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Revisiting security: a Hobbesian critique of Liberal Interventionism

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Introduction

Security has historically been one of humanity's top priorities. Indeed, as human beings, we are compelled to pursue the inner peace that enables our full development. But security no longer has the same significance as it once did. It is evident that in the twenty-first century, particularly in Western nations, our primary concern is not sustenance or survival. In reality, the concept of security has become quite muddled; although our living standards have risen dramatically, people continue to feel more and more fearful (Reporter, 2017). At the same time, human nature has a tendency to oversecritize situations, and we are attracted to hazardous phenomena (Stafford, 2022). This is precisely why we do not see happy endings in the news.

In addition, the concept of security has taken on numerous new connotations and undergone a complete transformation. Today, security is an ethical and moral concern that reflects a way of life, not just a physical concern. This change in our understanding of security is closely related to one of the largest security-related controversies in International Relations: foreign interventions. Naturally, the concept of intervening on the territory of another sovereign state raises a number of ethical questions, such as to what extent is it acceptable to violate the sovereignty of other states for humanitarian purposes? Is democracy a value that ought to be propagated to increase security? Should one nation be permitted to impose security on another?

Nevertheless, security and intervention are not simply matters of definition. In truth, the problem is much more pervasive, as it involves the one entity tasked with ensuring our safety. I am referring to the modern nation state. A law-enforcing entity with a monopoly on the use of force within its territory. Due to global pandemics, the migrant crisis, and external threats such as terrorism, the state is in an increasingly precarious position despite widespread agreement that the government has a responsibility to protect (we pay taxes for this reason). On the one hand, it is meant to protect us from potential threats. On the other, it appears to be failing to do so, resulting in unprecedented levels of global dissatisfaction with democracy (Lewsey, 2020). Furthermore, numerous interventions in other countries for the sake of security have only exacerbated these feelings of annoyance.

Liberal Western governments have intervened in numerous other countries in the past to defend some of the most recent elements of the global security regime, including human rights, identity, and counterterrorism. This paper intends to examine the debate surrounding global security and liberal interventionism. In doing so, it argues that our conception of security has become so expansive that it justifies intervention for the promotion of security, which has proven to be more harmful than beneficial. Security has become a term so subjective and nebulous that it justifies ineffective military decisions. This results in numerous foreign interventions that have terrible consequences, such as dismantling more infrastructure, harming nationals abroad, and creating more chasms than bridges between particular regions of the globe.

Given this context, this research paper poses the following question: **To what extent does a Hobbesian interpretation of security challenge liberal interventionism?** In doing so, it will contend that the recent transformation in our understanding of security has created a maximal conception of security that is simply unsustainable for the state, and therefore justifies foreign

intervention. Hobbes instead provides a rationale for why we should adopt a more minimal, less demanding, and, candidly, more realistic conception of security.

The significance of this ostensibly simple query cannot be ignored. Foreign intervention has been the subject of debate for many years, and the poor decisions made by western democracies have resulted in direct human casualties. In addition, revisiting Hobbes may provide us with a new vantage point from which to evaluate our current conception of security, which I contend is excessively broad and unattainable.

The case of liberal interventionism

Liberal interventionism has been a major topic of discussion in the field of international relations for decades, among both academics and policymakers. In particular, the interventionist foreign policy of the United States can be traced back to the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, which first asserted the United States' claim to hegemony in the Western Hemisphere (Morales, 1994, p. 77). Since then, the United States has assumed the role of 'international policeman' and has used anti-communism and humanitarian aid as justifications for foreign intervention. This section seeks to provide a comprehensive literature review that investigates the impact of liberal interventionism as a form of promoting democracy and liberal values. In addition, I will examine the justification behind the existence of liberal interventionism, as well as the arguments against it.

Modern day liberal interventionism started to be shaped after World War 2. The horrific effects of the Holocaust led to a sense of frustration in the international community, which implied the limits of traditional non-interventionism in the affairs of sovereign states, prompting international recognition that state sovereignty should not be an absolute barrier to preventing mass atrocities and protecting human rights within any state's borders (Wheeler, 2016). As institutional developments occurred simultaneously with humanitarian and human rights movements, western societies - particularly the United States - began to advocate for deploying military force in certain areas by invoking humanitarian concerns, and these actions appeared to be approved by the west (Graubart, 2013, pp. 71-72).

The end of the cold war paved the way for the United States to develop a globally assertive internationalism that sought to use military force to promote democracy and human rights abroad (Parmar, 2009, p. 180). This is no coincidence, since after the 1970s, liberalism started to establish itself as the dominant school of thought in IR. Due to the theoretical uncertainty of nuclear threats, war between major powers became unlikely after years of rising tensions (Buzan, 2015, pp. 128-130). This line of thinking began to pay close attention to how domestic politics influenced state behaviour as well as how international institutions governed and shaped the international agenda, including the security agenda (Eriksson & Giacomello, 2006, p. 299).

This liberal shift led to the reinforcement of liberal interventionism, which favoured democratic peace theory based democracy promotion and humanitarian intervention as the path to U.S. and international security (Parmar, 2009, p. 179). In addition, liberals began redefining the principle of national sovereignty to allow the international community (the so-called community of democracies) to intervene and prevent humanitarian calamities in certain nations (Parmar, 2009, p. 180). Some academics view this shift in emphasis as an escape from Hobbesian survival in the

anarchic global environment and a focus on cooperating with global actors in order to spread shared values and norms (Eriksson & Giacomello, 2006, p. 300).

However, what is the rationale for liberal interventionism? In 1987, the then-executive director of Human Rights Watch stated: “The administration today solidly accepts the principle that it is the responsibility of the United States to promote human rights worldwide. That was not the view in 1981” (Schmidli, 2022, p. 208). Such a kind of humanitarian aid intervention was widely approved in the West. This liberal argument was premised on the notion that by instituting domestic freedom, political participation, and market exchange, one could also achieve international peace - a contention that has reverberated throughout the 'democratic peace' literature, implementing the ideas of American presidents Wilson, Reagan, and Clinton (Doyle, 2000, p. 83). Promoting freedom and expanding the zone of democratic rule were central tenets of their foreign policy doctrine, based on the notion that peaceful liberal societies do not engage in violent conflict with one another (Layne, 1994, pp. 7-8). Proponents of the 'democratic peace' have asserted that, over time, after democratising nations, a peace would spread to encompass the entire globe, resulting in the establishment of a democratic, free, prosperous, and peaceful world order.

Since 2005, this liberal perspective has been reflected in the United Nations' 'Responsibility to Protect' (R2P) doctrine: “The international community, through the United Nations, also has the responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other peaceful means, in accordance with Chapters VI and VIII of the Charter, to help protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity” (United Nations, n.d.). This not only legitimises the concept of humanitarian intervention, but also institutionalised it: “we are prepared to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council, in accordance with the Charter, including Chapter VII, on a case-by-case basis and in cooperation with relevant regional organizations as appropriate, should peaceful means be inadequate and national authorities manifestly fail to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity” (United Nations, n.d.). Theoretically, this appears to be a desirable option designed to aid vulnerable societies. However, it is encircled by considerable controversy. This institutionalisation and interpretation of humanitarian intervention in the name of restoring international peace and security to intervene in the domestic affairs of other states has created a spirit of a society of states (democracies) who embrace their responsibility to save the suffering of others (Graubart, 2013, p. 72).

What problems does liberal interventionism present? One of the answers found in the literature is that the United States seeks to advance its own economic and political interests based on market logics and capitalism behind its human rights policy and democracy promotion mechanisms (Schmidli, 2022, p. 4). Liberal interventionists are insistent that the only viable regime is one that prioritises the interests of the United States and other major powers. There is a strong moral sentiment that overlooks the actual national interests of the United States. Since the end of the cold war, the United States has not only increased its military and geostrategic influence in the world, but has also collaborated militarily with human rights violators such as Saudi Arabia and Pakistan (Graubart, 2013, p. 78). There is much concealed behind the moral concept of helping to solve a deeply ingrained social problem through intervention.

This is illustrated by the R2P-enabled invasion of Kosovo by the United States. A closer look reveals that it destroyed local infrastructure, led to the deaths of thousands of people, and employed the incorrect negotiation strategies - all with the support of NATO, which was a vehicle for the projection of US military power and resolve on a global scale (Graubart, 2013, pp. 80-81). It is difficult enough to impose neoliberal economic restructuring without considering how this will be received by local populations with diverse cultures and histories. In practice, however, the interaction between values and interests is even more complex: geo-strategic interests of great powers are concealed by the liberal saviour narrative. It is naive to believe that the R2P or the Security Council will actually alter this dynamic; rather, they legitimise it by creating this moral rhetoric, which is then exploited by government officials and the media to exaggerate the offences of enemy regimes (Graubart, 2013, p. 85).

In addition to the fact that some great powers use liberal interventionism to advance their own interests, there is a fundamental flaw in the justification for humanitarian intervention. Müller and Wolff (2014) describe it as “On behalf of some overarching, altruistic goal, an external power authorized itself to intervene militarily in a sovereign state to do whatever it deemed necessary (p. 281). The fact that a great power can find political justification for violating sovereignty has proven to be problematic. It would be naive to believe that only those who support democracy and have righteous intentions would employ this tactic. The issue is immediately before us: President Putin provided humanitarian justifications for his invasion of Ukraine and then reminded the international community that the west has done so on numerous other occasions (Al Jazeera, 2022).

Unquestionably, certain instances in history, such as the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, required extraordinary measures to alleviate the suffering of thousands of people. However, the West has utilised this justification improperly. “In the debate about humanitarian intervention, the reference to Rwanda is used to justify a comprehensive agenda of liberal interventionism that includes the illegal use of military force and the responsibility (‘to rebuild’) supposedly triggered by such military interventions” (Müller & Wolff, 2014, p. 287). Without scrutiny and in the name of humanitarian concerns, interventions become very ambiguous. Promoting democracy and human rights do not appear to be sufficient justifications for ignoring essential strategic and economic considerations before invading another territory. Not only are states permitted to pursue their own interests in the name of humanitarian intervention, but we also provide autocracies with a platform to do the same with their own motivations.

What is our current conception of security?

This section aims to engage with relevant IR literature on the concept of security. It intends to explore what scholars in IR believe security entails, and how the definition of the term has evolved through time. This is crucial if we want to comprehend how society views security and how this connects to what the government perceives as a security threat and does in response.

The concept of security has evolved significantly throughout time. Until recently, security was mostly viewed from a realist, state-centred perspective, with a focus on military strategic calculations (Buzan, 2015, p. 128). In fact, due to its centralised view of the state, the realist idea of security is considered as somewhat Hobbesian. This is due to the fact that realism is predicated on a number of fundamental assumptions about the nature of the international system, which is

supposed to be anarchical, and as a result, military power is the primary tool used by the state to defend itself in the global arena (Sheehan, 2022, pp. 11-14). As a result, the idea of a power struggle develops: nations are always at odds with one another as their neighbours (seen as rivals due to lack of information) grow stronger, which causes enormous doubt regarding their objectives. This traditional view on security is inextricably linked to traditional war and national defence, which have gotten less prominent as we have become less violent over time.

Liberalism eventually began to gain prominence in the field in the 1970s, resulting in a considerable expansion of the security agenda. At this point, our current concept of security began to shape and expand, and it would not stop. As a result, security has evolved into a non-military concern, focusing on issues such as the economy, the environment, and our identity, among others (Barnett, 1997, pp. 529-531). In such a framework, it seems reasonable to me that such expansion leads to a greater impression of anxiety and stress, as more and more situations become securitized - "traditional notions of security, defined by the state's defense of its territorial borders, do not exhaust the meaning of security in the current era; that is, since security has environmental, economic, and humanitarian components, the concept of security must be shifted away from its locus on the state and toward individuals" (Barnett, 1997, p. 532). Therefore, the argument that security challenges have become more non-territorial as a result of globalisation and the digital revolution explains why some academics consider state-centred responses to be nearly ineffective (Sheehan, 2022, p. 23).

It is not realistic to address the concept of security without mentioning the emergence of the paradigm of human security - an even broader interpretation that speaks to the capacities of humans to fully develop themselves, with a strong link to health (Lisk et al., 2015, pp. 25-26). The key aspect of human security is that people should live without fear for their survival, well-being and freedom. This definition can be seen as rather ambiguous, especially since something like a person's well-being is very hard to measure. Moreover, it becomes even more complex when realising that the responsibility of the state relies upon international alliances and non-state actors that constantly re-shape the human rights and global health regime (Lisk et al., 2015, p. 27). Moreover, this shared responsibility gets even further challenged by the great mobility of people all over the world, mixing cultures, identities, and sharing infectious agents from one side of the world to another.

But how does this translate into practice? Security, according to the OECD, is defined as "fundamental to people's livelihoods, reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It relates to person and state safety, access to social services and political processes. It is a core government responsibility, necessary for economic and social development and vital for the protection of human rights" (OECD, 2008). This definition, which shows how quickly our notion of security has changed from the traditionally realist perspective, is closely related to the concepts of development and human security that were previously explained. Besides, "Security matters to the poor and other vulnerable groups, especially women and children, because bad policing, weak justice and penal systems and corrupt militaries mean that they suffer disproportionately from crime, insecurity and fear. They are consequently less likely to be able to access government services, invest in improving their own futures and escape from poverty" (OECD, 2008). There is a clear expectation in the performance of the national state if security is

about safeguarding the weak and is determined by policing and justice - and may sound very familiar after analysing the rationale for foreign interventions.

International actors also widely use this in practice. For instance, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations urged for an expansion of security that does take into account the dimensions of the economy, food, health, environment, personal (such as crime or terrorism), communal, and political (OCHA, n.d.). On another hand, the European Union also recognizes the introduction of human security as essential for the well being of Europeans - “in the new global context, the European Union’s security policy should be built on human security and not only on state security” (European Union, 2004). We see in its definition the same elements that we came across above: “massive violations of the right to food, health and housing may also be considered in this category, although their legal status is less elevated. A human security approach for the European Union means that it should contribute to the protection of every individual human being and not focus only on the defence of the Union’s borders” (European Union, 2004). As a matter of fact, security has expanded and transformed into an almost purely ethical concept, which has been proven to be rather problematic when used to justify foreign intervention

Is there a minimal conception of security worth re-claiming?

In the previous section, I discussed the justification and implications of liberal interventionism in the context of International Relations and foreign policy scholarship. In doing so, I examined how modern states and society view security in general, which is the moral compass of liberal states' foreign policy. The purpose of this section is to examine Hobbes’s work in *Leviathan* (Hobbes, 1994 [1651]), in which he presented a less comprehensive view of security than is available today. In doing so, I expect to enlighten the conversation and obtain insights from this exercise that will assist us in resolving the liberal interventionism dilemma.

Leviathan is a seminal work of political philosophy by Thomas Hobbes that examines the essence and function of states and political authority. Even though it is not a book solely devoted to the issue of security and foreign intervention, its conceptions of power and the state reveal his understanding of the government's role in the security issue. In addition, this piece explores the ramifications of the state's function in society as well as the expectations that society and the sovereign should have of one another. Consequently, I will contextualise Hobbes' main ideas in order to discover a minimal definition of security that is very helpful in advancing the debate.

What is security according to Hobbes?

To comprehend Hobbesian security, it is necessary to contextualise Hobbes' political theory. *Leviathan* is not a book solely concerned with security, much less foreign policy. Nevertheless, Hobbes's argument has direct implications for how he views security in society and how he expects the state to behave as a result. This section seeks to investigate Hobbes's perspective on the state and society by examining a variety of textual citations and secondary sources. This exercise will allow me to gradually develop an understanding of what Hobbes considers security to be.

The initial step in comprehending Hobbesian security is to comprehend the author's justification for the existence of the state. For that purpose, Hobbes's theory relies on an explanation of the state of nature. Thus, the author contextualises how society will experience the absence of a sovereign in what he refers to as a war of every man against every man - "Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war, and such a war as is of every man against every man. For WAR consisteth not in battle only, or the act of fighting, but in a tract of time wherein the will to contend by battle is sufficiently known" (Hobbes, 1651/2014, XIII, p. 76¹).

This state of war, or the state of nature, is a condition in which every man is left unprotected and unaccompanied; there is nothing to keep them in awe, so there are no rules in society. With this, the author is attempting to emphasise that the issue with the absence of a sovereign is not only that we will combat one another, but also that the possibility of fighting exists, and could happen at any time. According to Rumelili (2020), this feeling of unpredictability connects anxiety to the state of nature because the future is unknown and our integrity is unpredictable (p. 262). As a result, our hearts are constantly invaded by fear of death, poverty, and other tragedies. In other words, we should not read the word war the way we would normally do so, instead, Hobbes is attempting to describe a state of existence in which nothing is secure, everything is unpredictable, and a terrible event could occur at any time.

This condition exists when the possibility of conflict exists, resulting in a constant dread of violent death. In that context our strength will not be enough to protect us: "For as to the strength of body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination,* or by confederacy* with others that are in the same danger with himself" (Lev, XIII, p. 74). The same applies for the mind: "And as to the faculties of the mind-setting aside the arts grounded upon words, and especially that skill of proceeding upon general and infallible rules called science (which very few have, and but in few things), as being not a native faculty (born with us), nor attained (as prudence) while we look after somewhat else - I find yet a greater equality amongst men than that of strength" (Lev, XIII, pp. 74-75).

Hobbes argues that in such a state, men have no security apart from their own strength: "In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain, and consequently, no culture of the earth, no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea, no commodious building, no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force, no knowledge of the face of the earth, no account of time, no arts, no letters, no society, and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Lev, XIII, p. 76). Not only will life be brutal due to the lack of protection, but also society will be unable to progress: in such a state of nature, it is impossible to expect any coordination to alleviate hunger, develop new technologies, or even establish a shared culture of trust and language.

Hobbes argues that in such an unprotected condition of nature, not only will society be unable to progress, but men will also lack the resources necessary to ensure their survival. As a result, we are left defenceless and filled with increasing egoism, which is the only method we can find to

¹ From now on will be cited as (Lev, chapter, page)

ensure our future survival. It is clear then, nothing can really be unjust under such natural condition: “To this war of every man against every man, this also is consequent: that *nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, have there no place. *Where there is no common power, there is no law; where no law, no injustice” (Lev, XIII, p. 78). But how can we escape this dreadful situation in which we all confront one another? This question holds the key to understanding Hobbes’s political philosophy.

Let's first delve more deeply into this natural condition and its implications: “as long as this natural right of every man to everything endureth, there can be no security to any man (how strong or wise soever he be) of living out the time which nature ordinarily alloweth men to live” (Lev, XIV, p. 80). Hobbes warns us once more that without the protection of the sovereign, there is no security for anyone because everyone would have the right to everything. With this, Hobbes is suggesting that in a natural condition there can be no law, therefore everything will be just. This is the root argument to understand why we will be scared and fear each other in Hobbes political philosophy, not because we are evil or inherently bad, but because we will want to survive under really poor conditions.

By contrast, this argument implies that the state and the laws it regulates will play a crucial role in protecting citizens - “A LAW OF NATURE (lex naturalis) is a precept or general rule, found out by reason, by which a man is forbidden to do that which is destructive of his life or taketh away the means of preserving the same, and to omit that by which he thinketh it may be best preserved” (Lev, XIV, p. 79). Hobbes clearly placed a great deal of emphasis on the preservation of life and survival - a man should do everything in his power to ensure his own survival - and as his argument progresses, it becomes clear that agreeing on a common power will be the inevitable and rational choice for achieving this objective

"For the laws of nature (as justice, equity, modesty, mercy, and (in sum) doing to others as we would be done to) of themselves, without the terror of some power to cause them to be observed, are contrary to our natural passions, that carry us to partiality, pride, revenge, and the like. And covenants without the sword are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all” (Lev, XVII, p. 106). Hobbes argues that if we want to feel genuinely secure, a strong force must enforce the law. So far, he has attempted to prove that no smart mind or strong body alone can suffice to keep us safe. By using the sword as a metaphor, he implies that we will need an organised commonwealth capable of assuring both individual and collective security. Even though this text was written centuries ago, it appears that this concept has not aged; modern states continue to view a monopoly of force over their own territory as a fundamental right of sovereignty.

But what does the author exactly mean by the ‘terror’ of some power? Hobbes argues for an entity sufficiently strong to keep us in check and, consequently, secure - “if there be no power erected, or not great enough for our security, every man will, and may lawfully rely on his own strength and art, for caution against all other men” (Lev, XVII, p. 106). However, the usefulness of the state will go beyond merely saving us from death: “Due to its concentration of power, the Commonwealth, on the one hand, inspires fear and therefore keeps the deadly competition under control. On the other hand, and more fundamentally, due to its concentration of power, the Commonwealth possesses the ability to control, shape, and thus know the future” (Rumelili, 2020, pp. 264-265). With this, Rumelili suggests that the commonwealth also addresses the enduring

sense of uneasiness that keeps people from feeling at ease and at peace. This anxiety can be attributed to the condition of nature; in other words, the government can provide predictability to its citizens.

Hobbes also implies, in his defence of the existence of the state, that the sovereign can defend us not only from internal threats, but also from external threats that put our territory in danger: "The only way to erect such a common power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of foreigners and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sort as that by their own industry and by the fruits of the earth they may nourish themselves and live contentedly, is to confer all their power and strength upon one man or upon one assembly of men" (Lev, XVII, p. 109). This is not a trivial point, as it extends the defensiveness of individual security (prioritising protection) to the national level. In other words, people rationally consent to give up a portion of their independence (the ability to essentially do whatever they want) out of dread of death (since there is no law in a state of nature). Therefore, they will want to concur on a common authority that will keep them in reverence of one another and shield them from external threats. Overall, there is a strong emphasis on preserving life as the prime objective of agreeing on a common power. Without a doubt, for Hobbes, the state's very existence is anchored in security - to the point that his entire justification is rooted in the concept of protection. Hobbes may not be known as a security scholar, but his argument outlines an alternative perspective on security.

Hobbes further argues that by consenting to a social contract (and creating the institution of the sovereign), we become the authors and creators of all actions and decisions carried out by the sovereign - "because every subject is by this institution author of all the actions and judgments of the sovereign instituted" (Lev, XVIII, p. 112). According to Aradau (2008), the institution of the Leviathan is founded on the belief that there is no such thing as genuine freedom in the state of nature (p. 299). This desire to escape an ungoverned, violent world (where freedom cannot exist) is what gives rise to the Leviathan, with its restrictions and limitations on civil liberty. In other words, we collectively delegate our authority and power to the sovereign so that they may act on our behalf. I interpret this as a source of political legitimacy for the state, reinforcing the notion that the sovereign is not a distinct entity from the people, but is instead directly derived from them, reflecting collective decision making. We do not prioritise security over freedom; rather, we believe that civil liberty represents genuine freedom. It makes sense that the primary mission of the government is to safeguard the integrity of its citizens, given that this mission has been directly instructed by the citizens. It is the state's *raison d'être* to keep us safe, as a result of a rational desire of citizens to keep themselves safe: "it follows that, whatsoever he doth, there can be no injury to any of his subjects" (Lev, XVIII, p. 112)

Consequently, it is the responsibility of the state to determine what is fundamentally required for the maintenance of peace and to ensure this protection: "it belongeth of right to whatsoever man or assembly that hath the sovereignty, to be judge both of the means of peace and defence, and also of the hindrances and disturbances of the same, and to do whatsoever he shall think necessary to be done, both beforehand (for the preserving of peace and security, by prevention of discord at home and hostility from abroad) and, when peace and security are lost, for the recovery of the same" (Lev, XVIII, p. 113). Thus, it is evident that the government's decisions regarding internal and external crises, as well as their resolution, are dependent on the protection of its citizens at all times. The preservation of citizens, according to Hobbes, is the most important factor to consider

when determining whether or not a nation should engage in war with other nations - “is annexed to the sovereignty the right of making war and peace with other nations and commonwealths, that is to say, of judging when it is for the public good, and how great forces are to be assembled, armed, and paid for that end” (Lev, XVIII, p. 113).

These premises imply that Hobbes would be wary of outside intrusions that might compromise the internal peace and security of a sovereign state. In order to maintain control over internal matters and avoid internal conflicts, he underlines the significance of a centralised power. Therefore, external actors' involvement may be perceived as posing a threat to the state's security and stability. In fact, Hobbes tends to speak about security in a protective and cautious manner, according to the author's textual evidence mentioned above. According to Malcolm (2005), Hobbes would only be interested in pursuing international security alliances because he was afraid of war (p. 126). This implies that Hobbes is not completely against cooperation with foreign powers (like many defensive realists would argue), but rather preoccupied in assuring all means possible to keep the sovereign stable. These agreements should be, if anything, “defensive alliances, the essential purpose of which is deterrence” (Malcolm, 2005, p. 126). Overall, there appears to be a complete respect for the state's internal autonomy and authority, which I interpret as being against the violation of sovereignty.

It is worth mentioning that Hobbes's concern with physical integrity of citizens is such that he believes that even if the sovereign asks a citizen to hurt themselves they still have the liberty to disobey - “If the sovereign command a man (though justly condemned) to kill, wound, or maim himself, or not to resist those that assault him, or to abstain from the use of food, air, medicine, or any other thing without which he cannot live, yet hath that man the liberty to disobey” (Lev, XXI, p. 142). According to the author both preservation of life and physical well being are fundamental and inviolable rights - this also sets limits to the significant powers of the sovereign. This follows logically from his last argument: if we collectively choose to subdue to a protecting entity by covenant, we will do it in a way that its authority can only be exercised for our security and never against it. In addition, Hobbes understood the security project to be a long-term procedure necessary for maintaining this political order (and peace): “The project of security is, as Hobbes reminds us, not temporary but perpetual, for it constitutes the very principle of stability, which sustains the body politic” (Spieker, 2011, p. 194).

In a broader sense, security is a constant component of stability that essentially upholds the body politic, according to Hobbes. Some academics have labelled this perspective as "pessimistic" (Brewer & Steenbergen, 2002, p. 39). I contend, however, that Hobbes states much more than that human nature is a problem; rather, the issue is uncertainty and ignorance. Hobbes's understanding of human nature demonstrates how defenceless we are in the absence of an outside force. Furthermore, it has been determined through analysing *Leviathan* that the state's existence depends on protecting both the territory and the physical bodies of its citizens. That is the reason why it was created in the first place. When the government succeeds in fostering societal peace, security, and well-being, it will gain legitimacy and power. That achievement earns the sovereign the respect and acceptance of its entire populace.

As a result, Hobbes's view of security is rather limited: it focuses primarily on protecting the citizen and the territory, thereby ensuring internal stability within the nation. But why do I contend that

this perspective is rather narrow? This view of security tends to be narrower in scope because it creates a striking contrast with our current sense of security as discussed above. Hobbes does not place a strong emphasis on issues such as identity, the global environment, or the spread of a way of life to other parts of the world. Even less he seems keen on invading other territories and violating sovereignty. The protection of the territory's borders, internal tranquillity, and physical security are his top priorities. In addition, he places a strong emphasis on a defensive strategy that prioritises a cautious foreign policy and aims to prevent conflict. In conclusion, he chooses to do less, in order to protect more.

Discussion

The preceding sections of this paper sought to contextualise the liberal interventionism debate in International Relations, as well as the rapid evolution of our general conception of security over the past two decades. This is not a coincidence, as the rise of liberalism began to ascribe a number of moral values to the concept of security, which legitimised foreign intervention and even institutionalised it through the Responsibility to Protect. In addition, I provided an alternative way of conceiving of security, one that I contend is narrower but nonetheless highly pertinent to the contemporary modern state. The purpose of this section is to apply this knowledge to the case of American interventionism, specifically the US invasion of Afghanistan. This case study illuminates the greatest faults and contradictions of liberal interventionism and expands on the thesis of this paper: we must return to a minimal definition of security if we do not wish to continue justifying failures in the name of security.

According to the US government, “The United States went to Afghanistan in 2001 to wage a necessary war of self-defence. On September 11, 2001, al-Qaeda terrorists attacked our country. They were able to plan and execute such a horrific attack because their Taliban hosts had given them safe haven in Afghanistan. Since 2001, no enemy has been able to launch such an attack on our homeland, and that speaks to the entire U.S. government's efforts to defend our citizens from terrorist threats that could emanate from Afghanistan or anywhere around the globe” (U.S. Department of Defense, 2022). Based on this premise, the United States directly justifies its invasion of Afghanistan by asserting it was in self-defence, despite the fact that Afghanistan did not directly attack the United States, but rather some non-state actors within planned the attack. Even though the tragic events of September 2001 resulted in the deaths of thousands, this military action by the United States violates Afghanistan's Sovereignty. Considering its length, such a conflict would demand a substantial amount of human and economic resources.

Despite the fact that the United States' primary objective was to combat the war on terror, their long journey in Afghanistan with NATO allies had additional goals. Among these were the establishment of a structure for the Afghan government, the formation of an Afghan national army, the development of state capacities, the improvement of administration, the creation of infrastructure, and the granting of fundamental human rights (NATO, 2022). This type of interventionism went far beyond fighting terrorists; it was a genuine effort to build state capacities and institutionalise Afghanistan in order to resolve its humanitarian crisis. In this case, I argue that security was utilised to advance the political interests of the United States and its allies, namely the promotion of democracy and human rights in Afghanistan.

However, the invasion of Afghanistan, as well as liberal interventionism in general, was marked by significant pitfalls and shortcomings. First, the invasion failed to comprehend the complexities of Afghanistan's social, cultural, and political dynamics, and military objectives were not clearly defined (Connah, 2021, p. 74). In light of this erroneous perspective, they began to construct state capacities so “they could win the hearts and minds of Afghan civilians and build a relationship of trust between the various Afghan factions” (Connah, 2021, p. 75). However, deeply rooted tribal structures, ethnic tensions, and historical complexities prevented them from ever achieving union and stability. To make matters worse, the United States employed drone technology (under the pretext of eliminating terrorists). Not only did this violate international law, but it also harmed many of the people they intended to assist (such as women) and the structures they constructed, such as hospitals (Connah, 2021, p. 76). In such a context, it was extremely difficult for the United States to achieve any of its goals. Moreover, it appears that the United States failed to recognize the requirements and difficulties of the Afghan society, but it was already too late: the human resources of the United States, the citizens who travelled abroad away from their families, were already in jeopardy. This is not a trivial matter, as the failure to achieve the strategic objectives also placed the lives of many men and women at risk in vain. How many lives could have been saved if the United States had opted for a less interventionist strategy?

Moreover, since the invasion began, the number of civilian casualties in the country only increased dramatically; the number of fatalities between 2016 and 2017 made Afghanistan “the country with the highest number of deaths caused by terrorism in the world” (Connah, 2021, p. 78). These numbers not only indicate that the United States failed to defend the citizens, but they were also advantageous for the Taliban, as terrified civilians may have joined them or sought retribution (Connah, 2021, p. 79). The United States failed to recognize that safeguarding civilians (which should have been a non-negotiable requirement of the 'humanitarian' invasion) would be exceedingly difficult. It should be noted that the Taliban and other extremist groups joined civilians to further complicate the situation, thereby preventing the invasion from advancing (Connah, 2021, p. 76). This compromised not only the lives of Afghan civilians, but also the lives of several American soldiers, who were unable to identify the targets and were duped by the Afghans. Even though it is understandable to believe that there will be collateral damage in any war (even if it is for a just cause), the problem with the US invasion of Afghanistan was that it essentially failed to accomplish anything: “a survey of Afghan people in 2016 reports, 66 per cent believed matters were heading in the wrong direction, which suggests that over time, people have lost trust in the US intervention” (Connah, 2021, p. 76). A terribly long invasion abroad that, according to the people that were supposed to be helped, was having little effect.

On August 15, 2021, after 20 deadly years, the Taliban retook control of Afghanistan after the the US decided to withdraw its military forces (United States Institute of Peace, 2021). Some conditions were put between the new government and the US involving human rights, inclusive governance, not allowing terrorists, among others. This marked the end of a war that was admittedly a total failure: “President Biden says the United States should learn from its mistakes and that the withdrawal marks the end of “an era of major military operations to remake other countries.” Thousands of Afghans who assisted the United States and its allies, as well as up to two hundred Americans, remain in Afghanistan” (Laub, 2017). Furthermore, “The U.S. government spent \$2.3 trillion, and the war led to the deaths of 2,324 U.S. military personnel, 3,917 U.S. contractors and 1,144 allied troops. For Afghans, the statistics are nearly unimaginable:

70,000 Afghan military and police deaths, 46,319 Afghan civilians (although that is likely a significant underestimation) and some 53,000 opposition fighters killed” (Baterman, 2022). The numbers speak for themselves.

What is so worrisome about liberal interventionism in general, and the situation in Afghanistan in particular, is that our ever-expanding definition of security justifies terrible security decisions. Our current understanding of security has become excessively broad and nebulous, resulting in the securitization of far too many "issues" that have been approached through the development of a security narrative. This indicates that security no longer has an objective meaning and is instead regarded as a subjective condition. The purpose of this paper is not to argue that an evolution in the concept of security is undesirable; in fact, I believe that putting security first has enhanced our well-being. However, the concept of security has expanded far beyond its original intent, leading to a regrettable tendency to view far too many situations as security issues. We have lost track of security, and are not able to prioritise what matters anymore. Consequently, our conception of security becomes problematic and leads to poor foreign policy choices, creating more issues than it solves any. This approach not only dilutes the meaning of security, but also leads to the implementation of ineffective and frequently counterproductive security measures, such as interventionism, which have proven to make individuals even less secure on occasion.

But why should we care about the definition of security in the first place? A lot of what is wrong with liberal interventionism, is being derived from it being justified in the language of security. I contend that the fact that our concept of security is ill-defined should be addressed as soon as possible. Security has come to encompass not only traditional security concerns such as defence and intelligence, but also a wide range of social, economic, and environmental issues. We did not replace some problems with others, but rather added new ones to the list, some of which are in conflict with others. As a result, many previously unconsidered security issues, such as poverty, climate change, and inequality, are now viewed through a security lens. This leads to more democratic conflict and polarisation: security, which is approached with extreme caution and priority, is constantly at the centre of political debate. This is precisely what divides society. This broad definition of security not only dilutes the term's meaning, but also causes confusion about what we are securing against. We are at odds with one another. We construct walls in every sense. Worse still, we have no idea against whom we are fighting. Is it terrorism? Is it autocracies?

All the things we have been justifying under our broader definition of security would not have been justified under Hobbes's definition. This over-expansive understanding, which led to all of these invasions, would not meet his approval. We must not forget the origins of the modern nation state: it is inherently designed to protect its citizens and defend its borders. Hobbes's narrower definition gives us a sense of what matters: keeping us safe within our territory, fostering a conducive environment for a country's development, and maintaining peace with foreign territories. Overall, I contend that bringing Hobbes into the discussion is an exercise that reminds us of the state's intended function: protection. Nonetheless, particularly since the emergence of liberalism, the meaning of security has been translated in perilous ways, justifying excessive foreign intervention in the name of security. The United States was unable to protect the Afghan people, did not successfully promote democracy and human rights, and, worst of all, it allowed 2,324 innocent nationals to perish (Baterman, 2022).

In conclusion, I urge the academic community to reconsider our present understanding of security. This is extremely important and has direct effects on human lives. We must keep security objective, or we run the risk of no longer understanding what we are protecting ourselves from.

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