



UNFOLDING THE MIDDLE- EAST CRISIS: Rethinking the deeper causes and the current interpretations!!

It is not new that for a long time now many discussions have been raised about the nature and the success of the current peacebuilding agenda and about the correlation of peace and development. Hence, before starting analyzing the specific cases of the ongoing middle-east crisis it would be useful to set the general context in which contemporary international politics operate. The main debate in my point of view is whether neoliberal globalization constitutes the triumph of the western liberal values and system by promoting peace, cooperation and stability in the world or if in contrast, it releases serious forms of resistance and deadly security threats for the west.

At this point, we should focus on three specific aspects: Firstly on the super-territorial character that liberal governance seems to acquire, which is questioning the role of the state in general. Secondly, on the role of the neoliberal development agenda in the peacebuilding process and finally, in correlation to the last, on the liberal and human-right based values imposition that many characterize as a cultural imperialism.

To start with, as O. Richmond put it, based on the analysis of M. Foucault, ‘the balance of power, hegemony, institutionalism and constitutionalism and civil society converge in this version of peace in an era of governmentality which is super-territorial and multi-layered’, namely in the era of neoliberal globalization. Foucault had described liberalism as a new art of government based on economy over a ‘population’ and not over a territory which provides freedom up to the point this kind of freedom does not turn against the authority (freedom within the liberal ‘pacts of security’). If this happens, then the authority has the right to move outside the liberal values in order to maintain the single most important aim of the liberal societies the one of security. This analysis of Foucault that maps in this point closely with the ‘securitization concept’ of the Copenhagen school should be taken seriously into account by all those that are idealistically judging the current policy shifts in terms of multiculturalism in countries like Germany, UK and France. These shifts might seem too conservative, but actually are founded on the very liberal notion of security, namely on the factor that puts aside any political dispute and legitimizes actions outside the liberal system of values when it comes to the issue of security.

This was and is the most important factor for maintaining peace in the liberal world so far while it is based on the sovereign state- model. However, globalization has raised new non-state forces and has made the boundaries between states more unclear. Whether, though, this will bring peace, as we are going closer to an international cooperative community model, is highly debatable. The shift from the liberal ‘governmentality’ within the boundaries of a sovereign state to a ‘super-territorial governmentality’ in the form of questioning state authorities and imposing the liberal values on the whole world might turn out to be quite problematic. Firstly, because it is not clear what kind of authority will promote this new type of global governance if not the states. In other words, who will have the power to do it and depending on that, what will be the exact direction that it will give. Could it be a transformed hegemonic power that operates within and outside the state (e.g. USA-IMF.-UN-NATO), regional, economic and political zones (e.g. E.U., NAFTA etc.), the International Institutions, or maybe the markets and the multinational firms? Secondly, and most importantly, because this neoliberal economic type of governance produced quite problematic

development results for many of the areas that now constitute sources of conflicts, terrorism and general factors of instability for the international system.

The work of people like R. Wade and B. Milanovic are quite enlightening in terms of illustrating how globalization promotes poverty and inequality, while M. Duffield, M. Pugh and several others make the correlation of the contemporary conflict with the current development agenda. Hence, to come now to the more recent and specific cases in the Middle- East, although generalizations might be dangerous, we can use these three problematic aspects of the neoliberal peace as they were stated before, to take a picture of what is happening there. So far, the most of the western policies are located somewhere in between those two aspects: 1) Intervention with the form of mediation based on the arguments about stability, classical state sovereignty respect and fundamentalist threats 2) An idealist 'idealist' perspective of a responsibility to intervene to save those areas and bring democracy which is incorporated to the R2P (Responsibility To Protect) UN agenda.

This time the mass revolutions on the Arab world in combination with the reluctance of several regimes (e.g. Libya) to follow without any objections the neoliberal economic system, is leading to peacebuilding approaches which are justified by the R2P agenda and seem to forget how important the stable states aspect is. At any case, none of these approaches can succeed a long term peacebuilding. Why? Here comes the critical role of the economic development model. Countries like Egypt and Tunisia were some of the most westernized countries with people that believed and founded their expectations on the following of the liberal development and of this westernization. The results were not though as they had expected and when you have a constant imposing, in the form of a cultural homogenization, of certain values different from your own cultural background (where is multiculturalism in that case?), while at the same time development and a more equal distribution of goods still fails to come, then it is not difficult to have the riots of these people and in many cases their returning to religion.

In addition, we should not forget that most of these areas were former colonial territories and after that a constant part of the political game of decomposing states in order the big powers to increase their influence there. In other words, the current neoliberal development agenda within the context of a 'super-territorial governmentality'

promotes more openness and less state in already unstable areas. In this context, it can be said that the neoliberal development entails the structural causes of the contemporary wars. Neoliberalism so far, destabilizes authorities and creates 'failed states' (neoliberal development undermines liberal peacebuilding?), while the states that it preserves are authoritarian regimes with, at the same time, a sheer neoliberal economic model, the existence of which helps only the operation of the multinational firms and not the long-term stability in these areas.

Hence, we cannot say for sure what was the exact filter of the revolutions and if the outcome that they will give in Egypt, Bahrain, Libya and the other rebelled countries will be more democracy or a rise of fundamentalism. That is why writers from newspapers like 'The New York Times', 'The Guardian' etc, should be more careful when they claim that all these rebellions were for democracy and the liberal notion of freedom thus we should not let the rumors of fundamentalism prevent us from supporting the peoples' will for democracy. What is happening in the Middle- East is not simply an opportunity for democratization, or for more liberalization, but the outcome of the high rates of poverty and inequality that the problematic neoliberal development agenda produces, while a real battle is taking and will continue taking place between conflicting political discourses that try to capitalize these rebellions.

The following quotations can show what results the overlapping process of the 'super-territorial governmentality' with the neoliberal development agenda and the promotion of the liberal democratic values, or else what we call neoliberal globalization, might have to the security, stability and peacebuilding issues:

**M. Foucault (1967)** *'this is what I saw in Tunisia, the evidence of the necessity of myth, of a spirituality, the unbearable quality of certain situations produced by capitalism, colonialism and neocolonialism'*, **S. Huntington (1997)** *'the form of the warfare in the era of globalization may be transformed into a battle of civilizations'*, **B. Tibi (1998)** *'in the Middle – East, we have the existence of a collective identity, which resists to the pressures of nationalism, globalization and modernity in general, through religion'*, **Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (supreme religious leader of Iran, 2011)** *'What is happening*

*now in North Africa, in Egypt and in Tunisia has clearly very big importance to us. It indicates the revival of Islamism that the revolution of the Iranian nation first started'.*

To conclude, before we wear our 'idealistic lenses' in order to judge Cameron, Merkel and Sarkozy, we should first realize how the liberal mechanisms of security operate and the additional challenges that the western liberal societies have to face in the era of globalization. In addition, before we see the rise of democracy in these areas, we should first see the different cultural background of these areas, the contingency of the validity of our beliefs for democracy and freedom, and of course the fact that several parts of the liberal values and agenda were some of the structural causes of these rebellions- revolutions. Multiculturalism perceptions should be first applied to the second case and then we will see again about the first.

In contrast, it would be better to focus on: 1) the economic aspects of neoliberal globalization that seem to promote inequality and poverty within and outside the liberal world and to the systematic policies of decomposition of states which together lead to the emergence of conflicts, riots and terrorism, 2) and of course on the operation of the global illegal trade networks that support them. It is obvious that globalization brings big shifts on the perception of notions such as peace, security and sovereignty and we might now are the observers of the evolution of a global political game that puts a clear end to the liberal 'end of history' arguments and brings to the surface new big challenges for the stability of the international system that might cannot longer be dealt within the liberal and neoliberal context!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

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