

Impact of Human Rights Violations and Protection on Conflict Management, Economic Development, and Democratization.

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ABSTRACT

Human rights violations are often particularly severe in societies that are undergoing significant political, social, and economic transformations. Human rights are moral principles or norms that describe certain standards of human behavior and are regularly protected as natural and legal rights in municipal and international law. It also hampers economic development and encourages corruption and formal sector inefficiency. They trigger violent opposition to multinational corporations and foreign investors and, thus, stifle development even further. The review article will detail more on its Impact on conflict management, economic and on democratization.

Keywords: human right, violence, economy, and society.

INTRODUCTION

Human rights violations have strong negative effects on a society's capacity to manage conflict, to develop economically, and to democratize, whereas protecting and promoting human rights has the opposite effect [1]. These impacts can be seen in every regional and national context. Throughout much of Africa, human rights violations exacerbate political and social violence, growing out of the suffering of excluded, marginalized, and dominated communities. In some countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, or Guinea, this has led to full-scale civil war. Human rights violations trigger and increase separatist agitation by minorities: they trigger violence during elections and changes of government; they delegitimize institutions such as the police and judiciary that are crucial to the maintenance of law and order. Moreover, in war-torn societies, peace agreements are difficult to implement and sustain in the presence of continued human rights violations. Cyclical wars and conflicts have a negative impact on people's daily lives. Only if leaders and their constituents grow tired of conflict, will they end up negotiating settlements. By doing so, they make it possible to move from violating human rights to

reinforcing respect for them [2]. However, conflict related and post-conflict-related human rights violations highlight persistent injustice, inequality, and bad governance. Human rights violations hamper economic development and encourage corruption and formal sector inefficiency (which are also causes of human rights violations). They trigger violent opposition to multinational corporations and foreign investors and, thus, stifle development even further. There is general agreement that the economic situation in Africa has favored those leaders (and their cronies) who violate human rights. Kleptocracies which loot national resources and monopolize opportunities worsen societal schisms and deny some (or most) of the population access to public goods and services and larger shares of national wealth. Human rights violations make democratization processes, if existent, highly volatile and more violent [3]. Human rights protection, on the other hand, has given previously excluded and marginalized groups a stake in the democratization process, by ensuring access and participation. It has also gradually restored the credibility of power sharing and has given civil society some freedom to operate. This reduces

the likelihood that new civil conflicts will break out, and makes it easier to resolve or damp down existing conflicts. Whereas human rights protections have contributed to democratization and economic development, deep ethnic cleavages and economic difficulties have meant that such advances have been limited and, often, temporary.

Human Rights Violations and Intractable Conflict

Many have noted the strong interdependence between human rights violations and intractable conflict. Abuse of human rights often leads to conflict, and conflict typically results in human rights violations [4]. It is not surprising, then, that human rights abuses are often at the center of wars and that protection of human rights is central to conflict resolution.

Violations of political and economic rights are the root causes of many crises. When rights to adequate food, housing, employment, and cultural life are denied, and large groups of people are excluded from the society's decision-making processes, there is likely to be great social unrest. Such conditions often give rise to justice conflicts, in which parties demand that their basic needs be met [5]. Indeed, many conflicts are sparked or spread by violations of human rights. For example, massacres or torture may inflame hatred and strengthen an adversary's determination to continue fighting. Violations may also lead to further violence from the other side and can contribute to a conflict's spiraling out of control. On the flip side, armed conflict often leads to the breakdown of infrastructure and civic institutions, which in turn undermines a broad range of rights [6]. When hospitals and schools are closed, rights to adequate health and education are threatened. The collapse of economic infrastructure often results in pollution, food shortages, and overall poverty [6]. These various forms of economic breakdown and oppression violate rights to self-determination and often contribute to further human tragedy in the form of sickness, starvation, and lack of basic shelter [7]. The breakdown

of government institutions results in denials of civil rights, including the rights to privacy, fair trial, and freedom of movement. In many cases, the government is increasingly militarized, and police and judicial systems are corrupted. Abductions, arbitrary arrests, detentions without trial, political executions, assassinations, and torture often follow. In cases where extreme violations of human rights have occurred, reconciliation and peace building become much more difficult. Unresolved human rights issues can serve as obstacles to peace negotiations [8]. This is because it is difficult for parties to move toward conflict transformation and forgiveness when memories of severe violence and atrocity are still primary in their minds.

Affected Areas

In the Middle East, human rights violations by the government of Iraq have exacerbated the Kurdish problem and have led to a virtual division of the country [9]. In addition, the UN Security Council's economic sanctions on Iraq have violated the human rights of ordinary Iraqis and have extended the stalemate rather than contributed to a resolution of the conflict. Violations of Kurdish rights by Turkey have led to domestic divisions and problems with the European Union and have failed to advance a solution to Turkey's Kurdish situation. Israel's violations of the rights of Palestinians draw sharp criticism from the international community and even its closest ally (the United States) [10]. At the same time, the decades-long war against Israel conducted by authoritarian regimes and elites has forced Israel to fight a succession of high- and low-intensity conflicts, often amid civilian populations. The conflict has been dramatically worsened by these regimes' needs to divert attention from internal repression and corruption. Violations of civil, economic, social, and cultural rights have been largely responsible for the economic stagnation and decline afflicting the Middle East, and they have severely limited progress towards democratization [11]. On a more positive note, protection of human rights has promoted conflict

prevention between the Jordanian government and its Islamic opposition, and has contributed significantly to democratization (such as a functioning parliament). Improvements in human rights practices in Egypt have not led to real political liberalization but have contributed to conflict management. In Iran, democracy has suffered as a result of the violation of the civil and political rights of the opposition, but a slight easing of repression by hard-liners in the government has reduced confrontation with the opposition.

In Israel and Turkey, broader protection of human rights has helped to advance democracy, economic development, and Turkey's prospects of joining the European Union [12].

In Pakistan, human rights violations have made it more difficult to soften the country's ethnic divisions and to address the Kashmir conflict through non-violent means. They also contribute to keeping the country mired in poverty. In India, ongoing limitations in civil, economic, social, and cultural rights remain important obstacles to a more accountable political system and broader diffusion of economic opportunities [13]. However, recently improved protection of economic rights has improved access to economic opportunities and facilitated faster economic development.

In Eastern Europe, the former Yugoslavia, and the former Soviet Union, human rights violations have had a particularly negative impact on conflict management where demands of groups potentially engaged in conflict were not better accommodated through stronger human rights protections and democratic political compromise [14]. As well, the impact of human rights abuses on economic development has often been damaging, principally by imposing less equal economic opportunities through cronyism and corruption and thereby preventing resources from flowing to their most profitable use. Human rights practices typically evolved along with regime type: effective democratization typically accommodates the basic goals of key groups and thus prevents violent

conflict; on the other hand, human rights violations destroy confidence in, and respect for, democracy, and hence delegitimize and undermine democratization processes [15]. In particular, lack of fairness in electoral processes (during election campaigns, voting, and vote-counting) undermines popular trust in democratic institutions and discourages participation in political life and development of effective political parties. Positive human rights practices have been beneficial where demands of groups that might potentially be engaged in conflict could be accommodated through political compromise [16]. This prevents and minimizes the escalation of differences to violent conflict. The impact on economic development has been beneficial, principally by minimizing cronyism and corruption and providing more equal economic opportunities. Protecting individual security and property rights and developing a fair and just legal system fosters investment and economic development [7]. Human rights practices were typically chosen along with democratization. Where democratization can accommodate the basic goals of key groups, human rights practices help to increase confidence in, and respect for, democracy and hence help to consolidate democracy by increasing its legitimacy. Freedoms of expression and association have been critical for the development of political competition and are crucial for effective and lasting democratization processes [12].

In the People's Republic of China opposition voices are suppressed, which often makes conflicts more difficult to resolve. Democratization has been extremely slow, largely because of continued oppression of civil society [4]. In the last 20 years, however, greater protection of civil and economic rights has facilitated economic development; on the other hand, cronyism continues to restrict opportunities in many parts of the country. Some protection of civil and political rights is the first step towards economic development and democratization. In Taiwan, earlier and stronger improvements in human rights

practices facilitated more rapid economic growth and, eventually, democratization. In Argentina and South Korea, as often happens, human rights violations and authoritarianism went hand in hand. If anything, the human rights violations in Argentina worsened economic conditions [1]. On the other hand, the South Korean example shows that, if basic civil and economic rights are maintained and other economic policies are favorable, authoritarianism can provide conditions favorable to economic growth. In both countries, human rights protection and democratization are interdependent forces, as democratization has led to human rights protection and vice versa. In neither case is it obvious that economic development has improved with broadened political rights; however, neither has economic performance obviously deteriorated [5].

Both external and internal actors play critical roles in promoting and supporting societies' efforts to protect human rights and to further stability and development. The subsequent sections suggest some immediate and medium-term actions that should be taken by national governments, regional and sub-regional organizations, the United Nations, and civil society actors to advance human rights protection in transition societies [8].

What Can Be Done

International humanitarian law has been enacted to preserve humanity in all circumstances, even during conflicts. Such law "creates areas of peace in the midst of conflict, imposes the principle of a common humanity, and calls for dialogue." [15] It rules out unlimited force or total war and seeks to limit the use of violence in the hopes of maintaining the necessary conditions for a return to peace. Various international committees are in place to monitor compliance with human rights standards and report any violations. When breaches do occur, they are brought to the attention of international tribunals or tried in an international court or war crimes tribunal [10]. But conflicts sometimes progress beyond the state at which international law can help. As the number of victims

grows and more individuals are taken prisoner, tortured, or executed, it becomes more difficult to resort to the legal path. In addition, it is often difficult to "reconcile the safeguarding of human rights with conflict resolution." Many peacekeeping and conflict-prevention initiatives have failed both to protect human rights and help the parties towards conflict resolution. In part this is due to the fact that while wars between states have diminished, wars within states have escalated. Many internal conflicts involve a surge in organized violence. Genocide, crimes against humanity, and aggression against civilians have become a central part of warfare in these "internal" conflicts. Such violence often arises out of identity issues in group/out-group dynamics and attempts of one ethnic or religious group to gain and maintain political control and to exclude other groups [9]. Such conflicts are often not fought over principles or ideas, but rather focus on differences. The "outsiders" are dehumanized, making human rights violations such as severe discrimination or ethnic cleansing all the more psychologically feasible. Thus, attacks on human rights are often at the very heart of these internal conflicts. In response, public authorities must regain control of organized violence. This means a re-establishment of the rule of law and a rebuilding of trust in public authorities. In addition, more inclusive, democratic values are needed to defuse exclusivist ideals. In the face of such violations, leaders must champion international legal norms and human rights. These human rights norms are central to the maintenance of civil society, and necessary for grounding attitudes of tolerance and mutual respect within communities. Serious difficulties arise, however, when those in power are responsible for human rights violations. In this case, outside intervention is necessary to stop the abuse [8].

Recommendations for non-governmental organizations

Non-governmental organizations must seek opportunities to collaborate with (sub)-regional organizations and the

United Nations in advocating and promoting good human rights practices and in monitoring human rights improvements [12]. In relations with other NGOs, they need to reduce counter-productive turf fights and, instead, to coordinate efforts. Moreover, international NGOs need to work in a collaborative and supportive manner with domestic NGOs. NGOs need to strengthen their focus on educating the public to respect and protect rights; they also need to emphasize peace and human rights education inside and outside schools and universities. In turn, schools and universities need to do more to educate citizens on human rights [8]. Then, in turn, an educated citizenry will probably place greater pressure on their own governments to respect human rights at home and to support efforts abroad to promote human rights and prevent human tragedies. NGOs need to encourage opinion makers, educators, and faith-based organizations and movements to support peaceful conflict resolution

Authoritarian regimes that preserve their power through political repression, cultural control and manipulation, economic cronyism, and diversionary civil and international conflict are the most systematic source of human rights violations. Because of the willingness of such regimes to use repression and violence to stay in power, there is no easy way to produce quick improvements across the board. Even in the rare cases where other regimes are willing to use force to dislodge rights-violating regimes, the conflicts have high costs and there is no guarantee that the post-conflict situations will be significantly improved. There are similar limits to the actions and even the ideological efforts of intergovernmental organizations, including the United Nations. Therefore focus is required on longer-term efforts at

CONCLUSION

Hubert and Weiss rather than to incite hostility [20]. Likewise, in addition to monitoring and evaluating government policies and the field activities of (sub)-regional organizations and the United Nations, they must monitor activities of fellow NGO actors, thus creating much-needed legitimacy and accountability within the NGO community. Local and international NGOs need to ensure transparency and accountability in their work and procedures, so that accusations of paternalism and corruption do not erode their legitimacy and moral authority. Mutual codes of conduct are crucial in that effort: they need to emphasize professionalism, non-partisanship, and independence. Local NGOs must strive to become less dependent on foreign funding, by establishing membership fees, by engaging in local fund-raising, and by creating a stronger sense of local ownership. Both local and international NGOs need to establish broader bases of membership to enhance their credibility and visibility [5].

ideological persuasion and harmonization. The strength of the international human rights regime at the national, intergovernmental, and sub-national levels has always been the creation and advancement of human rights norms. It is this strength that promises the greatest long term prospects for reform. Such reform can be achieved broadly only through the gradual conversion of mass and elite opinion, above all in the rights-abusing authoritarian states that most strongly resist this message. This requires a continuous effort to promote broad human rights norms at every level, by national, intergovernmental, and sub-national actors. This effort must be attentive to local traditions and conditions, without compromising its basic principles.

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