HUMAN SECURITY

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The essay poses the question whether the so-called Arab spring offers the potential to complete the 1989 revolutions. It first discusses what was hoped to be achieved in 1989, and it then argues that the post-1989 arrangements failed to prevent new security challenges from emerging. The Islamist threat came to play the role that the Communist threat had played to the West or the Western threat had played to the East. The essay then turns to the question on what needs to happen if current events are to lead to something better. It argues that there is a need to overcome the legacies of the past and adapt institutions to the global present. The world must move away from nationalist and bloc thinking towards a concept of human security – a concept which came out of the Helsinki Agreements in 1975. The case of the recent intervention in Libya illustrates the need for a human security approach in practice.

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INTRODUCTION

It is a special honour to receive an honorary doctoral degree here in Budapest. This is not only because of my family connections. It is also because my formative political and intellectual experience was here in Hungary in the 1980s. It was here, as well as in other Central European countries, that I learned the concept of civil society – an idea that had become dormant in the West. And it was through my

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[1]   The author received an honorary doctoral degree from Corvinus University of Budapest on April 18, 2011. This essay is based on the lecture delivered by the author on the occasion.

discussions with young people and with opposition intellectuals that I absorbed the significance of the coming together of peace and human rights – something I now describe as human security.

This is another turbulent moment in world history when the people power that was experienced here in 1989 is sweeping across the Middle East. So the question I would like to ask in this short lecture is whether the so-called Arab spring offers the potential to complete the 1989 revolutions, to fulfil the aspirations of those who longed for democracy and an end to political violence. The regimes in the Middle East are capitalist and authoritarian, sometimes masked by a sham democratic process. They are not so very different from many post-Communist regimes. So what do these revolutions betoken for the future of this type of regime and for the world? I will start by talking about what we hoped to achieve in 1989 and then what went wrong. I will then ask what needs to happen if current events are to lead to something better.

ASPIRATIONS IN 1989

I would like to begin by telling you my Sarajevo story. A fisherman fishes a mermaid. She says she will give him three wishes if he throws her back into the sea. So he wishes to be young and handsome, he wishes to have a beautiful wife and he wishes to be very important. He throws the mermaid back into the sea and he wakes up in a grand ornate room. He looks in the mirror and he is young and handsome. A beautiful woman comes into the room and she says 'Wake up Ferdinand! We have to go to Sarajevo today!' I told this story when I went to Sarajevo in 1991 just before the war there began. During the 1980s I had three wishes. I wished for democracy in Eastern Europe. I wished to get rid of cruise missiles. And I wished for the Cold War to end. And all my wishes came true and one day a Yugoslav friend rang up and said 'Wake up Mary! There's nationalism and crime and ethnic cleansing! You have to go to Sarajevo today!' That's what happened after 1989. So what should we wish for now?

Actually one could argue that the Cold War ended 14 years before the revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe when the Helsinki Agreement was signed in 1975. It was that agreement that first brought peace and human rights together. As many of you will know, the Helsinki agreement comprised three baskets. The first was the security or peace basket; it was an agreement about the territorial status quo in Europe and about the non use of force on the European continent. The second basket was about economic and scientific cooperation. And the third basket was about respect for human rights. Both the democratic opposition in Central Europe and the peace movement in Western Europe could be viewed as offspring of

that agreement. For the former, the Helsinki agreement provided a legal instrument to publicise their situation and the reduced international tension offered a small but significant political opening. The growth of the peace movement in Western Europe in the early 1980s was a reaction to the proposed new generation of nuclear weapons, which raised fears of a return to pre-Helsinki hostility and military confrontation. Through the mass mobilisation of that period and through growing dialogue and communication across the East–West divide, many of us came to understand and assimilate what the indivisibility of peace and human rights really meant. Some like me in the peace movement came to realise that democracy in Central and Eastern Europe was the way to end the Cold War and the arms race. And many (though not all) in the East European opposition came to understand that reducing the conflict between East and West created space for civil society. We opposed the Cold War not simply because we were afraid of another world war but because the existence of enemies and mutual threats sustained a war mentality that provided a justification for suppressing freedom.

The end of the Cold War was a huge achievement. It meant an end to the Communist regimes and to the kind of binary black–white thinking that inhibited political creativity and social change in the West as well. And yet many are disappointed. The holding of elections did not necessarily bring democracy in the sense that ordinary people could influence the decisions that affect their lives. The introduction of markets increased wealth for a few but also led to new inequalities and social injustices. The re-emergence of nationalist and xenophobic ideologies, the spread of transnational crime, and the growing privatisation of violence exploded in some regions like the Balkans or Central Asia. Moreover, this combination of weak but authoritarian states, social and economic injustice, and new or renewed exclusivist political currents were not just a post-Communist phenomenon. They affected the West as well as other parts of the world.

So what went wrong? Part of what went wrong was our failure to dismantle the legacies of the past and, in particular to transform the thinking and the institutions associated with the Cold War. To be sure, military budgets were cut but this was not the same as disarmament and demobilisation. Soldiers who were unpaid sold their services and their weapons in a newly expanded market in violence contributing to the toxic mixture of crime and insecurity in Africa, the Balkans or Afghanistan. Intelligence and internal security services were less affected and continued to exist. And in the United States, the research and development budget was protected and this laid the basis for new military technologies in the 21st century. The Warsaw Pact was dismantled and a new institution, the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) was established on the basis of the Helsinki Agreement. But NATO was not dismantled; indeed it expanded eastwards. And in post-Soviet space a new organisation, the Commonwealth of

Independent States (CIS) was created. This proliferation of security organisations with different philosophies prevented each other from providing security.

To some extent, security thinking did change as a consequence of the end of the Cold War. A new humanitarian discourse characterised the OSCE as well as organisations like the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN). But that discourse competed with deeply embedded geopolitical mentalities. New nationalisms constructed new 'we-them' dichotomies. And the terrorist attacks on New York on September 11 2001 led to a new 'War on Terror' that bore many of the hallmarks of the Cold War. The Islamist threat came to play the role that the Communist threat had played to the West or the Western threat had played to the East. The War on Terror led to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It provided new justifications for increasing military budgets again, a new lease of life for intelligence services, and new arguments for cracking down on civil liberties. In the Middle East, for example, where authoritarian regimes have lasted longest, the argument that Islam is unsuited to democracy and that any political space would be filled by political Islam was used to defend the West's continued support for those regimes.

But what happened can not only be explained in terms of the legacies of the past. We also have to understand what went wrong in terms of the present and, in particular, our failure to adapt to the phenomenon that we ourselves created that we call globalisation. Globalisation is an all encompassing term with many different meanings. When I use the term I am referring to growing interconnectedness as a result of the revolution in information and communications technologies and air travel. I am also referring to the growth of a global market and the dominance of a fundamentalist belief in deregulation and privatisation. And in addition I am referring to the erosion of the nation-state and the fact that fewer and fewer decisions that affect our lives are taken at the level of the nation-state. Democracy is being effectively hollowed out at the very moment that people are demanding more and more democracy. Terms like transition, convergence criteria, or structural adjustment offered a standard set of recipes to be adopted by all parties so that decisions about the allocation of resources are no longer taken in national capitals. Market reform often meant the dismantling of social safety nets. It was the global market and not popular votes that, for example, has thrown out governments in Ireland and Portugal. The consequence is that democratic choices are largely reduced to the manipulation of the media. Appeals to nationalist and xenophobic prejudices are often ways to define political difference in a context where meaningful policy differences are less and less possible. At the same time, the weakness of global institutions permitted an unregulated global market to plant the seeds of asset bubbles and financial crisis.

Europe should have offered an alternative way out of this paradox. It is potentially a mechanism for solving the global democratic deficit. For Central European countries, certainly, membership in the European Union mitigated some of the consequences of the combination of past legacies and the global present. But Europe is an unfinished project. It widened but did not deepen. It acquired more members, a common currency, and a common visa policy, but did not fundamentally democratise its institutions. It was used as a scapegoat by national politicians. And in the competition between national and European rhetoric, the former seems to be winning out, making Europe unfit to cope with the economic crisis and unable to offer an alternative to the War on Terror. Indeed, there is a real risk that the whole project will unravel.

So does the new wave of people power offer us the possibility for completing the hopes and aspirations of `1989? Does it provide an opportunity to end the War on Terror and the new divide between the so-called "West-secular semi-democratic capitalist regimes" and Islamism, the political Islamist ideology? Could it democratise today's authoritarian regime and bring social justice as well? What do we learn from what went wrong after 1989 that could make things right now?

HUMAN SECURITY AND ITS DIMENSIONS

In what follows I emphasise the security dimension – the need to overcome the legacies of the past and adapt our institutions to the global present. There is a need to move away from nationalist and bloc thinking that permeates our institutions towards a concept of human security – the concept that expresses what came out of the Helsinki agreement. This means not only changing our thinking but dismantling the security institutions of the past that sustain current authoritarian regimes and creating new institutions that are better adapted to a globalised situation. Of course we need security institutions but they have to be very different – this is why I propose to apply the concept of human security.

Human security has three dimensions.

First of all, human security is about the security of individuals and the communities in which they live. This is the third basket of Helsinki – the human dimension. By emphasising the security of individuals rather than states, human security implies a commitment to human rights but it does not deny the importance of the more traditional state centred threats. Indeed, the threat, for example, of an attack by an enemy state can also be described as a humanitarian threat.

Second, human security is about the interrelationship between freedom from fear and freedom from want and about physical as well as material insecurity. This is the second basket of Helsinki; the emphasis on economic, scientific and cultural

co-operation. It means that human rights do not just cover political and civil rights but economic and social and cultural rights too.

Thirdly, human security implies an extension of rule-governed security as opposed to war-based security. It implies that relations between states are governed by a law paradigm rather than a war paradigm. It is about the non-use of force in relations between states and the extension of law-governed security to the whole Euro-Atlantic area – the first basket of Helsinki. Or to put it another way, it is about the blurring of the internal and the external. We are used to thinking of internal security as the domain of law and policing and external security as war and diplomacy. A human security approach implies that something like what we take for granted internally has to apply externally as well.

The term 'human security' has been widely used and it has been criticised for meaning whatever anyone wants it to mean. For some, the term is too 'soft'. It treats economic and social development as security issues and neglects the real dangers people face in the context of political and criminal violence. If we tie the term to the Helsinki baskets, then it has to have a hard dimension. It has to be about protecting people from foreign military aggression, genocide, ethnic cleansing, sectarian warfare, terrorism, violent crime, or other human rights violations as well as from extreme poverty or disease.

For others, the problem is the opposite. It is a way the great powers legitimate the use of military force. NATO justified the war over Kosovo in 1999 in terms of humanitarian intervention and the Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, used the term 'human security' to justify the invasion of Georgia in August 2008. Neither the Kosovo war nor the Georgian war can be described as human security. Whatever the goals, the means did not conform to human security.

In other words, human security is a means as well as a goal. It may involve the use of force and thus can be regarded as a hard security policy but the use of force has to be directed towards protection rather than fighting or revenge. It means using the military in a different way, more like policing than war fighting. To put human security into practice we need something like global emergency forces – police, health services, fire fighters, etc. These forces would also include the military but the aim would be to dampen down violence and to protect civilians not to fight enemies.

Let me give two examples. One is about how thinking could change our actions. The attack on New York on September 11 2001 was treated as an attack by a foreign enemy on the United States; it was compared to Pearl Harbor in 1941 and justified what was described as pre-emptive defence against Iraq and Afghanistan. Suppose it had been described as a 'crime against humanity?' That would have required a global police effort to capture the perpetrators and bring them to justice instead.

The second example is the current intervention in Libya and is about how we need institutions to implement human security. Like Kosovo, the goal of the intervention in Libya is to protect civilians – a human security goal. But the means are the classic instruments of war – air strikes. It is very difficult to protect civilians from the air. The danger of air strikes is that people get killed, mainly soldiers but also the very people you are supposed to protect; already rebels and some civilians have been killed by mistake. Air strikes are also very polarising, increasing the cohesion of Gadhafi supporters behind an anti-imperialist rhetoric. At best they will help the rebels win but leaving a legacy of bitter division. At worst the stalemate between the rebels and Gadhafi will degenerate into the kind of new war that we have witnessed in Africa, Iraq or Afghanistan.

From a human security perspective, the appropriate course of action would have been to protect civilians throughout Libya and guarantee their right to peaceful protest. In the end, the prospects for democracy depend on the extent to which the rebels can mobilise politically; thus the aim of any human security approach is to dampen down violence and not support one side or another militarily. The first task should have been to declare Benghazi and the liberated areas a UN Protected Area or safe haven. Human security forces including both military and civilians would have had to be deployed to help protect the liberated areas, provide humanitarian and reconstruction assistance and support for a democratic political process so that the liberated areas could provide poles of attraction for other parts of the country. These forces would defend the protected areas robustly; they would not attack Gadhafi forces but where, given the opportunity, they would try to arrest those indicted by the International Criminal Court. They would, of course, have needed air protection and indeed what has happened already helps to provide conditions for a safe haven. But this is different from relying on military attacks from the air alone. Of course, this did not happen since the world has not yet constructed human security capabilities.

But security forces have to be accountable to democratic institutions. So as well as dealing with the legacies of the Cold War, we have to address the global present and we have to institutionalise greater access to decision-making for ordinary people at both European and global levels. We need, for example, an elected President of Europe. We also need new types of taxes at a European level – a carbon tax, for example, or a tax on speculation so that European institutions are independently funded and are able to respond to crisis and social injustice across Europe. We need to think about how the newly emerging democracies of North Africa and the Middle East could be linked to Europe and what kind of redistributive economic and social policies at European and global levels can help to meet popular aspirations. And of course, we need to think about sustainability, how these European and global institutions can respond to the combined chal-

lenges of climate change, economic and technological transformation as well as the power shifts from Europe to Asia and Latin America.

CONCLUSIONS

In the 1980s, it was through dialogue and communication that we developed new ideas about how to see the world. Our big ideas, I have suggested, were about civil society and human security. Can the new people's movements in Europe and the Middle East come together and formulate a new way of thinking which could help to make today's wishes come true? The revolutions in the Middle East have disproved the assumption of Arab exceptionalism. The people on the streets of the Middle East are asking for dignity and freedom; extremist Islamist currents have been marginalised. As in 1989, they are showing that the power of voice and conscience has the potential to provide the kind of stability that weapons and money have failed to provide. So can this moment reinvigorate the momentum towards human security and the democratisation of the European and global projects? If my analysis is correct, this is what is needed to bring about the kind of democracy that we hoped for in 1989 and to which young people in Europe and the Middle East still aspire.