and procedures.
Change	Develop plans to scale and sustain behaviour.	Monitor long-term impact of intervention to link back to stage "B". Continue support for local authorities after immediate outcomes are met to build positive relationships over time and monitor changes to context. Aim to dispel behaviours that drive suspicion and contribute to policy problem by highlighting positive contributions of international community and identify bad experiences for what they are – outliers.

Own Source

The case study discussed here presents a real series of events but may be generalisable enough for international actors to recognise across their own experiences. In the unfolding of this case, after a few weeks, the international community – spearheaded by the humanitarians on the ground – reached out to the local authorities to jointly develop a plan to accompany the voluntary return of displaced people from sites and provide support for returnees to their places of origin. The jointly developed strategy aimed to put the authorities' plan to close IDP sites to execution with international support, while guaranteeing a more dignified and safe process, in full respect of the rights of the displaced and international humanitarian standards. Thus, we see that local buy-in is integral and perhaps identifying barriers to this engage-

ment early on may have reduced stresses on all stakeholders involved.

The behavioural approach can be resource-intensive – can this burden be managed?

The case study discussed here presents a real series of events but may be generalisable enough for international actors to recognise across their own experiences. In the unfolding of this case, after a few weeks, the international community – spearheaded by the humanitarians on the ground – reached out to the local authorities to jointly develop a plan to accompany the voluntary return of displaced people from sites and provide support for returnees to their places of origin.

Consider the following real-life case. As part of the emergency response to a tsunami, an

international aid organisation found that a massive distribution of emergency goods in an affected area had partially failed: most of the clothing distributed had not found any takers. It later became clear that in the dress code and religious traditions of the affected area, the type of clothing distributed was considered inappropriate or immodest. Thus, having failed to incorporate any kind of rapid behavioural observations in the initial needs assessment and response phases, the organisation lacked the critical input to satisfy basic emergency needs, and lost valuable time and resources in implementing course-corrective actions.

A behavioural approach adapted to fragile settings necessitates better – rather than simply more – information. The focus here should be on the relevance, timeliness, and multi-disciplinary collection of information, and on managing trade-offs between the three. In some cases, relevant information might already be collected, but insufficiently used or formalised across stakeholders. In other cases, critical pieces of information might be missing. Information can come from a wide variety of sources to plug these gaps. Thus, the BI approach complements adaptive management in fragile settings in proposing “relatively rapid learning across time” – collecting and responding to new behavioural information about the context and results of activities to enhance the nimbleness, inclusivity and responsiveness of interventions.¹⁵ The timeliness criterion fits well with the gradual shift in the way planning processes in fragile contexts are designed, putting a higher premium on evaluative thinking, evidence-based decision-making, non-linear approaches and continuous programme iteration.¹⁶

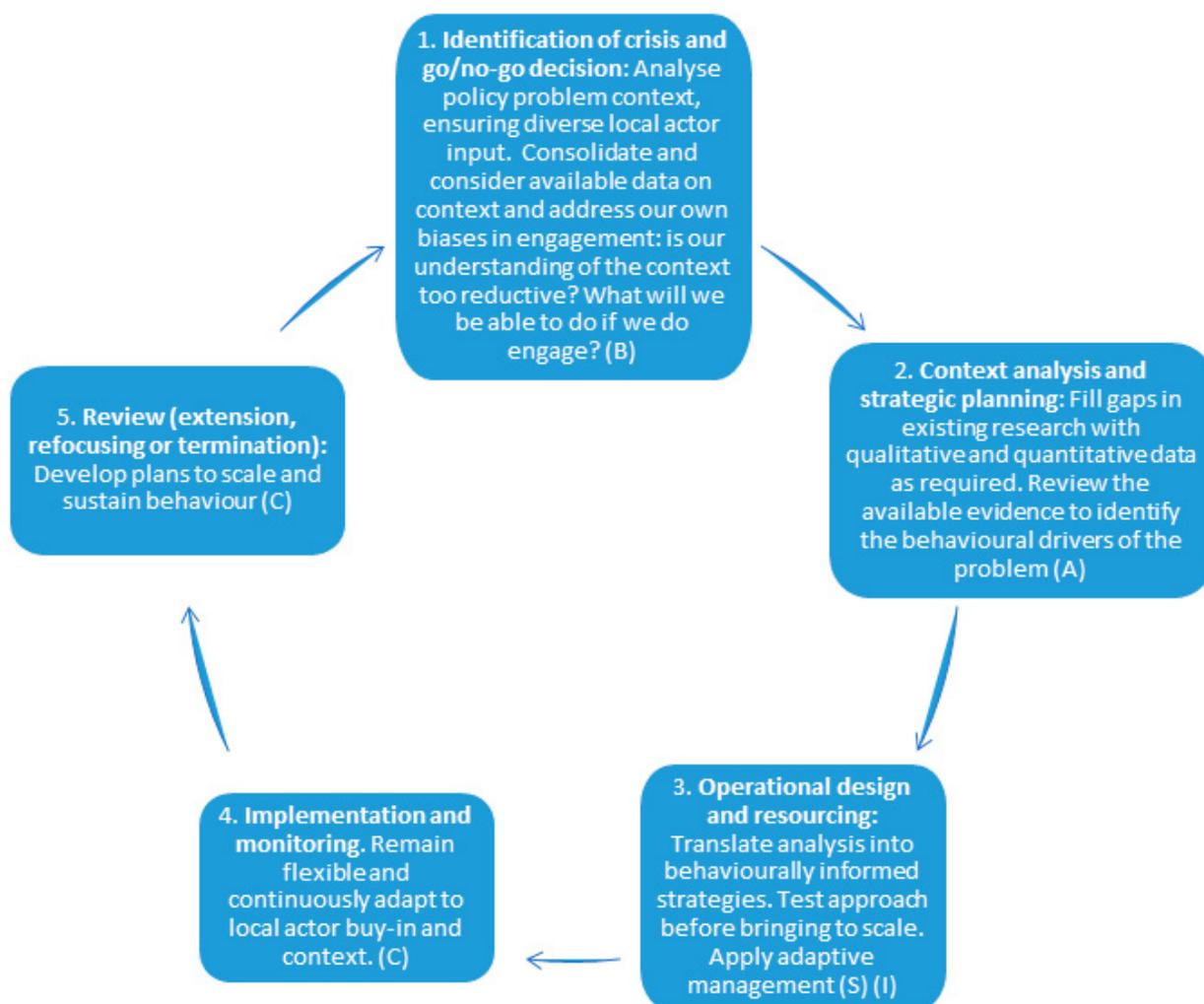
A resource-aware approach to BI might draw from the following principles: (i) recycle, reuse, and reduce existing knowledge bases; (ii) invest in joint learning with multi-disciplinary teams; (iii) strengthen the quality at entry; (iv) build awareness of potential harm; (v) where existing interventions don’t address the behavioural analysis or major information gaps exist, don’t be afraid to take a more radical approach; and (vi) test your assumptions regularly. Such an approach to information management is designed with impact and sustainability in mind.

WAYS FORWARD: BUILDING BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS INTO THE LIFECYCLE OF OPERATIONS IN FRAGILE SETTINGS

Deepening the policy research agenda

To deepen the agenda, we propose that behavioural insights and biases are considered not just in operational decisions – but across all stages of intervention. Crucially, international actors should be consolidating the available evidence and confronting and adapting their own biases at the formative point of analysis, when initially deciding to engage, to ensure that it has maximum value. At this stage, they should be asking: what will we be able to do? Is our reading of the situation too reductive and if so, what types of data do we need, whom should we be engaging with, and how? Figure 2 provides an overview of what this transposition across other stages of the lifecycle of operations might look like.

Table 1. Applying the BASIC framework to the resettlement of IDPs in Tanganyika



Own source

More research would also be useful in some areas not yet addressed in this article. Interesting areas for further study might include:

- Analyse, through a typology of actors, how the application of BI varies between stakeholders across the HDP nexus - for example, is the application of BI more critical in certain phases of the operational cycle depending on the type of actor?
- Establish the state of play regarding the development of BI training and education tools applied to relevant sectors;
- Gather lessons learned in applying BI to fragile contexts for cross-fertilisation purposes, which are currently scattered among different, poorly connected epistemic communities - for example, security sector actors vs. those involved in the health sector; and
- Apply BI to the study of networked digital spaces associated with fragile contexts, including risks associated to political manipulation, civil unrest and violence.

This article is a starting point for further study on practical approaches for enhancing international co-operation in fragile contexts through behavioural insights. Formalising our understanding of the very human biases that guide our engagement in operational settings is crucial to avoid common errors and past mistakes, enhance current interventions, and build new ways of working.

ENDNOTES

1. The authors wish to thank Faisal Naru, Cyprien Fabre, Jonathan Marley and Caroline Jeanjot for their generous feedback and suggestions, which greatly contributed to the article.
2. Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, fast and slow*. (New York: Macmillan, 2017).
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11. Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, *Nudge: improving decisions about health, wealth, and happiness* (London: Penguin Books, 2008), 14-38.
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13. Note: this box presents a partial overview of the most common biases affecting decisions in fragile settings. More examples can be found at the Decision Lab, an applied research firm.
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16. Ibid.

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“International engagement often remains based on untested assumptions about the motivations and interactions between and across international actors and local actors.”

REDEFINING RATIONALITY WITHIN NUCLEAR DETERRENCE THEORY

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Abstract: “Nuclear Deterrence Theories” assume that actors behave in a utility maximization strategy following the basic premise of game-theory even now in the 21st century. This paper argues that despite scientific progress in other fields such as psychology, neuroscience or economics, nuclear deterrence theories lack any scrutiny regarding their definition of rationality. This led to stagnation within the theoretical framework, influenced by political considerations of rationality or irrationality. They are hereby following Knorr's terminology of apparently irrational behaviour. Nuclear Deterrence Theories have never considered nuclear administrative cultures' aspects on the rationale of deployment scenarios of nuclear weapons.

Bottom-line-up-front: Nuclear Deterrence Theory requires an urgent update of its main assumptions. Rationality and the definition therefore have a clear cut influence on our understanding of the international realm.

Problem statement: If nuclear deterrence is central to international politics, how to explain why the definition of rationality within deterrence theory has never received an update, despite its centrality to the idea's validity?

So what?: To reinforce Nuclear Deterrence Theory as a viable theory, the definition of rationality must be extended. It should seek to include aspects such as emotions, gender, prestige-seeking, and power. The importance of a rework of rationality goes hand in hand with evaluating the entire sphere of nuclear deterrence theories, especially in a multipolar setting of the 2030/40s and its rising dangers.

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“Deterrence Theory requires an urgent update of its main assumptions. Rationality and the definition therefore have a clear cut influence on our understanding of the international realm.”

DETERRENCE AND RATIONALITY

The field of deterrence theory has vastly expanded over the last 60 years, despite the continuous repetition of the same arguments.¹ Surprisingly, its basic underlying premise has rarely received any scrutiny: rationality and its intellectual counterpart, irrationality. Deterrence theories supposedly follow the logic of a zero-sum game, thereby implying that an actor is only rational if he tries to minimize or maximize the potential costs respectively of expected benefits within a current crisis. Yet, no actor has only interests related to tangible, generally applicable objective results. Measures of success such as personal honour, societal standing or one's interpretation of risks are far more central to the concept of rationality than many deterrence theorists acknowledge.² Classical, and even structural deterrence theory, lag in new insights about decision making and risk-propensity. In order to reinforce deterrence theory as a viable theory, the definition of rationality must be extended. It should seek to include aspects such as emotions, gender, prestige-seeking, and power.³ The argument follows Klaus Knorr's observation within national intelligence estimates which he coined "the apparently irrational behavior".⁴ Interests can be volatile, meaning that interests do not have to be identical or that a specific crisis does not hold the same importance for both actors or that several crises are intertwined. By widening the scope of rationality away from the narrow spotlight of a cost maximization assumption, it becomes possible to rejuvenate deterrence theoretical approaches. The article follows the appraisal by Schelling to widen the scope of deterrence theories.⁵

Rationality as a concept for analysis should orientate itself on Simon's view of what rationality should do: "Always select that alternative, among those available, which will lead to the most complete achievement of your goals." In his words, it is the conformance between pre-established ends and the means to achieve them while acknowledging the differences between opposing actors and, thereby, acknowledging that "the behaviour of people with a different culture different from one's own often appears irrational when in fact they act rationally, but evaluate the outcomes of alternative courses of action in terms of values that differ sharply from ours."⁶

This analysis contains four parts. The essay's initial part will establish the current research and the common understanding which most strands of nuclear deterrence theory follow. The Second Part will then identify one of the most important limitations stemming from the judgemental binary understanding of rationality. Followed, in the third part by

the question of why emotions, while vitally important for the concept of Deterrence, did not influence deterrence theory at all. The last part deals with military rationalities that have been unchanged since the end of World War One. The Lanchester Law still reigns supreme when thinking about military victory and its quantification, lending this rationale to the supposedly rational way of conducting deterrence.

CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH REGARDING RATIONALITY IN DETERRENCE THEORY

The hypothesis that the definition of rationality within nuclear deterrence theories is underdeveloped has long been established. Yet, despite several waves of deterrence theorists, only a small amount of deterrence theorists in the 1980s such as Jervis, Lebow and Stein considered the implications of psychology on deterrence and its definition of rational. Morgan identified rationality as a severe problem for deterrence theory.⁷

Authors such as Brodie, Wohlstetter or Schelling, assume that deterrence, per game theory, is a phenomenon that hovers above feelings, predispositions, the flow of information or strong emotions.⁸ Zagare even observes that "the theory (of deterrence) is a collection of propositions that flows from such theoretical primitives that is telling."⁹ Seasoned deterrence scholars such as Colin S. Gray fell into this trap of following the line of argumentation within deterrence theory that "the principles of deterrence theory are eternal".¹⁰ Gray, additionally, fails to identify and define these "eternal principles". His further claim that deterrence, per se, is not the source of the difficulty and that the world does not need another great tome of deterrence theory, show his lack of understanding surrounding the problematic theoretical groundings of nuclear deterrence theories.

The central point of friction in the academic deterrence discussions was the assumption of rationality of actors; narrowly defined as the "homo economicus", however, on the level of a state actor and thereby making the assumption that actors are interested in the maximization of their interests. Green observed already in 1966: "Economists, for example, question whether it is possible to conceive any definition of "rational" that does not mean "maximizing self-interest". The most perilous observation may be the ever-present implication that reality is rationally explainable and perfectible."¹¹

In Gerd Gigerenzer's words, rationality is often analyzed from the standpoint of logic or best practices rather than using the field of heuristics to explain human decision-making under the restrictions of uncertainty.¹² Any empirical evidence cannot support the assumption that all decisions on the state level are made solely along cost-benefit analysis lines.¹³ Humans who would only act under economic deliberations would be void of any social interaction.

The current research in deterrence's field offers a wide array of perceptions of rationality in the field. Morgan's deterrence theory is no longer valid for international politics, claiming that it is a theory meant for the Cold War's symmetric power competitions. As a result of this, he ignores the re-emergence of great power competition between China, Russia, the USA and European (Union) states. His analysis is based on the vanishing of the Cold War Bipolar system. He misreads the Cold War as only being a Bipolar international system. On the other side is, for instance, Zagare, who argues that procedural rationality corresponds closely to an everyday appreciation of the term. By this definition, rationality becomes a prudent and level-headed calculation of all choices available. For Zagare, procedural rationality serves an important theoretical function, "serving as a benchmark to identify and measure deviations from the ideal."¹⁴ Behavioral consequences of misperceptions, beliefs, psychological idiosyncrasies and cognitive deficiencies could then be identified by contrasting them with a fixed variable. A variable to measure deterrence failures or success might be a worthwhile endeavour if an underlying subjective moral judgement tainted it. Zagare and Kilgour depart from an objective theoretical construct when they argue that anything that deviates from the best practice variable (whatever this might be) must be contrary to a clear-cut rational choice.¹⁵ They later reject the premise that rationality can be in the eye of the beholder and rejects outright rational actor models. The rejections and contradictions as well as binary thinking that there are two strains within the theoretical world, further undermine their line of argumentation.

BINARY THINKING OF DETERRENCE THEORY

A bias in thinking about rationality reveals itself, which can be best described as binary. Something is regarded either as irrational or rational. This black or white sentiment in a field of war which has always been down to personal and collective experiences, feelings, and interpretation of information, is unaccommodating and rather discomfoting

due to its ignorance of human emotions. Many authors, such as Mearsheimer, use rationality to pass judgment on states' behavior.¹⁶ States, which seem to act in contrast to this behavior of what is deemed acceptable, were classed as "irrational". It transformed the terminology of rationality into a discourse about a binary view of international politics far beyond the academic sphere. Thus, allowing for a black and white analogy for political purposes rather than using rationality as a purely scientific-analytical tool. Structural and classical theories alike brand behavior as rational or irrational. They are hereby implying a moral judgement that severely prohibits any significant analysis of decision making in nuclear affairs. The introduction of bounded rationality in the 1980s was too late to contribute to the field due to the end of the Cold War.¹⁷

Binary options, despite their subjectiveness, are being reinforced using mathematical equations. The equations seem logical; two sides with different outcomes in mind, looking to find the Nash equilibrium; the best "rational" and thus "sane" development. At first glance, this representation seems to be a thoroughly objective analysis of this "economic interaction". Heralding the best result means that any outcome that is not according to a best-case scenario must have been made by at least one actor who was not equally mentally developed. It comes as no surprise that the decision-theoretical deterrence theories can rarely be supported with any empirical evidence.¹⁸

The reliance on mathematical variations, such as in "classical" deterrence theory, obstructs the view that most theories bias how they interpret the outside world; in short, of how they process information against personal or collective preferences. Classical theoretical utility approaches, such as in the case of Powell's Nuclear Deterrence Theory, use a supposedly mathematical system to hide the fact that they cannot contribute to a better understanding of the deterrence conundrum, other than mathematical formulas, which lack any empirical validation.¹⁹

Applying mathematics authors such as Powell, Frahm or Zagare and Kilgour, resulting in hiding behind a tautological screen of mathematics and economics which does not add to further insights into the motivations behind deterrence interactions.^{20 21 22} Commonly it is assumed that most, if not all, economic and political agents obey the maxims of consistency and coherence, leading to the maximization of utility. Thus, a change in wealth or final asset positioning is used as a universal reference system to measure deterrence policies' success. This problematic tendency of attribution is being built upon by implementing mathematical probabilities and the calculation thereof, following a current social science pattern trying to quantify evidence, even if the quantification does not offer any reliable result. The problem with quantification is that it upholds the illusion of certainty.²³ Best summarized by comparing deterrence theory to chess, while a better metaphor for deterrence is a game played on several boards at different times and different settings.

A mathematical approach to deterrence theory can only work if rationality is defined correctly. It would further mean that interests can be attributed to a binary system. This is, however, difficult due to several factors. For one, interests of actors in international politics do not have to overlap or have any direct linkage at all. Thus, the often-assumed prisoners' dilemma only holds true in a small number of international crisis. Even the frequently discussed Cuba Missile Crisis ended due to acknowledging the strategic problem of Jupiter medium-range missiles from Turkey, which arose one year before the crisis.²⁴ The US's official narrative did not recognize that the crisis ended with the recognition of soviet vital interests until the 1990s. If one uses Zagare, Morgan or Powell's theoretical approach, this would not be considered a possible outcome of deterrence policies as they assume that a deterrence crisis is only about backing down or finding a win-win situation.²⁵ One could argue that this was only about finding a win-win situation for both sides. However, this cannot be shown by factual evidence. Noticeably, negotiations such as in the case of the Cuban missile crisis start through the raising of a strategic issue to the level of a crisis. The connection with the Berlin Crisis, which was only a few months earlier, is often overlooked. Thus, a crisis in which deterrence theory could be used does not appear out of an empty void of space. In this sense, classical deterrence rationality highlights only direct spikes in a deterrence relationship, not however the long-term effects of a rivalry between states.

EMOTIONS AND PROCESSING INFORMATION

The reference system of a given actor allows devising a strategy that seeks to deter another actor in understanding the world. The reference system, be it collective or individual is the basis against which each actor factors his or her understanding of information from his or her surroundings is interpreted. Values, experiences, and socialization, regarding the other actor involved, shapes the reference system. In short, deterrence is an observer's relative. As

Harold Nicolson already warned in 1946: “The structure of any international crisis is rather organic, rather than artificial; it is the result of gradual growth; and however much one may seek to detach the specimens for purposes of exposition, it must never be forgotten that at the time they were part of the thought, feeling, and action of sentiments beings, exposed to all the impulses and fallibility of human nature.”²⁶ Deterrence theory is thus a construct that seeks to identify the opposing side’s points of perceived vulnerability.

Psychology has had some impact on the study of nuclear deterrence though only for a brief moment in the 1980s²⁷ and only recently re-emerged with a few articles regarding the subject of emotions such as fear.²⁸ It is surprising that deterrence theories barely feature psychological aspects which go beyond necessary emotions for economic theory. To consider the psychological influences on decision-making has not been a significant concern in these kinds of literature.²⁹

Deterrence’s main goal is to seek a strong emotional response through a threat, which is supposed to lead the opponent stopping his aggressive behavior. Schelling observes, “a threat is like an ordinary commitment, a threat can constrain the other player only insofar as it carries to the other player at least some appearance of obligation.”³⁰ Thus, deterrence itself seeks to alter the other side’s rationale and thus cannot obey by a general understanding of rationality. Surprisingly, authors in the field ignore one of its earliest “grandmasters” most famous observations. Thucydides already famously observed, regarding the reasons for the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War, that what made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear which this caused in Sparta.³¹ Following the logic that people we tend to dislike are more often attributed to having different values to ours or even having negative attributes. This, in turn, increases the fear which is instilled into the interpretation of another state. Fear in any definition of the term is individual, rendering an objective reality impossible.

Any fear, in particular, one of mortal danger, leads to three emotional responses in the human or organizational mind, fight, freeze or run.³² Naturally, fear triggers a physical response in the human body, resulting in unusual strength, endurance, and split-second decision-making in individuals’ case.³³ Decision making is enhanced by relying on instincts. Fear changes human chemistry and with it, it changes how humans perceive their surroundings as well as how they evaluate information. In an extreme situation, new information causes no interference if they match information that are already accepted. An issue develops if the information contradicts or offers new insights into a crisis. Thus, individual rationality affects the very premise of information acceptance. This way, it makes a shared context for interpretation difficult.

The nuclear domain increases mortal fear in decision-makers and the public space, making it a ridiculously abstract topic to comprehend for the human mind, in this sense affecting the context for interpretation. The Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry published a report in 1964 on the psychosocial aspects of preventing nuclear war, in which it argues that the response to the impact of nuclear issues on our psychosocial perceptions does not fit in our psychosocial framework.³⁴ On a large scale, the choice to use nuclear weapons has thus a tremendous impact on the rationale of any decision-maker.

A pure threat of physical destruction, such as seen in the US Single Integrated Operational Plans 61 and 62 (SIOP),³⁵ could have devastating effects if the instilled emotion of fear is strong enough to trigger a fight rather than a flight response within an opposing actor.³⁶ The sentiment itself sometimes overrides even the most rational of actors. In this respect, considering values, history, and experiences opens the possibility of finding vulnerabilities (or points to reverse confrontation), making deterrence more effective, without triggering a negative response and ultimately fatal reaction.

Threatening most of the enemy territory (such as with SIOP 62), Cold War thinkers’ classical approach, with destruction, is too blunt an instrument to be considered a worthwhile pursuit to change a state’s behavior.³⁷ The threat to do it gradually and according to the development of the other state’s behavior, be it positive or negative, is still a blunt instrument at best. Classical and structural deterrence theorists focus foremost on the sterile interaction between two opponents, without looking at their specific political situation or grievances of either concerned party. The pure threat of destruction itself might have a contrary consequence to the indented end state. A clear-cut chess interaction cannot be empirically proven. Economic theories and thus, deterrence theories are assumed to be closed systems. While considering Martins argues in the context of mathematical analysis of neuroscientific methods in economics, that “the human brain is already sufficiently complicated, and the

attempt to provide complex mathematical models (which presuppose closed systems) in a context of an open system brings more confusion, rather than clarification, to the study of the human brain and of human behaviour (in general).”³⁸

LANCHESTER LAW’S AND RATIONALITY

Nuclear Deterrence theory is not solely haunted by a definition of rationality based on game theory or utility theories but by rationality found in military attrition theory. This originates in the 1920s, in the aftermath of World War One. Military science in western states is focused on the idea that numbers, in particular shooters, are important considerations in winning a military tactical confrontation. This idea originates from the focus on a pitched battle that decides a military conflict in western military thought.³⁹ Protracted conflicts have always been a conundrum for western thinkers. The cult of the offense and its adaptation in the late 1860s show that long wars were seen as irrational⁴⁰ - a statement which does not hold any relevancy over the last 100 years. Either wars did not lead to a clear military victory of either side (such as Vietnam or Afghanistan) or the opposing side simply refrained from submitting defeat. In terms of nuclear deterrence, this has some consequences for the thinking surrounding nuclear weapons. Assumptions that a full-on nuclear strike would persuade an attacker from continuing an assault are based on the idea of a quick enduring decision like the idea of a pitched battle. Thus, it assumes that if the losses are high enough, the attrition factor will hinder the opponents’ advancement.

Currently, no theory includes analytical levels other than those at strategic-political level. Thus, forgetting about the organization charged with executing nuclear deterrence, the military. Nuclear deterrence looks at unitary state actors, such as within Neo-/Realism theory, assuming all actors within a state follow the administration’s strategic considerations in charge. Thus, it is essential to include the military sections’ rationality thinking, charged with weapon employment.

Higher military officers’ education is remarkably similar in western states, seeking to educate them with the rationale that there is a possibility to ensure victory and if possible, through a quick, decisive action.⁴¹ Lanchester Law lies at the very foundation of the idea of rationality within all currently existing nuclear deterrence and warfighting theories. The Law applies to the education of officers only for the operational level. Yet, the issue many deterrence

theorists neglected is how this education affected our understanding of rationality and logic regarding nuclear weapons, even more so how it forms our understanding and assumptions of a nuclear conflict.

Even if it is assumed that the deterrence interaction is under a non-perfect information situation, any deterrence forecast follows a logic of Lanchester Laws of attrition. Lanchester Laws are initially meant for attrition combat, in this sense allowing for the calculation of battle outcomes with the help of mathematical equations. Lanchester's most famous invention in the operational and tactical realm is the N-Square equation.⁴² It stipulates that with modern weaponry, a modern unit (for example, aircraft) can engage multiple enemy units simultaneously or in quick succession. At the same time, each unit can be engaged by various enemy units. Lanchester argues that the firepower square by all units concerned establishes a more realistic battle outcome prediction, rather than the sole focus on each side's number of units. The focus is of a tactical nature, where casualties are taken over time.⁴³ The latter point made the approach particularly attractive for nuclear war planners, making nuclear war easier to comprehend. Lanchester Laws also affect models of salvo-firing of missiles, attrition warfare or force-annihilation-prediction. These equations lie at the heart of the western idea of nuclear warfare.

In this sense, it comes as no surprise that defence establishments, due to their desire to be combat efficient, see nuclear weapons as a force multiplier. The view of the operational level is essential to access the game of nuclear deterrence. As Simon's observes in the context of his study regarding decision-making in administrative organizations, "the actual physical task of carrying out an organization's objectives falls to the persons at the lower level of the administrative hierarchy."⁴⁴ While in the case of deterrence, the lowest rank, the tactical level, is not a valid analytical level, while the operational is due to its decision-making power for actual contingency planning. The civil-military understanding of how a future war could look like and thus what rationale would be followed, is always a possible faultline between the political-strategic and military operational levels. As Jomini famously observed, "the first care of the commander should be to agree with the head of state upon the character of the war."⁴⁵

Organizational differences and conflict thus have detrimental effects on the execution of a state's deterrence intentions. Differences in the outlook on deterrence, its planning

and targeting affect the rationality of a given actor.

CONCLUSION

Rationality is the central theme of deterrence. The underdeveloped state of the definition of rationality has led to a narrow focus of economic ideas in the realm of nuclear deterrence theories. This is understandable as it would question decision-theoretical deterrence theories as well as the mathematical approaches in their current state

Deterrence needs to be understood on an individual actor basis as well as through the rationales of the administrative institutions tasked with carrying out nuclear deterrence missions. In particular, the rationale of the operational military, concerned with carrying out the deterrence mission has to be put into the context of deterrence theory via an approach of organizational behaviour theories.

Rationality cannot be analyzed by treating states as unitary actors. Simplification in a deductive theory is necessary; however, deterrence theory has no value leaving out rationalities of all international and domestic actors. In particular, if rationality is affected by organizational disconnects or different organizational cultures. For deterrence theory to have any added explanatory value, regarding the application to actual power competitions, it needs to acknowledge that it has to lose some of its simplicity. In particular, it should seek to consider the different levels of decision making of nuclear weapons establishments. None of those mentioned in the above areas, such as emotions or organizational difficulties, have been evaluated by authors dealing with deterrence. There seems to be a civil-military divide in the thinking about nuclear warfare and deterrence in particular. It is vital to note that military establishments at the military-strategic level have a different perspective than the political-strategic decision-makers. This divide has to feature more prominently in the deterrence theoretical frameworks. The unitary actor model and its logic that each state has one rationale has to be condemned to history.

The importance of a rework of rationality goes hand in hand with evaluating the entire sphere of nuclear deterrence theories, especially in a multipolar setting of the 2040s. Resolving the conflict between the different strands of rationality within deterrence theories becomes a vital task. It is then important to identify what a theory of deterrence seeks to achieve. Is it a deductive

theory explaining events in hindsight, or should it fill the role of identifying deterrence situations as they appear? Even more importantly, deterrence theory ought to answer how it can explain long-term rivalries and their inherent rationales effectively.

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THE STICKY WEBS OF CONFLICT AND POLITICAL ORDER IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Abstract: This article argues that the dominance of geopolitical analysis of conflict in the Middle East must be complemented by more profound examination of the nature of its political orders and deeper socio-economic trends. It undertakes an initial exploration of these three dimensions of conflict and starts connecting resulting insights. A key observation is that authoritarian varieties of "limited access orders" continue to characterize the Middle East. Such orders tend to generate privileged governance and limit human development possibilities. They have recently come under growing budgetary strain due to falling oil prices, sanctions and tanking economies, including COVID-19 effects. Especially the region's weaker states – Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen - have become financially dependent on stronger ones and/or sites of violent contestation between them. Europe and the US can reduce conflict incidence in the Middle East by shifting the dependency of the region's weaker countries from oil/gas patronage to international loans and grants as well as by putting a halt to their own disregard for human rights and democratic values when dealing with the region's authoritarian orders.

Bottom-line-up-front: Interpreting conflict in the Middle East chiefly in geopolitical terms easily produces more of it as the region's unbending authoritarian orders face economic turbulence as well as accelerating poverty and inequality rates due to COVID-19. In turn, this would see the region becoming a greater source of regional externalities, global instability and human suffering.

Problem statement: It is tempting to analyze conflict in the Middle East predominantly through geopolitical lenses because of its regional power competition and geography. Yet, this produces only a partial understanding of the political economy of conflict in the area that is inadequate for the development of good conflict prevention and management strategies.

So what?: Better strategies for conflict prevention and conflict management in the Middle East require interlinked analysis of: a) the dynamics of regional great power competition, b) types and evolution of domestic political orders and c) the direction of deeper socio-economic trends. The core of such strategies is to put greater pressure on the elites of the region's stronger states to behave more peacefully and respectful of human rights, and to diversify economic options of the weaker states.

INTRODUCTION

It has always been tempting to analyze the Middle East through geopolitical lenses due to its resource abundance, conflict incidence and its location astride Europe, Africa and Asia. Doing so produces a focus on international events such as Iran and Israel's recent bout of playing Russian roulette with commercial shipping in the region, or Turkish incursions into Syria and Iraq. While such analysis has its uses, it is also inadequate to comprehend the political economy of conflict in the region.¹ Instead, developing such understanding requires simultaneous inquiry across three interlinked dimensions: dynamics of regional great power competition, types and evolution of domestic political orders and the direction of deeper socio-economic trends. It is on the basis of such multi-layered analysis that better regional conflict prevention and conflict management strategies can be developed. This article scopes key issues in each dimension, explores their linkages and suggests initial conclusions.²

COMPETITION BETWEEN STATES

Geopolitically, two frames of the region dominate: one centers on US – Iranian confrontation, the other on regional great power competition. The first prism pits the US, Israel, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia (KSA) against Iran and the groups linked to it that span Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and even Afghanistan and Pakistan. It treats Turkey as a kind of regional juvenile that both sides nevertheless woe in a manner that lies between practical accommodation and occasional resistance. In this view of the Middle East, the Abraham Accords³ of August 2020 were a gamechanger because they turned Israel into an official member of the neighborhood watch group on Iran in spite of the unresolved Palestinian question. The second frame opposes Turkey, Iran and US-supported countries like Israel, Saudi Arabia and the UAE in a regional contest for dominance. In this prism, emotive identifiers like nationalism and sectarianism join cold geopolitical calculations. It also takes Turkey more seriously and downgrades the role of the US somewhat, perhaps anticipating the long-announced “pivot to Asia”.⁴

The value of both frames is that they draw attention to two remarkable developments that occurred in 2003 (US invasion of Iraq) and 2011 (Arab Uprisings) respectively. To begin with, the traditionally powerful Arab states of Iraq, Syria and Egypt successively “imploded” due to invasion, civil war and political/economic crisis. They are no

longer capable of much structural autonomous engagement beyond their borders. In a sense, they joined the already weak state of Lebanon – epitomizing elite capture of civil war recovery – and a somewhat stronger Jordan – epitomizing elite dependency on US/Gulf largesse. In terms of strength of the state and quality of national governance, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon have come to form a kind of “black hole” in the heart of the Middle East.

In addition, both geopolitical frames demonstrate how the originally separate security complexes⁵ of the Gulf region and the Levant region were welded together by the US invasion of Iraq, the question of a nuclear Iran, the Syrian conflict and Islamic State. Today, the Gulf and Levant need to be studied as a continuous area of conflict that is bounded by two regional powers, which connect it with adjacent security complexes⁶ – Turkey with Europe and the Caucasus, and Iran with East Asia and, also, the Caucasus. To make a negative development worse, the aforementioned events also deteriorated relations between the US and Iran, as well as between the US and Turkey. In the case of Iran, the Trump administration firmly cast it as a revisionist religious power, rather than a pragmatic one with interests that can be negotiated. The Biden administration has so far largely maintained this stance in practice. In the case of Turkey, Ankara's bromance with Moscow – personified in Presidents Erdogan and Putin⁷ – as well as Turkey's turn to ‘Eurasia’ have become major irritants. All of this leaves Washington more reliant on a smaller group of regional partners to pursue its interests, which polarizes relations even further.

In sum, two important geopolitical drivers of instability in the Middle East are the growing number of the region's weak states upon whose territory strong states can settle their differences, and the outsized role of the US as extra-regional power (but also Russia, and increasingly China).⁸

ALL FOREIGN POLICY IS DOMESTIC

But viewing the region as geopolitical chessboard is insufficient to explain its current conflict incidence. A key underlying enabler is that the region's political orders are of the “limited access” variety. North, Wallis and Weingast argue that political power in such orders is exercised on the basis of horizontal, personalized elite pacts and vertical patron-client relations. The necessary rents are obtained by elite capture of the “commanding heights of the economy”,⁹ sufficient concentration of the means of violence and use of socio-religious identity markers to maintain mechanisms of loyalty and patronage. In such orders, there is little to no institutional or civic space independent of the personalized relations that dominate rule and wealth acquisition.¹⁰

The rentier dimension of the “limited access orders” of the Middle East has been turbocharged by oil and gas wealth. Even after decades of production, the region remained home to 48% of proven global oil reserves and 38% of proven global gas reserves in 2019.¹¹ Fortune mostly favored the Gulf countries, Iraq and Iran. Jordan, Lebanon and Yemen directly or indirectly depend on their neighbour's riches via remittances, grants and loans. Syria only has limited oil and gas wealth. Turkey and Israel are significant exceptions with correspondingly more diversified economies and lower degrees of authoritarianism.¹² From a conflict perspective, the general model of state-led oil/gas-based rentierism produces several negative consequences.

First and most importantly, it is a key factor explaining the endurance of authoritarian systems, either by trading economic prosperity for political rights (as in the Gulf) or by appropriation for their own benefit (as in Iraq and Iran). Second, the combination of authoritarianism and elite-concentrated wealth has profoundly negative effects on the evolution of private entrepreneurship, social coherence and the bundle of effective rights that come with citizenship. States, in the form of elite networks based on personal relations, dominate these areas through monopolies and clientelism. A third consequence has been that the region's authoritarian elites overspend on security and underspend on human development. For example, military expenditure in the Middle East is among the highest in the world¹³ while the region's citizens are consistently dissatisfied with the quality of education and health care they can obtain, not to mention their economic prospects.¹⁴ Finally, authoritarian elites face fewer constraints on their foreign policies and this makes it easier to support clients across the region, as well as to engage in violence.

In brief, rule by authoritarian networks of elites creates sustained and severe inequalities that invite countermobilization, which can be domestic, transnational or international in character (including the likes of IS). But such networks also stand ready to defend their capture of public authority and resources – if necessary through unconstrained violence. From this perspective, protests across the region – Iran in 2009; Syria, Bahrain, Egypt and Yemen in 2011,

Turkey in 2013 and Lebanon/Iraq in 2019 – are not isolated events but connected by the political and economic marginalization that the region's political orders produce.

he more stable elite networks - those countries with reasonably well-managed internal divisions such as the Gulf states or Iran - are capable and willing to engage in external action that maintains the “limited access order” as regional model. Consequentially, domestic patron-client relations are reproduced at the regional level, creating hierarchies of elites. The interventions in Bahrain, Yemen, Libya, Egypt and Syria by the Emirates and/or Saudi's in the wake of 2011 can be seen in this light. Overlapping and intersecting with these interventions has been the expansion of the Iran-linked “axis of resistance”. While its driving logic is arguably more security-oriented than focused on maintenance of the political status quo, its effects are similar.

Before the outbreak of COVID-19, the status quo ante 2011 had largely been restored in the Middle East and the fight between regional hierarchies of clientelism resumed. In the region's weaker states, like Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq, dominant elite networks were able to mobilize sufficient violence to suppress domestic protests. In the stronger states of the region, like Iran or Saudi Arabia, elites were able to mitigate foreign policy disasters while serious domestic political challenges did not recently arise. Consider the UAE extracting itself scot-free from Yemen, the Saudi's getting away with a slap on the wrist over the murder of Khashoggi or the crisis with Qatar, and Iran avoiding serious censure over its contribution to the carnage in Syria, or its role in the bloody suppression of protests in Iraq.

In sum, a major driver of instability in the Middle East, which underlies and feeds its geopolitical dynamics, is the endurance of a “limited access order model of governance” based on oil/gas rents. It undersupplies public goods, oversupplies private goods and creates patron-client hierarchies at a regional scale.

RUNNING OUT OF GAS...

n terms of socio-economic trends, a fresh challenge to the region's “limited access orders” - that is to say, beyond protest and revolution - reared its head late 2014 / early 2015 in the form of a USD 30-40 drop in the price of a barrel of oil that has mostly persisted.¹⁵ This forced ruling elites across the region (especially in the Gulf) to tighten their purses and introduce public sector budget cuts with significant future ramifications for their clientelist policies across the region. For example, especially Jordan and Egypt may at

some point find themselves without the usual lender-of-last-resort and face the need to take political reform more seriously, or brace for greater unrest. Lebanon has already arrived at this point.

Plans for economic diversification have accompanied such public sector budget cuts in the Gulf, Iraq and Iran.¹⁶ They tend to be top-down, capital-intensive and conglomerate-centric efforts to allow ruling elites to maintain economic control.¹⁷ Such plans are likely to have significant social consequences as they typically also reduce subsidies and introduce taxes while lacking mechanisms to obtain citizen feedback or engagement.¹⁸ More importantly, they are prone to failure since long-term economic growth tends to come from a broad base that is absent given the poor state of medium-sized enterprises, citizen engagement and international investor confidence. The fate of NEOM - a futuristic megacity in the northwest of Saudi Arabia - is instructive in this regard. In other words, the oil/gas resources that underpin the “limited access order” clientelism of the region is eroding, but feasible alternatives are hardly being developed. This is setting the region up for new socio-political turbulence in the not-so-distant future.¹⁹

In addition to the budgetary troubles of the region's strong states, COVID-19 put the weaker client states of the region's “limited access order” in a tight spot as the pandemic's health and economic impact highlighted the poor performance of their rulers in delivering on the priorities of their citizens. Poverty rates are rising to the range of 40-50% in Lebanon and Iraq, for example.²⁰ But even though this situation poses a risk to elite network governance in the form of more protests in Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq, it also presents such networks with an opportunity to deepen existing dependencies by holding out the prospect of clientelist-based survival. On the basis of, for example, sectarianism.

But this comes with new risks as strengthening such identities also increases habits and practices of exclusion. Springborg rightly notes that the Middle East's high degree of social regionalization goes hand in hand with a low degree of politico-institutional regionalization.²¹ In other words, in sociocultural-religious terms, much of the Middle East is an interwoven tapestry, but in terms of political institutions it is both under-connected and compartmentalized. Ethno-sectarian identities in the Middle East tend to have a transnational dimension. If such identities are not inclusively managed at the national level, alternative pathways for mobilization as well as foreign interference can open up with relative ease. For instance, strengthening sectarian identities in a context of strong social regionalization risks reproducing the transnational radicalization of the past decade.

In addition, greater use of clientelist networks by the elites that run the region's weaker states will deepen their own dependence on the region's stronger states that sponsor them. Higher-level elite networks in places like the UAE, Saudi Arabia or Iran will not hesitate to strengthen their hold on lower-level networks. But they themselves also face long-term threats to their wealth. Should demand for regional patronage exceed supply, several scenarios are possible, including a search for new sources of revenue (which might be illicit, such as the increasing drugs trade involving Syria and Hezbollah), greater involvement of extra-regional sponsors (like China) or shortfalls resulting in greater protests or unrest. From a conflict perspective, all are bound to produce at least some negative effects.

Ultimately, the economically poor outcomes that the political orders of the Middle East produce for many of their citizens are likely to grow worse. If elites seek to manage the ensuing dissatisfaction by placing greater emphasis on identity politics or by taking greater recourse to violence, new conflict risks abound.

The Middle East as a region faces difficult times ahead, irrespective of how the Syrian civil war might be resolved, the nuclear deal renegotiated or Islamic State resurge. This is because key fundamentals of its political order are under pressure, its geographical core has weakened, and regional institutions that can mitigate conflict and address collective action problems remain absent. This mix presents a Gordian knot since resolution of each element depends on resolution of the others. For example, developing a regional infrastructure plan to increase economic connectivity is hardly conceivable without prior resolution of existing regional tensions. But neither are these tensions easy to resolve without creating a win-win proposition through, for instance, greater economic prosperity.

The economic aftershocks of COVID-19 lend urgency to the task of managing the turbulent times ahead without delay since the pandemic's political effects could be profound. Just as the banking crisis of 2008 was a dark cloud on the horizon of the Arab Uprisings, so might the inequality and poverty triggered by COVID-19 relate to similar future upheaval.

External parties can – arguably must – help since regional capabilities of self-innovation are limited at present. But the manner in which support is provided will be crucial, and in particular the extent to which it seeks to make the region's political orders more inclusive without triggering greater conflict.

As a starting point, the growing socio-economic pressures on the weaker political orders of the region can be leveraged to substitute their dependency on oil/gas patronage for dependency on international loans and grants via the International Financial Institutions – especially in times of rock-bottom interest rates on public lending. The inevitable conditionality must be made sufficiently attractive in the short-term to be agreeable to ruling elites, but intrusive and forceful enough to enable political change in the long-term. A more aggressive and less cumbersome international regulatory

framework to go after ill-gotten assets – consider Swiss accounts, British passports or Parisian penthouses – could induce ruling elites to cooperate.²² Such efforts need to be designed for the long-haul. Clientelist systems were not constructed overnight and neither will their deconstruction.

Moreover, Europe and the US should put a halt to the blatant disregard for human rights and democratic values that their dealings with the region's authoritarian rulers often display as long as Western interests are accommodated. Such dynamics were once again painfully on display by President Macron conferring the Legion d'Honneur on President El-Sisi – the man behind the Rabaa massacre, for example. After 2011, Western countries can no longer expect stability in the Middle East while doing business as usual with the region's authoritarian regimes due to their poor performance in terms of governance and human development.

Halting arms sales, providing firmer political support for human rights and civic activists, as well as advocating for stronger UN involvement across the region offer further starting points. From the latter perspective, the single greatest contribution the US could arguably make is to leave the region to its own devices and actually execute its “pivot to Asia”. This would reduce the tendency to play hardball in parts of the region due to the Fifth Fleet hoovering in the background, and force consideration of more neighborly arrangements.

ENDNOTES

1. See for instance: Gordon Lubold, Benoit Faucon and Felicia Schwartz, “Israeli Strikes Target Iranian Oil Bound for Syria,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 11, 2021, accessed March 15, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/israel-strikes-target-iranian-oil-bound-for-syria-11615492789>.
2. I would like to thank Nancy Ezzeddine and Monika Sie (Clingendael), Maysam Behraves (Lund University) and Joseph Bahout (Issam Fares Institute) for their helpful feedback.
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7. Stuart Williams, “The Uneasy Alliance Between Putin and Erdogan,” *Newlines Magazine*, online, 11 March 2021.
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12. The myth of Israel as the only democracy of the Middle East does not stand up to scrutiny as long as the Palestinian issue remains unresolved. It can be considered as a partial authoritarian system.
13. See the SIPRI Military Expenditure Database and the SIPRI Military Balance.
14. See the various Human Development Reports; also: J. Jamal et al., *Citizenship 360° in the Arab Region: Perceptions on Sustainable Development across Countries, Income, and Gender* (New York: UNDP/RBAS, 2020).
15. See: “Crude oil,” Trading Economics, last accessed March 14, 2021, <https://tradingeconomics.com/commodity/crude-oil>
16. In Iran's case, this has also been strongly influenced by the US sanction regime since 2018.
17. Adam Hanieh, Money, markets and monarchies: *The GCC and the political economy of the contemporary Middle East* (Cambridge: CUP, 2018).
18. Hanieh; Springborg.
19. See: International Energy Agency, *World energy outlook 2020*, online, accessed March 15, 2021.
20. See: “United Nations expects poverty in Iraq to double to 40% in 2020,” Middle East Monitor, accessed March 15, 2021, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200514-united-nations-expects-poverty-in-iraq-to-double-to-40-in-2020>; UN ESCWA, *Poverty in Lebanon* (Beirut: UN ESCWA, 2020).
21. Springborg.
22. For example, the burden of proof could be reversed so that appropriation of assets becomes possible if their owner cannot credibly demonstrate they have been financed with licit funds, akin to the ‘Unexplained Wealth Orders’ in the UK: “Unexplained wealth orders,” *BBC.com*, accessed March 16, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/c12jr19ngdt/unexplained-wealth-orders>.

Establishing Accountability for Grave Human Rights Violations in Belarus

CASE STUDY ON THE OSCE MOSCOW MECHANISM

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Abstract: The Moscow Mechanism of the human dimension allows for producing a fact-finding report with recommendations on serious human rights and/or democracy problems in one of the OSCE participating states, within a relatively short period. Such problems usually also affect a wider concept of security. This case study of the most recent use of the Moscow mechanism for the alleged election fraud and the very serious human rights violations in Belarus in 2020 first introduces the rules governing the use of this mechanism and then informs about its findings, recommendations and the follow-up to the report. It shows that although the mechanism faces difficulties, due to the short period of implementation and the possible lack of cooperation of the country under investigation, it still is capable of producing a substantive result and serves in a catalytic role for the efforts of interested actors.

Bottom-line-up-front: Different from the position of the Russian Federation and its allies the Moscow Mechanism is not obsolete but does constitute a major fact-finding tool of the OSCE which has proven its value and should be used also in the future. olution, with inputs from Austria based on its long-standing engagement in Ethiopia.

Problem statement: How can the OSCE investigate alleged violations of human rights and democracy in its participating states?

So what?: The OSCE's Moscow mechanism provides a little known, but effective tool of the organisation to have major allegations of violations of human rights and democracy investigated by independent experts. The resulting fact-finding report and recommendations can serve as a basis for further action in OSCE/ODIHR and beyond by interested states and international organizations, as well as strengthen the efforts of pertinent NGOs and human rights defenders.

THE MOSCOW MECHANISM

The Moscow Mechanism was created at the Moscow meeting of CSCE in 1991 to strengthen the human dimension of the CSCE, which has been transformed into the OSCE in 1995. The security concept of OSCE includes a strong focus on human rights and democracy¹. According to the Moscow Mechanism, a group of minimum ten so-called “invoking states” of the 57 participating states of the OSCE can request a report on “a particularly serious threat to the fulfilment of the provisions of the OSCE human dimension” in another participating State². The usual practice is to first make use of the so-called “Vienna Mechanism” of 1990, which basically foresees an exchange of information. This has been the case before the invocation of the Moscow Mechanism in the case of the Chechnya/Russian Federation³. However, in urgent matters, as in the case of alleged major human rights violations in Belarus in 2020, the 17 invoking states did not apply the Vienna Mechanism.

The Moscow Mechanism in principle foresees the establishment of a mission of inquiry of three experts, who are drawn from a roster kept by OSCE/ODIHR based on nominations from participating states. Accordingly, the invoking states choose their expert rapporteur, after which the requested state may, within six days, choose a second rapporteur and the two have to agree on a third one as the chair from the same resource list⁴. All those experts must not be nationals of the states involved. However, if the requested state chooses not to appoint his rapporteur within the period foreseen, the expert chosen by the invoking states becomes the single rapporteur with the mandate to draw up a report on the facts and also to produce recommendations on possible solutions to the question raised⁵.

The requested state is under obligation to cooperate fully with the mission of the expert(s) and facilitate its work. In particular, according to the rules, it has to facilitate the entry of the mission in its territory, free travel therein and any meetings the mission wants to have with officials, NGOs or other persons of interest, who are to be protected against any reprisals⁶. However, the practice so far has been different. In all contentious cases, the state under investigation has refused to cooperate and declined the respective rapporteur access to its territory or institutions and persons on its territory⁷. Different from the two cases of self-invocation (Estonia 1992 and Moldova 1993), in the four contentious cases of Turkmenistan (2003), Belarus I (2011), Chechnya (2018) and Belarus

II (2020) the rapporteur appointed by the invoking states had to do the mission as a single expert.

The conditions of work for such missions are difficult because the OSCE secretariat has to take a neutral role and only provides administrative support through the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Warsaw. Accordingly, the experienced staff of OSCE cannot contribute to the drawing up of the report, as it is the practice with other international organizations like the Council of Europe. All that ODIHR can contribute is to publicize the mission and to establish a channel of information, in practice an e-mail address for anybody, whether individual or NGO who wants to share information with the rapporteur. It may also help with technical matters such as translations. The cost of the expert and possible research assistance as well as of the role of ODIHR has to be covered by the invoking states. A major limitation, in particular in case of a wider mandate is also the time-limit of 14 days between the formal appointment and the submission of the report to the invoking states and ODIHR, which shares it with the requested state. After receipt, the report is translated by ODIHR into the language of the state under investigation, which has two weeks to submit eventual observations on the report. Again, because of the refusal of cooperation, in practice this has not been the case so far. After this deadline, the report is communicated to all participating states of OSCE and presented by the rapporteur at the following session of the Permanent Council, followed by a debate.

THE CASE OF BELARUS 2020

In the case of the invocation of the Moscow Mechanism on Belarus in 2020, the author of this contribution has been appointed by 17 invoking states as a rapporteur. In fulfilling his mandate, he benefitted from his experience in a previous mission under the Moscow Mechanism on Chechnya⁸.

The mandate of the rapporteur was to establish the facts and give advice on possible solutions to the concerns raised, which were defined as:

“Intimidation and persecution of political activists, candidates, journalists, media actors, lawyers, labour activists and human rights defenders, as well as the detention of prospective candidates; election fraud; restriction on access to information, including internet shutdowns; excessive use of force against peaceful protesters; arbitrary and unlawful arrests or detentions; beatings; sexual and gender violence; abductions and enforced disappearances; torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and widespread impunity for all of the above.”

Because of the lack of cooperation from Belarus he had to do the fact-finding mission as a single expert. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) provided administrative and logistical support. In particular it opened a channel for communications under the Moscow Mechanism through which the rapporteur received more than 700 submissions, many of them testimonies with documents, photos and videos of the human rights violations and their results. With the support of several Russian-speaking assistants it was possible to cope with the large amount of material available which included reports from individuals and pertinent local and international human rights organizations. The information received was cross-checked by the rapporteur with other sources available and with the help of number of interviews made with persons having particular knowledge of the events in question as well as with victims of police violence by authorities.

The findings are documented in detail in the comprehensive report of 5 November 2020i. With regard to the question of “election fraud” it comes to the conclusion that there were evident shortcomings of the presidential elections which did not meet the basic requirements established on the basis of previous election monitoring. This relates in particular to: 1) non-timely invitation of international observers, 2) shortcomings in the appointment of election management bodies on all levels, 3) restrictions of the right to stand, 4) limitations in election dispute resolution, 5) overall disregard for freedom of assembly, 6) unequal playing field for candidates, 7) non-transparent early voting process, 8) lack of possibility to verify the electoral results, 9) inaccessibility of all steps of the electoral process for proper observation.

ODIHR having been invited too late to observe the crucial process of registration of candidates as it had been the practice in previous elections, rightfully renounced to send a monitoring mission. The observations by local monitoring organizations, citizens and international observers with good reasons found that the presidential elections did not meet the basic international requirements for genuine elections. Accordingly, the allegations that the presidential elections were not transparent as well as neither free nor fair were found confirmed.

Regarding the *alleged major human rights abuses* committed by the Belarusian security forces in response to peaceful demonstrations and protests, those were found to be massive and systematic and unfortunately continuing also after the end of the mission. Based on recent reliable reports, by December 2020 there were already more than 30,000 arrests of overwhelmingly peaceful demonstrators, many of them sentenced to up to 15 days of administrative detention, while some 400 criminal cases had been opened against protesters. Practically all of them experienced police brutality through beatings and inhuman treatment in police cars and detention facilities. Some 150 cases were considered as political prisoners. There were several killings as a result of disproportionate violence by the security forces.

The facts assembled in the report show massive arbitrary detentions, systematic torture of protesters in the first days after the elections, regular beatings and cases of sexual violence, while most cases of disappearance could be resolved. The wide-spread ill-treatment of protesters is proven by a vast number of testimonies supported with pictures and videos, despite attempts by the authorities to prevent independent reporting by journalists, citizens and NGOs. There were systematic shutdowns of the Internet with some 70 webpages fully blocked. Some 370 journalists have been detained during this time, more than 110 accused of participation in illegal assemblies and some 90 sentenced to jail from 3 -15 days. One of the most important news portals, TUT.BY was deprived of its mass media status¹⁰.

The purpose of the massive police brutality appears to be the intimidation and harassment of citizens, which is also taking place through threats and reprisals of different kinds against civil society, workers on strike, student and teacher protests, defence lawyers and reporting journalists as well as businessmen supporting the protests. The brutality of the security forces is not limited to demonstrations but extends also to reprisals for any kind of support to protesters as can be seen from the case of the owner of a flower shop, who used to provide flowers to women protesting and who was beaten so heavily in a police station that he had to be hospitalized. He later had to leave the country.

It is particularly worrying that the well-documented cases of torture and ill-treatment in the crackdown by the security forces on political dissent have not as yet resulted in anybody being held accountable although some 2,000 complaints have been brought to the authorities. Together with the absence of a fair trial in political cases this confirms allegations of general impunity. In conclusion, the right to liberty and security are under massive attack, as are the freedom of assembly and association, the freedom of the media and the safety of journalists and the right to a fair trial. While protesters are criminalized, perpetrators enjoy impunity.

As requested by his mandate, the rapporteur made recommendations to the Republic of Belarus, to OSCE and to the International Community, which should contribute to addressing the dramatic situation with regard to the Presidential elections and the related massive human rights violations. This was done in a constructive spirit with a view to the future of Belarus as a European country based on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. A brief summary of the altogether 88 recommendations in the report should illustrate some of them:

With regard to the *presidential elections of 9 August*, the Republic of Belarus was recommended to cancel the results due to irregularities at all stages of the process and to organize new, genuine, presidential elections based on international standards as contained in previous ODIHR/OSCE recommendations and with the timely invitation of international observation.

Regarding the Situation of Human Rights in Belarus, it was recommended to immediately cease all violence, in particular ill-treatment against peaceful protesters and opponents and to unconditionally release all prisoners held for political reasons, including all detainees who were arrested in relation to the presidential elections before and after 9 August 2020; and to engage in a dialogue with all actors, in particular civil society and political opponents.

Regarding the right to a fair trial, it is recommended to ensure that the standards of fair trial

like the presumption of innocence and the speedy access to legal assistance as well as the independence of judges are respected both in criminal as well as administrative procedures; the harassment of lawyers representing political prisoners has to be stopped;

Regarding freedom of assembly and association, it is recommended to fully respect the freedom of peaceful assembly in line with international standards which includes the respect for the right to spontaneous assemblies as part of the right to assembly; to stop threatening parents with custodial removal of children in the context of participation in assemblies or political dissent; to respect legitimate protests in the fields of culture, universities and sports as well as from labour activists or religious leaders and to refrain from taking reprisals for such actions;

Regarding freedom of expression and the media, it is recommended to ensure the safety of all journalists and to refrain from any persecution related to the performance of their duties and to the seizure of and damage to equipment and footage; to facilitate and deregulate the accreditation of foreign journalists; to refrain from interference with access to the Internet including mobile Internet and to terminate censorship and blocking of webpages as well as any restrictions on bloggers;

Regarding accountability and preventing impunity, it is recommended to promptly investigate all allegations of torture, ill-treatment, sexual violence and killings by security forces, including their disproportionate use of weapons by an independent and impartial body; to provide effective judicial remedies for alleged violations of human rights; to ensure full accountability of perpetrators, to speedily bring those responsible for torture, inhuman treatment and other human rights violations to justice; and to allow for the UN Special Procedures, in particular the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Belarus to visit the country on the basis of standing invitations;

With regard to measures of a structural nature it was recommended to invite the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe to assist with necessary constitutional and other legal reforms, which are particularly needed for the electoral law, the criminal code, for the law and registration procedure for public associations, political parties and labour unions or the law on mass events; to abolish the administrative sanction of detention for unauthorized peaceful assemblies; However, without democratic and structural reforms, it cannot be expected

that necessary legal reforms suggested will have the desired effects.

To OSCE participating states and the International Community were recommended to establish an independent international body for the in-depth investigation of human rights violations in the context of the presidential elections with the help of forensic experts to safely collect the evidence of major human rights abuses for future trials; to bring perpetrators of torture and inhuman treatment among the Belarusian security forces and their responsible superiors to justice wherever possible; to provide assistance to persons who have to leave the country, both for their (temporary) protection as well as for the treatment of injuries and traumata as a result of torture and ill-treatment; and to provide support to all human rights defenders and civil society organizations promoting and protecting human rights in Belarus¹¹.

The report on Belarus was presented to the Permanent Council of OSCE on 5 November 2020, which, because of the COVID-19 restrictions was done online¹². In the following debate, the report received much support, with the exception of Belarus and the Russian Federation and some of their allies, who argued that the Moscow mechanism was obsolete¹³.

FOLLOW-UP TO THE REPORT

The follow-up to the report and its recommendations under the Moscow Mechanism depends mainly on the initiative of the invoking states and other interested actors, because there is no follow-up procedure foreseen after the presentation and discussion of the report in the Permanent Council. For example, in the case of the report on human rights violations in Chechnya of 2018 a side event on the human rights situation in Chechnya took place during the Human Rights Implementation Meeting in Warsaw in 2019. In a joint statement of 34 participating states in the Permanent Council of December 2020 the Russian Federation and Chechnya were asked to respond to some key recommendations¹⁴.

Regarding the report on the human rights situation in Belarus, it was welcomed by numerous states, European bodies and civil society and the rapporteur was invited to present it to the Sub-Committee on Human Rights of the European Parliament, the EU Political and Security Committee (PSC) of the EU, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), to a special side event of the UN General Assembly and in several NGO meetings. Several countries and the EU took or enlarged sanctions against persons in Belarus. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe asked the Venice Commission for an opinion on the compatibility

of certain provisions of its criminal law used to persecute peaceful demonstrators with European standards¹⁵.

With regard to the implementation of one key recommendation, on the creation of an independent international investigation body for the in-depth investigation of the evidence on major human rights violations in a quality that it can be used in future trials to prevent impunity and ensure accountability, several initiatives were started by interested states, the European Union and NGOs. As a result, in March 2021 an “International Accountability Platform for Belarus” was presented by a consortium of 19 states to be run as an independent organization as a joint venture of several international and local NGOs. Its task is the collection, consolidation, verification and preservation of evidence of serious human rights violations in Belarus¹⁶. In addition, on the initiative of the EU the Human Rights Council of the United Nations in its Session in March 2021 decided to set up a new mechanism with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to investigate the serious human rights violations in Belarus and to collect the evidence with a view to contribute to accountability for perpetrators and justice for victims. It will also cooperate with all stakeholders including OSCE¹⁷. In conclusion, the Moscow Mechanism did have a significant impact on the international response to the human rights situation in Belarus.

ENDNOTES

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India and China: GEOPOLITICS IN THE INDO- PACIFIC DECADE – PART II

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Abstract: The two nuclear-armed nations with the largest militaries and populations in Asia are slowly but surely turning into regional rivals despite their shared aspirations for multipolarity and cooperation on international issues of mutual interest. From a geopolitical point of view, the new great game will be predominantly situated in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean due to rising competition between the two Asian giants, in addition to the systemic rivalry between China and the USA. The Indo-Pacific decade will witness manifold arenas of geopolitical clashes and geoeconomic competition between India and China.

Bottom-line-up-front: The outcome of the geostrategic rivalry between China and India is not clear yet. The geopolitical approach of both countries is reflective of *a constructive pragmatism when necessary and a comprehensive competition whenever possible*.

Problem statement: In what way does the complex security triangle between China, India and Pakistan affect their relations? What are the main issues in the geoeconomic competition between China and India? What geopolitical scenarios can be relevant for the future?

So what?: Given that China and India will be the two major powers of the Indo-Pacific region, their relationship will increasingly be shaped by economic competition, geostrategic rivalry and a certain readiness for confrontation in their quest for shaping this common geopolitical space. There are two plausible scenarios: either the USA and India will unite to coordinate actions and measures against the growing influence of China in tandem with Russia (the Dragonbear) or the USA and China will engage in a process of approximation, whereas India will need to carefully navigate between the two systems of power without aligning itself in a strategic manner.

TERRITORIAL SKIRMISHES ALONG THE ACTUAL LINE OF CONTROL

In reality the political, economic, and diplomatic relations between China and India have grown significantly in recent decades, guided by the principle of cooperation and trust building¹. Beijing's surging geopolitical clout and geo-economic footprint, however, coupled with the focal points of unresolved border issues, brought about a shift in the relationship between the two Asian powers in most recent times. The two nuclear-armed nations with the largest militaries and populations in Asia are slowly but surely turning into regional rivals despite their shared aspirations for multipolarity and cooperation on international issues of mutual interest. The geopolitical tensions between them have particularly intensified since 2017. There have been armed clashes on the Sino-Indian border in the Himalayas. This was not only the worst standoff in the last decade, but it ultimately resulted in a shift in the bilateral relationship from a cooperative towards a more confrontational modality. The disputed region on the Doklam plateau is claimed by both China and Bhutan and is of strategic importance to India, due to its proximity to the Indian border².

Most recently, the Asian giants got involved in the Galwan skirmishes along the Line of Actual Control, causing an unprecedented loss of life on both sides³. It eventually led to the deployment of troops on both sides of the border, with China allegedly mobilizing 50,000 troops⁴. Jagannath Panda names the "rising tempers on both sides alongside more robust nationalism in each country that frames the other as an antagonistic power" as the main reasons for the most recent tensions⁵.

Neither the clashes with China along the disputed Himalayan border nor the Chinese presence on the Tibetan plateau are expected to diminish or to be resolved diplomatically. The incidents between the Indian and Chinese troops throughout the last year, which unfolded in the Ladakh highlands⁶, are expected to repeatedly occur in the upcoming years. Furthermore, India will have to develop its transport infrastructure near the common border as well as transform its military to enhance its capabilities towards a containment of Chinese activities near Indian territories. Finally, the two armies will remain engaged in a standoff in "Pangong Tso, Galwan Valley, Demchok and Daulat Beg Oldie in Eastern Ladakh", which might easily lead to another brinkmanship in the future⁷.

COMPLEX SECURITY TRIANGLE BETWEEN CHINA, INDIA AND PAKISTAN

While China sees the USA as its most significant competitor, so does India feel about China. In addition, India is more cautious since Beijing has established close ties with Pakistan, while China increasingly distrusts New Delhi because of its mutually warming relations with the USA. In this context, Pakistan is clearly the apple of discord between them, whereas the Kashmir region has been the focal point of conflict since the foundation of India (see also Simon Hartweger in TDHJ Special Edition #01/21). Kashmir has an overwhelming Muslim majority, however, it remains largely part of India, while Pakistan has occupied its Western part. The frozen conflict between the two hostile neighbours is periodically shaped by the emergence of tensions, regular skirmishes and sudden brinkmanship along their common border. Despite the possession of nuclear weapons, both countries have been involved in direct military clashes throughout the decades. What adds most aggravation to the already complicated geopolitical situation from an Indian point of view is the steady geoeconomic rapprochement between China and Pakistan. Beijing has gained an access to the Indian Ocean through the Comprehensive Economic Corridor (CPEC), which entails railways and a trans-Himalayan highway in Pakistan and a port in Gwadar – to the disadvantage of Indian geopolitical and geoeconomic interests⁸. In this regard, India seeks to act as the most significant naval power in the IOR, as the Chinese presence is becoming menacing to India's goals⁹. For that reason, both Asian powers seek to strengthen their positions in South Asia through various cooperation formats and economic ties. Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Maldives are already witnessing a strong Chinese presence in their domestic affairs. And yet, New Delhi aims to offer an alternative to the Chinese connectivity projects by attracting foreign investment and engaging the neighbouring countries diplomatically and economically. Thus, South Asia will witness a growing competition between China and India over the "hearts and minds" in each of these countries, whereas even diplomatic efforts towards a normalization of the relations between New Delhi and Islamabad would not be unrealistic in the future.

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“The outcome of the geostrategic rivalry between China and India is not clear yet. The geopolitical approach of both countries is reflective of ***a constructive pragmatism when necessary and a comprehensive competition whenever possible.***”

INDIA'S GEOPOLITICAL APPROACH TOWARDS CHINA

The two Asian goliaths are already vying for limited resources at a time when the COVID-19 crisis has been exacerbating each socio-economic aspect of their domestic affairs and disrupting global supply chains. A large proportion of the world's goods as well as energy transports pass through the Indo-Pacific region, entailing some of the most significant maritime routes and global choke points for food and oil supply. Around 40% of the world's oil shipments and one-third of the annual global trade in goods pass through the Indian and Pacific Ocean, including critical transport hubs such as the Strait of Hormuz, the connection to the Persian Gulf, and the Strait of Malacca, the main artery between the two oceans¹⁰. An immense proportion of the world's raw material supplies also pass through the Indian Ocean on their way from Africa to the South China Sea and beyond¹¹. In view of the increasing interconnections in the Indo-Pacific region, a rise of tensions can be expected due to an enhanced competition over natural resources, the hindered access to free navigation along the oil and food choke points as well as the disrupted access to water.

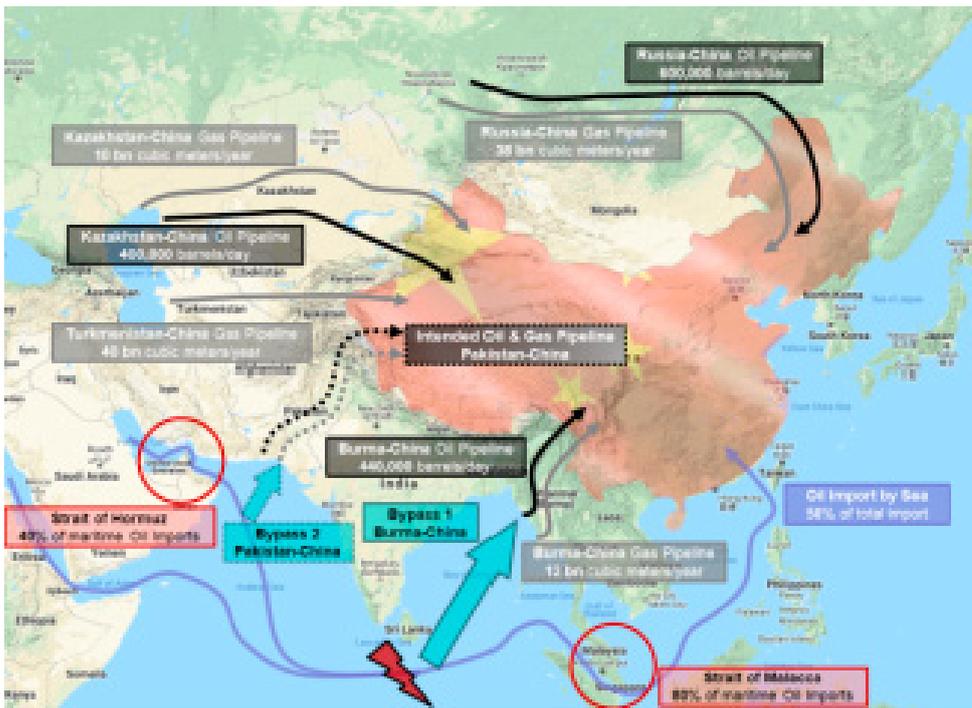


Figure 1: Oil Supply in the Indo-Pacific Region (AIES Map)

Furthermore, Beijing's controversial region Xinjiang occupies a strategic position in China's main terrestrial connectivity projects within the BRI – the primary route goes through Russia (Dragonbear¹²), the middle route through Central Asia, with deviations through Iran and Turkey, and the Black Sea, and a third one through Pakistan (CPEC) connecting to the port Gwadar in the Indian Ocean. Xinjiang, known for its forced labour camps and broad discrimination of human rights against the Muslim Uighurs, is of great importance as China asserts claims over parts of India's Arunachal Pradesh, while India claims the region Aksai Chin connecting Tibet with Xinjiang in Northwest China. The two nations have even fought a war over this territory in 1962. From a geopolitical point of view, the rapprochement with Pakistan offers a solution to several key issues in terms of the long-term Chinese interests – a transport and trade route from China to the Indian Ocean and Gwadar port as a maritime component of the BRI. Moreover, an ambitious and cost-intensive project such as CPEC requires safety and protection, which China already provides with the help of private security companies. Finally, Gwadar is part of a comprehensive network of ports in key locations, which enables power projection in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond.

FUTURE GEOPOLITICAL SCENARIOS

From a geopolitical point of view, the new great game will be predominantly situated in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean due to rising competition between the two Asian giants, in addition to the systemic rivalry between China and the USA¹³. The rapprochement¹⁴ between China and Pakistan, as well as the systemic coordination between China and Russia (the Dragonbear)¹⁵ in a much broader geopolitical context, are key examples of fluid regional formations. Russia remains a major actor with a significant geopolitical potential for both China and India. Moscow's approach during the border tensions in 2020 clearly

showed that it prefers to play the role of a mediator, aimed at mitigating possible escalations instead of taking sides. In fact, Russia has a strong geoeconomic interest in supplying arms to both countries and would reluctantly renounce this opportunity in the future. However, the phenomenon of a systemic coordination between China and Russia in various key fields is perceptibly becoming a factor in India's foreign and security calculus. As a rising regional power, India could use the trilateral format with the Dragonbear to coordinate important conflictual positions and invest in trust building regarding security and defence issues in the Indo-Pacific region.

Logically, the US regards India as a significant and reliable partner in creating a counterweight to China's overwhelming presence in South and South East Asia. Following the COVID-19 crisis outbreak and the deteriorating relations between members of the West and China (e.g. Canada, Australia, and member states of the European Union), the re-emergence of the QUAD¹⁶ and other constellations that include core members of the Anglosphere¹⁷ such as CPTPP¹⁸, are increasingly seen as part of a broader US-led counterbalancing effort against China's rise, including geoeconomic projects such as the BRI¹⁹, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor²⁰ and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership²¹. Obviously, the political elites in New Delhi are increasingly in favour of closer relations with Washington, but also continue to rely on friendly relations with Moscow amid the intensifying tensions with Beijing. It remains to be seen whether Biden's Administration will skillfully play a balancing act between China and India in the near future. It is expected that a major geopolitical shift in the region will take place due to Washington's efforts to establish a comprehensive strategic relationship with New Delhi. Furthermore, China will continue extending its terrestrial connectivity to Europe through Central Asia, to bypass the US maritime dominance in the Indo-Pacific space.

There are two plausible scenarios²² linked to the Indo-Pacific region in the short term: either the USA and India will unite to coordinate actions and measures against the growing influence of China in tandem with Russia (the Dragonbear) or the USA and China will engage in a process of approximation under Biden's Administration, which seems increasingly unlikely, whereas India will need to carefully navigate between the two systems of power without aligning itself in a strategic manner. In the case of further escalations in South Asia, the USA would support New Delhi, while Russia would rather seek to remain officially unaligned.

India's geopolitical choices are either joining the US-led bloc of predominantly Anglosphere allies and close partners such as Japan and Australia against China, or, once again, building partnerships of non-aligned middle powers that can navigate through the complex relationship between Washington and Beijing without taking sides.

Geographically speaking, China is an Asian-Pacific country, while India is turning into an Indo-Pacific one. However, the focal point of intersection between China's terrestrial and maritime connectivity projects is situated in the Indo-Pacific region, where Beijing will further seek to enhance its presence and geo-economic leverage. It is beyond any doubt that China has adopted a geopolitical approach of simultaneously becoming a "heartland" (Central and Eastern Europe, Eurasia, the Dragonbear) and "rimland" power (the Indo-Pacific, South China Sea and South East Asia)²³. Such approach will trigger further tensions with India in the upcoming Indo-Pacific decade. New Delhi will have to make tough geopolitical choices and engage in multi-fora alliances. Unless China builds its navy big enough for power projection into the Indian Ocean, India will keep its leverage as a major naval power. However, China is gaining more importance in the geo-economic arena by the day. Thus, there is a risk that India will cede ground to Beijing on trade, investment, and infrastructure issues. In addition, China may be viewed as being an emerging winner from the current COVID-19 crisis, while it will take more time for India to recover²⁴. This will give China an additional geo-economic leverage, particularly while engaging countries linked to the Indo-Pacific region.

To conclude, the outcome of the geopolitical rivalry between China and India is not clear yet. The geopolitical approach of both countries is reflective of a constructive pragmatism when necessary and a comprehensive competition whenever possible. Given that China and India will be the two major powers of the Indo-Pacific region, their relationship will increasingly be shaped by economic competition, geostrategic rivalry, and a certain readiness for confrontation in their quest for shaping this common geopolitical space.

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