Alessandro D'Errico – Università degli Studi Milano Statale

Humanitarian Action and Conflict Governances in Areas of Limited Statehood

- **Draft: Please Do Not Quote -**

1. Introduction

While both International Relations and Criminology have increasingly acknowledged the role played by transnational non-state actors in global security, transnational *non-armed* non-state actors (TNNA) have received insufficient attention (Avant and Haufler 2012, 2). In fact, although there is a growing interest in the participation of non-state actors to security governances of so-called fragile states (Hoenke 2010), the interaction of TNNAs with local-global actors in conflict affected areas, and the governance outcomes this interaction produces, remain substantially under-explored aspects (Avant and Haufler 2012).

In particular, the modalities through which the core activities of transnational non-state actors are secured in areas of limited statehood still present open questions (Hoenke 2010). We know fairly little about the choices taken to secure their operations, though these choices influence both the security of the organization and of the context (Avant and Haufler 2012, 2). Existing accounts cannot fully explain which processes bring TNNAs to engage, withdraw, or change their postures in conflicts, as well as what factors are most relevant in these processes.

Inspired by the example provided by International Humanitarian Aid Organizations operating in post-2011 Libya, this paper develops a theoretical framework aiming to understand how organizations define strategies to protect their operations in a setting where former agreements are re-discussed, where insecurity is high and where the political authority is highly contested among several (non-state) security actors.

It is fairly acknowledged that the fall of Qaddafi has paved the way to a new political landscape. Those who have actually made field-work noted that the contours between political and security actors often merge ([a]Pack 2015); this overlap is sided by a the strong political and military fragmentation (Lacher and Cole 2014), where alliances are structured along complex and ever-shifting lines. This is the context in which several International Organizations and International Humanitiarn NGOs have been operative since 2011.

An exploration of the NGO decision making process that lies 'behind' a security strategy, however, is more than a mere scrutiny of management practices. Within a security strategy there is set of politically-dense decisions that define the NGO's 'posture' in, and interaction with, complex conflict

governance settings – that link together as different actors as the diplomats of national capitals, local elder councils, functionaries of international organizations and corporate managers. As a result, this paper is interested in answering the following questions:

- How do NGOs operating in Libya define their strategies of adaptation to the changes in the conflict dynamics?
- Which factors are most likely to affect the decision-making process?

Importantly, such an inquiry may answer the call on shedding more light on the processes through which social actors deconstruct and reconstruct state institutions in the post-colonial world (Plecard and Hagman 2010).

This paper proceeds as follows. First, it reviews the relevant literature, and underlines why it cannot fully address the questions highlighted. Second it proposes a theoretical framework, suggesting that it is useful to understand local security dynamics as a 'market for force" on which demand and supply on the good protection interact; this move allows to reframe the question about how humanitarians interact with a 'menkhausian' environments (Menkaus 2006) in terms of choices taken on this market, and on uncovering the determinants of such choices.

Then, the framework develops two contrasting hypotheses based on two different strands of theories. It compares a first hypothesis taken from the literature on civil wars – according to which NGOs 'mirror' the (changes in the) logic of groups' strategic actions and the market norms of exchange – with another hypothesis taken from the learning theories of organizations – that sees NGOs 'scanning' the market.

Lastly, it concludes highlighting the merit of adopting a focus on NGOs for the study of conflict governances, both in terms of what drives their decisions, and how they relate with – or on the extent to which they can influence – the process of 'state formation' (Plecard and Mehoulan 2015) they are enmeshed into.

2. Literature Review

The first necessary step – however - is to wrap-up with what the literature provides. In particular, I highlight the presence of 4 main strands: the governance and hybrid governance literature, the rentier-state literature, the studies on security privatization and those on rebel governance. For these, I believe that I am displaying the main features, which are relevant for studies like the one at hand.

Governance studies

Since the 1990s, scholars have increasingly studied the non-hierarchical modes of coordination, as

well as the involvement of non-state actors in public policies, within and beyond states (Boerzel and Risse 2010, 113). Governance, could be described as the "various institutionalized modes of social coordination to produce and implement collectively binding rules, or to provide collective goods" and consists both of a *structure* and of a *process* (Boerzel and Risse 2010, 114).

Concepts such as *governance without governments* (see e.g. Rosenau & Czempiel 1992, Cutler *et al.* 1999), were soon presented as alternatives to hierarchical systems, where coordination is achieved through voluntary commitment and compliance (see e.g. Rosenau 2000).

Empirical studies gradually demonstrated that, however, for the 'governance without government' to take place there should be "a strong state loom[ing] in the background" (Boerzel and Risse 2010, 113) - that is the host state should have the ability to threaten the imposition of binding rules (Boerzel and Risse 2010, 116). This "shadow of hierarchy" is crucial, since it creates incentive structures necessary for the cooperation of non-state actors (Heritier and Lehmkuhl 2008,2).

An interesting development is the extension of this discussion to the so called "areas of limited statehood" (Boerzel and Risse 2010, 118). This are defined as "those parts of a country in which central authorities (governments) lack the ability to implement and enforce rules and decisions, or in which the legitimate monopoly over the means of violence is lacking, or both" (Ibidem 118).

While weak state institutions would seem to imply necessarily governance failures, in the areas of limited statehood the authors find the presence of "functional equivalents to the shadow of hierarchy" (Ibidem 120), which allow them to identify "cases of governance without a *state*" - that "appear[s] to be an empirical reality in many parts of the world" (Ibid 120).

The set of alternatives to consolidated statehood can be grouped according to the underlying logic of social action sustaining them – either the logic of consequence or the logic of appropriateness (March and Olsen 1989, March and Olsen 1998 cit from Boerzel and Risse 2010, 120).

In the first case, actors are self-interested and utility-maximizing, and will constructively participate to governance if the right incentives are present, and/or if the behavior of these actors is constrained by the presence of institutional settings – in which the authors are enmeshed (Boerzel and Risse 2010, 120).

According to the first mechanism abiding to this logic – the "risk of anarchy" - non-state actors engage in governance and the provision of public goods when there is no political order even if they have the concrete risk of entirely absence governance. "If the pursuits of their individual profits depends on the provision of certain common goods and collectively binding rules to produce them, and the state is not capable or is unwilling, companies have a major incentive to step in and provide governance in areas of limited statehood" (Ibid. 121). Nevertheless, the occurrence of cooperation in areas of limited

statehood – following here an institutionalist argument – is directly proportional to the level of institutionalization of the setting (Ibid 122).

The second mechanism is one of 'external compensation for limited statehood'. External actors – such as International organizations or foreign governments – can promote the participation of non-state actors to governance. This can be the case either of external actors directly exercising domestic sovereignty over areas of limited statehood, or the case of actors that must comply to standards of good-governance, or actors that must uphold the same rules as the government that is no longer able in function; or – lastly – if external governments force non-state actors to contribute to governance (such as through the compliance with standards of good governance etc) (Ibid 122).

Alternatively, following a logic of appropriateness, actors are "embedded in normative structures that induce them to follow social rules" (Ibid. 121). A first case is represented by normative structures affecting and embedding markets. In this cases, norms become increasingly important for the core activities of non-state actors – the example provided is that of "human rights creeping into the core business of many companies", such as, multinational corporations with a brand name to defend" (Ibidem 124). Here, empirical studies strongly support this claim, highlighting how the provision of collective goods where statehood is limited is greatly determined on whether the company at hand is interested in defending its reputation (see e.g. Hoenke et al 2008).
A second order of cases is that represented by areas of limited statehood populated by 'traditional' communities which have their own social standards. Local communities – it is reported – do not provide a shadow of hierarchy, but can expect non-state actors to abide with local norms and to provide collective goods (Ibid. 125)

While these points provide fascinating insights, some aspects remain to be clarified. First, empirically, few scholars have studied organizations' security behaviors (Hoenke 2013, 5). Moreover, contexts in which the condition of statehood is extremely limited – a la Menkaus (2006) – have received little attention. Then theoretically, the similarity in profit-organizational practises across contexts in Africa challenges the argument of the (equivalent for) the shadow of hierarchy (Hoenke 2013, 5). Importantly, I suggest, these perspectives cannot fully explain how the behaviors of organizations operating under similar structural is formulated.

Hybrid Governance
Increasingly popular in the recent years, the hybrid governance literature is mostly interested in

understanding how everyday life in so-called 'failed' or 'fragile' states organizes itself (see e.g. Cleaver 2002, Menkhaus 2006, Lund 2006, Raeymaekers et al. 2008, Boege et al. 2009, Arnaut et al. 2008, Hagmann and Plecard 2010). For some, the emergence of hybrid forms of governance is a positive development (e.g. Menkhaus 2006, Moe 2006, Logan 2009, Boege et al 2009), while others tend to be more skeptics (e.g. Schmid 2001), highlighting how their emergence can simply crystalize existing power inequalities and exploitative systems. Three common elements are generally highlighted: historicity, hybridity and negotiability (Cuvelier, Vlassenroot, Olin 2014, 346). First, hybrid governance is often 'history-dependent' (Ibidem 346) as people tend to draw on their past when they need to re-organize polities (Claever 2002). In terms of hybridity, it is usually referred to the merging and/or coexistence of formal (western) with non-formal (traditional) institutions (e.g. Lund 2006). With negotiability the literature generally refers to the non-fixed, unstable, fluid character that hybrid forms of governance can assume (Cuvelier, Vlassenroot, Olin 2014, 346, Titeca 2006).

This strand of literature interestingly highlights the importance of forms of governance that are usually neglected by governance literature, and for their look at public authority from below (Lund 2006, 674). At the same time, this literature lacks of systematic research frameworks and comparative analyses (Cuvelier, Vlassenroot, Olin note 2014, 346).

Rentier-State

The rentier-state studies can be seen as a sub-field of the wider literature on the 'resource curse', which refers to the direct relationship between natural resource abundance and the negative, economic, political and social outcomes experienced by states (Cuvelier, Vlassenroot, Olin 2014, 343). The rentier-state studies studies have investigated the relationship between oil resource slack and rent-seeking behaviors from elites (Cuvelier, Vlassenroot, Olin 2014, 344) and the collusive relationship between elites and companies – which trade rents for protection (Beblawi and Luciani 2007). Also, by creating forms of transnational clientelism, studies have demonstrated the proliferation of "rentier polities" (Hoenke 2013, 6).

This literature would benefit from the arguments elaborated by the (hybrid) governance literature above, though they have not been considered (Hoenke 2013, 6), and it could be enriched by looking at the interaction between transnational organizations and local elites/polities in substantially anarchic contexts *a la* Menkhaus (2006).

Security Privatization and Rebel Governance

A fourth strand that has increasingly paid attention to transnational organizational practices in areas of limited statehood is that interested on privatization in security governance. The original domain of

this strand of literature is that of western democracies (e.g. Berndtsson and Stern 2011, Leander 2013). More recently, the geographical focus has been broadened. From an international relations perspective, Avant and Haufler (2012) have started to explore organizational strategies that companies undertake in areas of limited statehood.

From a different angle, Abrahamsen and Williams (2010) analyze the privatization of global security services through the focus of commercial security providers in Africa and how - through the interaction of private security professionals and state actors - new forms of authority and power are reconfigured in 'global security assemblages' (Ibid. 90). Yet, more research could explore the conditions that favor or hinder the development of a globalized security assemblage (Hoenke 2013) – and a look at a 'Menkausian' environment could be helpful. Moreover, beyond their focus fall the broader sets of actors that participate to the governance of conflict areas (Hoenke 2013, 7) – such as donor agencies, NGOs or local (rebel) authorities.

This final point allows introducing the last strand of the literature reviewed - that on 'rebel governance' (for the first contributors see e.g. Kalyvas 2006, Weinstein 2007). This strand frequently draws "parallels between the performance of governmental functions by rebel groups and the genesis of the bureaucratic state" (Mampilly 2011, 26), and two characterizations of rebel groups are usually provided – the warlord & the bandit (Ibid. 2011). Warlords are seen as "a-historical, economically minded actors" who promote the development of governmental structures to increase their "revenue-generating capacity", where public goods are provided only "in exchange of short term material gains" (Mampilly 2011, 29). Others, instead, apply to insurgencies the state-formation models developed by Tilly (1990) and Olson (1993) and "posit a politico-economic logic" as a "driving telos" in their attempt to consolidate their rule (Mampilly 2011, 31). The rebel-as-bandit perspective focuses on the system of opportunities that the conduct of war provides for state consolidation (Ibid. 32), and sees the bandit as having the choice of "taking either a consensual or a coercive approach" in its interaction with civilians (Ibid. 2011, 32). Following Olson (1993), if bandits decide to transform themselves from "roving" to "stationary", it is because of a strategic calculation, rather than a moral impulse: they consider more profiting in the long run to choose "consensual accumulation strategies", instead of continue with looting – as roving bandits would do. Thus, it is quite common to see the literature approaching these themes through a look at the governance capacities and conduct of rebel groups (Cuvelier, Vlassenroot, Olin 2014, 345) and seeing rebel governance mainly concerned in extracting resources from the population (see e.g. Weinstein 2007). At the same time, the conditions that favor the emergence of partnerships between non armed groups and rebels remain under-researched. Also, this strand suffers from a lack in comparative material that would allow making generalizing conclusions (Cuvelier, Vlassenroot, Olin 2014, 345-6).

Gaps in the literature and way forward

Compared to their increasing engagement in areas of conflict, there is a shortage of studies on TNNAs (Avant and Haufler 2012, 1-2); This is striking since, although these are "not security organizations per se,.., the strategies these transnational non-state actors pursue in response to violence affect security for both themselves and the societies in which they operate" (Ibid. 2).

With these points in mind, I follow Heyse (2006) in suggesting that valuable insights can be provided by a focus on the actor-NGO. While the literature on NGOs generally treats them as a category of actors "similar in nature and behavior" (Heyse 2006, 4), this perspective can hardly explain why the outcomes of decision-making processes related to their (non)engagement in humanitarian crises may be different (Heyse 2006, 5). Indeed, a better understanding can be achieved opening up the black-box the NGOs (Heyse 2006, 10). Hence, I suggest that a focus on the decision-making processes that regard NGOs 'protection strategies' is more than a simple contribute to the "knowledge of internal work processes" of humanitarian NGOs (Heyse 2006, 10). In this way, I argue, it is possible to trace how specific forms of partnerships between security/political actors are created, they change, flourish and or perish, as well as to explore the consequences of these choices on local security dynamics

2. Competing Hypotheses
Security in the Market for Force and Negotiating Access

To be fair, scholars have widely analyzed cases in which with states 'collapse', with the subsequent rise of local armed groups. With the increase in the number of conflicts worldwide that followed the end of the Cold War, scholars increasingly converged around the ideas that 1) violent conflict was a signal for the weakness, failure or collapse of political institutions; and that 2) post-cold war rebels were not ideologically motivated – like their predecessors – but driven by a economic and political motives (see e.g. Zartman 1995, etc , cit in Plecard and Mechoulan 2015). These ideas clearly exemplify how discussions on intra-national conflicts often start with a comparison of the local state against Weberian standards (Dunningham and Peterson 2015,1).

Recent research has however moved away from these 'parsimonious-reductionist' accounts and, looking at the everyday politics of civil wars, has started to challenge it: indeed, "civil wars do not simply destroy political orders, but they contribute to shaping and producing them" (Plecard and Hagman 2010). Yet, few scholars have acknowledged that even in the direst cases of breakdowns of

state apparatuses, it is quite common to find complex systems of governances interested in the provision of public goods, starting from security (Branovic and Chojnacki 2011, 554, Boege et al 2009, Plecard and Hagman 2010).

Although the Weberian conception of the state monopoly over violent means has been the prevalent paradigm regarding the control of force for the last two centuries, scholars have recently pointed to the rise of a vibrant market for force as a major player in international politics and military operations in the last two decades (Abrahamsen and Williams 2011, Avant 2005, Singer 2003). Understanding the organization of violence as interaction between agents on a market is useful particularly for a study of the areas of limited statehood (Branovic and Chojnavcki 2011)

What the market-contributors tend to share as a shortfall, is seeing the market as a "single homogenous and neoliberal" entity (Petersohn and Dunigan (2015, 2). Instead, markets globally are diverse under multiple dimensions, and this variation can be best understood as a conglomeration of different *types* of markets for force (Petersohn and Dunigan 2015, 2).

Following Fligstein and Dauter (cit from the authors above, 2007 113) a *market* for force is defined as "the locally specified set of formal and informal rules under which actors engage in exchange". Markets are, "arenas where commodities are sold and bought and property rights are transferred upon monetary payments" (Petersohn and Dungan 2015, 4). In contrast with neo-liberal theory, which proposes that the mode of market exchange is always based on mutual voluntary agreement between the parties (Rosenbaum 2000, 466-68), the specific "exchange conditions and the mode of exchange may differ" across markets, and that mutual agreement is not always necessary to allocate commodities on the market (Peterson and Dunigam 2015, 5), markets can be different in terms of openness, and competitiveness (Ibid, 5).

In fact, across world regions different *types* of markets can be distinguished, namely neo-liberal, hybrid and racketeer markets; a look at the type of market can help predicting the consequences on the state monopoly for force and the provision of security as a public good (Peterson and Dunigam 2015, 162).

Neoliberal markets function through privately own business entities, which are the main actors. Clients and providers engage in a voluntary exchanges through legal contracts. Bureaucracy usually monitors the guarantee of property rights and their transfers, and a commodity's exchange – as well as its price - is mostly determined by competition between actors (Peterson and Dunigam (2015, 163). Conversely, in hybrid markets, the state is the dominant actor and competition is non-existent, since the production of services occurs only after the approval of the state. Lastly, in racketeer markets the state and the legal system play only a restricted role. Exchanges are often imposed by force – for

instance security suppliers use their position to sell security services while simultaneously spreading insecurity (Peterson and Dunigam (2015, 164-5).

Hence, there are two factors that contribute to define the nature of the market. First, the role of the state, which can oscillate between 'dominant', to 'non-existent'. Here, as by definition areas of limited statehood lack of a state, the role of the state can be assumed to be limited/non-existent, the type of market may be partially determined by the second factor: the prevailing norm – that influences the mode of exchange of protection - where force seems to be more plausible than voluntary exchange.

Against these possible market conditions, humanitarian aid organizations have a set of specific strategic options to engage in the security governance of conflict settings (Avant and Haufler 2012). The first type of response to conflict volatility is called *avoidance* – that is, "withdrawing from high risk areas or never entering them" (Ibid. 2012, 6). Secondly, organizations may decide to respond 'hardening the tarket'. Seen by some as a 'natural' response, company may adopt strategies of the 'fortress-type'. A third type of strategy is defined as "alliance": this is similar to the fortress, but involves relying on a local authority for the organization's security. (Ibid. 7). For long time at the core of NGOs' approach to conflicts, the fourth type of strategy is called "acceptance": the organization "operates only in a territory when local actors – governments, rebels, civil society – accept it as an apolitical party" (Ibid.8). The last type of strategy is called "engagement", and it entails the active endeavor to – from the organization's side – to "understand [its] role in producing or mitigating violence, pursues relations with all those affected by violence, develops codes and best practice standards in cooperation with other transnational actors, and makes proactive commitment to reduce the prospect of violence" (Ibid. 2012, 9).

These themes are familiar with the literature describing NGOs' security approaches to conflicts.
For example, "conceptual basis for,.., operational security" widely accepted among aid agencies is represented by the so-called "security triangle paradigm" (Stoddard et al. 2009, 5). Such security management approach combines of three core elements: acceptance, deterrence and protection (Van Brabant 2001). The creation and maintenance of *relationships and networks* with local actors – the essence of acceptance – are still considered the major strategic option within the NGO community, though it must be integrated with context driven combinations of protection and deterrence (Stoddard et al 2009, 5). Protection is conceived as the set of efforts intending not to affect the threats for the organization, rather its "vulnerability through protective procedures or protective devises (Van Brabant 2001). Deterrence strategies are instead those who attempt to "contain a threat by posing a counter-threat" that range from "international sanctions" to "armed protection" (Van Brabant 2001).

In its essence – from a Humanitarian NGO perspective – a security strategy consists of the set of activities undertaken to guarantee the highest level possible of operational security – that are necessary for maintaining the programme running and to get access to beneficiaries (Van Brabant 2001, Stoddard et al 2009)

In fact, the two elements of humanitarian action are assistance and protection (Herrero, 2014). Yet, to do them, humanitarians require to have *access* to locations – usually referred as the capacity "to operate without fear of attack and interference" by conflict parties. (Ibid 2004). This will be most commonly provided & maintained through *negotiations* with a constellation of actors that have different interests (Ibid. 2014) – defined as a "process of communication and relationship building undertaken with the objective of arriving to an agreed outcome around a particular set of issues, in situations where parties are not in a complete accord on those issues to begin with" (Mc Hugh & Besler [OCHA] 2006, 5).

2.1 Constrained Choices: Security Markets and Norms of Exchange

From a first perspective, logically following what said above, market dynamics and norms of exchange could be 'disciplining' the behavior of TNNAs, and thus their participation to security governance.

In "the logic of Security Markets", Branovic and Chojnacki (2011) noted that political-economic incentives in civil war settings pave the way for non-state armed groups to rise as political authorities, thus leading to the creation of security governances in collapsed states. (Ibid, 553).

In these cases, "two logics of strategic action" define security dynamics at the local level (Ibid 554). In the case of *strategic insecurity, "*a shortage of armed protection, the emergence of non-state armed groups and a lack of collectively binding rules" prevail (Ibid.554). On the other, *strategic security*, "which fulfils political, economic and identity-based functions within a given territory and provides for various degrees of scope and inclusiveness by various actors, such as civil defence groups, external military forces and private military companies" (Ibid 554).

As it was mentioned before, during a conflict (see e.g. Weinstein 2007), non-state armed groups may change their strategic behaviour with civilians, from plundering and looting to the provision of political goods, such as security (and vice-versa) (Ibidem 554). This change in governance strategies can be explained in terms of changes in the logic of security markets – defined as the "spatial and

temporal coincidence of the demand for and supply of security in areas where the means of violence are not monopolized" (Ibid. 554).

Here, the logic of security markets assumes, that "the changing competitive conditions of security markets", measured as the "total number of violent groups and their organizational design", explain the rationale behind the decision of armed groups either to use violence against civilians or to invest in the provision of security", as well as other public goods (Branovic and Chojnacki 2011, 554).

Intended as a governance function, security has to be evaluated in terms of a public good; thus it becomes relevant the scrutiny its 'consumption' - the extent of inclusiveness and rivalry in collapsed states (Branovic and Chojnacki 2011, 556). In collapsed states, often a process of "societal fragmentation" takes place leading to an "intrastate security dilemma" (Kaufman 1996, Posen 1993, cit from Branovic and Chojnacki 2011, 556) for civilians. In these cases, security becomes a "club good", with different actors raising and competing for its "shares in the market" (Branovic and Chojnacki 2011,556).

Thus, through the look at the way in which armed actors interact with civilians for collecting resources and distribute them, and at geographic configuration of this interaction, it is possible to investigate the types of security provided (Ibid, 556). A crucial condition is the "effective control exercised" - that determines the extent of collaboration between rebels and civilians and, therefore, thus the type of violence employed violence against civilians (Kalyvas 2006, cit from the authors above 556).

This background provides the framework to understand how this dynamic process "permits security as a good to once again move markedly from the private to the public realm" (ibid 557).

Defined security governance as the "intentional provision of security for the collective good of a defined group of recipients of protection, one particular mode of security by coercion meets this criterion. Coercive security involves specific strategies" of groups "who invest in the establishment of monopolies in the use of force and thereby advance processes of governance formation". (Ibid. 557). Importantly, those actors who have the means to impose sanctions *will* use them to control the relationship with civilians and the territory. Also, they *will* invest in the creation of institutions regulating the collection of resources, through taxes rather than looting and plundering. Until the time in which this monopoly of protection established is not threatened by others, "this system or rule can be treated as security governance" (Ibid. 557).

Such market exchanges are *sui generis*. Protection is allocated with the use of force instead of pricing mechanisms (Skarpedas and Konrad 2004, cit from the authors above, 557). Additionally, force – instead of voluntary exchange – may be shape the transfer of goods and rights (Mehler 2004, 540). Competition is usually detrimental, as more suppliers translate in intensified violence (Mehler 2004,

540) and into to higher prices (Skarpedas 2001,174).

How does the Logic of Security Markets work? Given the demand as fixed, suppliers instead, "calculate the profit margins of their investments in the supply of security" (Ibid. 2011, 559).

The more concrete becomes the possibility of eliminating the adversary and getting his resources, the more valuable become conflict compared to settlement strategies; at the same time, the more insecure becomes the environment, the more costly protection will become, and the risk of rebels perpetrating

Figure 1. The logic of security markets over time
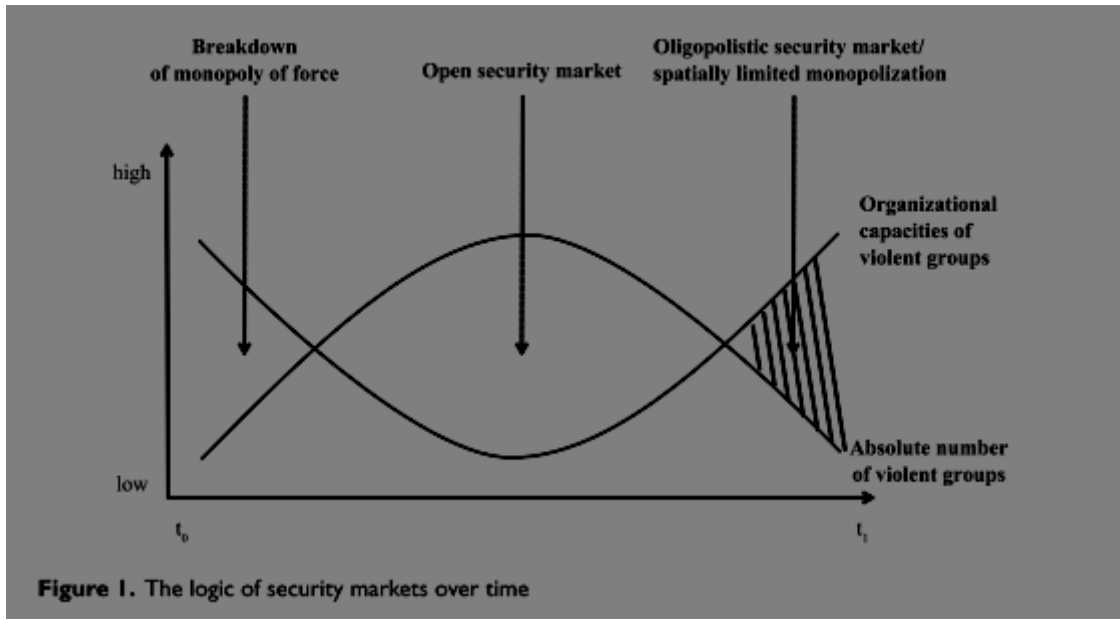
indiscriminate violence increases (Ibid, 559, see also Kalyvas 2006, Weinstein 2007). Therefore, "arbitrary violence and destruction are more probable in zones of strategic insecurity because of the asymmetric distribution of information and multiple material insecurities" (Ibid. 559).

Figure 1. resumes the logic presented by the authors (Ibid 559).

T0 represents the moment of state collapse; violence increases following the rise of the number of actors. With the increase of the number of actors, the organizational capacities of each group tend to shrink – as they will invest all resources in the military wings (Ibid 2011, 560). As T1 approaches, groups will search to increase the efficiency of resource extraction – thus are expected to resort to "coercive modes of governance" (Ibid 2011, 560). Because of this shift, groups will transform from roving to stationary bandits (Ibid, 560, see Olson 1993). At the same time, while groups tend to become force-monopolists outside (war-making) and inside (state-making) a territory (Tilly, 1985, 172), it is *the time horizon of control* that will influence whether institutions of coercive security will develop or not: if this is long-term, creating institutions to collect resources and protect the population is a more efficient strategy than looting (Branovic and Chojnacki 2011, 561).

Against this backdrop, having cooperative relationship with civilians is politically strategic for rebel groups (Mampilly 2011, 53). Resorting to coercion after the achievement of territorial control will

restrain the popular support (Ahmad 1982, 249). Instead, key is to re-establish a form of sovereignty consisting of an "authority relationship" between the civilians and the leadership (Mampilly 2011, 52), one that "requires a degree of *consent* (emph. Added) even if it is partially derived from coercive capacity[ies]". That is, groups must achieve "some *legitimacy* in the eyes of the population" (Mampilly 2011, 54)

As it was mentioned, collaboration is a function of territorial and temporal control (Kalyvas 2006, 110-3). Besides through violence, collaboration can be achieved through some non-violent mechanisms which are core governance functions (Mampilly 2011, 54). In particular, following the 'provision of benefits mechanisms "control makes possible the provision, when available, of all kinds of benefits to generate loyalty – hearts and minds" (Kalyvas 2006, 124-28) as it would be in the case of hospitals and schools (Mampilly 2011, 54) or other provided by international organizations. In sum, the provision of public goods is crucial to maximise the participation of the vast majority of the non-combatant population, and creates legitimacy and support (Mampilly 2011, 54).

Besides the "level of strategic security", also "respective societal norms" governing the exchange on the market determine its functioning (Duningham and Petersson 2015, 171). These are identified as the "norms governing exchange and the role" of armed actors as legitimate security providers: these can be of two forms, as mentioned before – force and voluntary exchange (Ibid. 2015, 171). As Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein noted (1996, 54) norms are "collective expectations about proper behaviour for a given identity" and, in their "regulative" form, "operate as standards for the proper enactment or deployment of a defined identity". Thus shape the realm of possibilities of civilians and organizations regarding the purchase of security.

From the above discussion can be drawn the following conclusions: the NGO purchase of security responds to structural governance imperatives. They are influenced by the level of strategic security, the norms of exchange ruling the market.

Accordingly, Hypothesis 1: NGO Behavior in Libya 'mirrors' the changes in the logic of strategic action of armed groups and the norms of exchange regulating the market.

2.2 The 'Scanning Hypothesis' - Learning About the Security Supply

A competing (complementary?) explanation for the way in which strategies are defined can be seeing NGOs as learning organizations: for NGOs working in unstable contexts, the flow of their services depends also on the capacity to purchase the service security on the market for force. Thus NGOs

must scan the market to understand who are the potential security providers, get involved in a bargaining process and, once achieved some agreements, understand how to make the deals be respected.

The literature on organizational learning is extremely vast and characterized by lack of consensus on models and definitions (Fiol, C.M., and Lyles, M.A. 1985). However, it is increasingly acknowledged the idea of learning as a "change in the organization's knowledge that occurs as a function of experience" (Argote 2013, 31). Implied in the concept of learning, there are two basic dimensions which must be considered: the first refers to the *content* of learning, which is both cognitive and behavior development. To properly speak of learning there must be a level of cognitive development involved in the process of adaptation. (Fiol, C.M., and Lyles, M.A. 1985, 805). The second important dimension is the *level* of learning. Argyris (1976) called 'single-loop learning' the process that maintains the central features of the set of rules of an organization, and restricts to detecting and correcting errors. A 'double-loop learning', instead, aims at adjusting not only specific activities and behaviors, but rather the overall rules and norms on which the organization founds.

Applied to our topic, learning within the market for force is actually a central skill that organizations must have for continuing their programmes. At the same time, it is a process with highly political consequences, one that relates to the selection of 'suppliers' of a commodity sui generis – security.
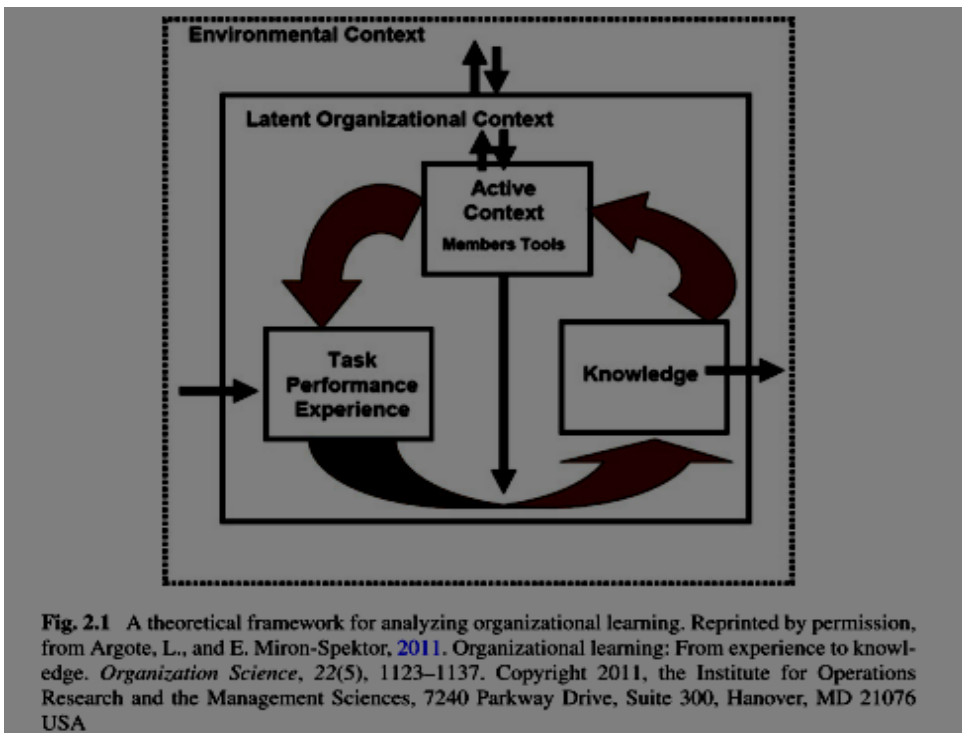

Fig. 2.1 A theoretical framework for analyzing organizational learning. Reprinted by permission, from Argote, L., and E. Miron-Spektor, 2011. Organizational learning: From experience to knowledge. *Organization Science*, 22(5), 1123–1137. Copyright 2011, the Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences, 7240 Parkway Drive, Suite 300, Hanover, MD 21076 USA

To track how learning occurs, I here propose a framework drawn from Argote (2013, 32). A snapshot of Figure 2 (from the authors) facilitates the understanding of the discussion.

This figure depicts the ongoing cycle of organizational learning, through which "task performance experience is converted into knowledge." (Argote 2013, 33). The experience from task performance interacts with the context*s* and creates knowledge. The knowledge "flows out" of the organization into the environment, as well as it changes the organization's context, determining future learning (Ibid 33).

Learning always takes place in a context, which includes both the organization and the external environment in which the organization is placed.

In the environmental context are included elements that are outside the boundaries of the organization, such as competitors and governments. It can vary along different dimensions, such as volatility, uncertainty, interconnectedness. Importantly, the external environment has two ways to interact with organizations, through the organization's experience or through the information conveyed through the networks of agents (Argote 2013). On the other hand, the organizational context includes elements such as structure, culture, or the relationships with other organizations (Argote 2013, 40).

Experience, context and knowledge, can be broken down along various dimensions. The sub-units are those who actually influence the learning process of organizations.

Looking first at Experience, this can be either direct or indirect. The 'Directness' relates in first place to whether the experience is accumulated *directly* from its focal organizational units – such as the NGOs' security manager - or *indirectly* from other organizational units (Argote 2013, 36), or from other organizations. Additionally, a unit for task experience can be success or failure: while the literature is divided on which type is more stimulating for learning, organizations can actually learn drawing from both (Argote 2013, 36). Lastly, the geographical concentration of experience may also matter. While, geographically dispersed units can have access to more knowledge, geographically concentrated units may be facilitated in creating shared understandings (Argote 2013, 38).

The organizational context can be distinguished in latent and active (Ibid. 2013).

The latent context – constituted by elements such as culture - operates through the influence on the active context – the members tasks and tools. It "determines the "organization's task and the tools available to perform" it (Argote 2013, 40). In fact, organizational culture is defined as the set of "shared learning experiences that lead, in turn, to shared, taken-for-granted basic assumptions held by the members of the group or organization" (Schein 2004, 22). Culture provides bases to make predictions on the actions that organizations may take: organizations' strategic postures can be tied

closely to their cultural backgrounds, because "norms will influence the behavioural and cognitive development that the organization can undergo. In turn, change and learning often involves a restructuring of those broad norms and belief systems" (Fiol and Lyles 1985, 804).

However, learning actually occurs through the active context – particularly the organization's members interacting with the task - as *this* takes decisions and performs tasks. For this paper, two aspects of the active organizational context are brought to the fore: the "extent of decentralization" (Argote 2013) of the task – in this case to what extent the organization has specific units charged of the task of purchasing security; and the presence/type of social networks both inside the organization and between the organization and the environment (Argote 2013).

Decentralization is positively related with learning (Fiol and Lyles 1985; Argote 2013, 42): the more organizations have decentralized structures of decision-making, the more they are seen as able to learn from experience. Also, having members well positioned in (security) networks also facilitates learning (Argote 2013).

Lastly, Knowledge takes the forms of changes in behaviors or cognitions; it can be declarative – knowledge about facts or know what – or procedural – knowledge about procedures or know how (Argote 2013, 48-9). Interestingly, knowledge both flows out the organization into the external environment and remains into the organization, spread by the members of the organizations and affecting future learning (Argote 2013, 48).

From this discussion I now draw my second hypothesis that assumes the purchase of security from the Libyan market as a *learning process*. Taking the strategy as the explanandum, the organizational learning is the intermediate variable determined by the combination of a set of factors outlined above.

So that **Hypothesis 2:** NGO Behavior [strategy] – the unit of knowledge - follows experience. But behavior is also affected by the organizational context and environmental pressures.

Conclusions

As it was said at the beginning, it is surprising to see how little attention is given to the study of the security-related decisions that organizations take in conflicts. In fact, the way in which organizations decide to interact with conflict governances has important consequences on the quality and the type of security provided at the local level.

More in particular, this paper aimed to outline a framework that could provide a set of plausible explanations on how better we can conceptualize the decision-making process – either as a mirroring or as a scanning process – as well as on which major determinants these processes have.

Four scenarios can come out of an empirical test. In two scenarios, we have one hypothesis emerging as a (fully) convincing explanation. In a third scenario, none of the hypothesis is able to shed more light on the initial puzzle. In a fourth, and more intriguing scenario, a hybrid model may be delineated: here, a dominant hypothesis can emerge as more convincing, but the complexity of the interaction between humanitarian organizations and the constellation of global (e.g. international donors, foreign countries) and local (e.g. non-state armed groups, 'state' officials) actors can be fully understood only if we combine it with elements taken from the other hypothesis.

For example, one potential implication of Hypothesis 1 is that if we have a conflict governance characterized by an oligopoly of violence characterized by enclaves ruled by groups with a long term time horizon, then we should be able to track the presence of governance settings, and public goods provided, in every of the enclaves where these conditions are met. And most importantly, we should expect to find INGOs in many of them, if not all. If this were not the case, one plausible explanation could be found looking at the governance preferences internal to the armed group (Mampilly 2011, Weinstein 2007). Or, another potential explanation could be traced in the outcomes of NGOs learning processes (such as the NGO capacity to find lack of trustable/willing suppliers, or donors' *political* preferences).

On the overall, this focus on NGOs has the merit of highlighting what factors favor or hurdle the delivery of basic and live-saving public goods (such as health services, food, NFIs etc) in conflicts by International Actors, who are often the only ones capable accessing communities in dire need.

Theoretically, this type of analysis gets relevance if we adopt the perspective according to which states are results of "long-lasting historical processes" that can be partially violent. They are outcomes of "unconscious and contradictory processes of conflicts, negotiations and compromises between groups", which implies that seeing civil wars expression of state weakness or collapse may present serious shortcomings. Instead, it could be fruitful to look at civil wars as at the never-interrupting negotiation process between 'state' and non-state actors regarding the institutionalization of power relations, whose main (changing) product is the state (Plecard and Mechoulan 2015, 9, Plecard and Hagmann 2010, Lund 2006).

In so called areas of limited statehood – i.e. where the state lacks the "administrative capacity, either material or institutional, to exercise effective control over activities within its own borders - some functions usually performed by states can be assumed by external actors" (Krasner and Risse 2014,

546). In other words, lacking the host state of 'domestic sovereignty' (Krasner 1999), transnational actors may limit to provide collective goods such as health and education; or they may go as far as strengthening the authority structures of weak state apparatuses – that can be seen as a 'state-building' function (Kranser and Risse 2014, 546).

This perspective, however, may actually overlook the fact that even in areas characterized by the "prolonged absence of central state structures", political orders "besides the state may emerge" at the local level (Plecard and Hagman 2010).

In these cases, non-state armed groups represent the public authorities in the 'political orders' under their rule (Plecard and Mechoulan 2015, 6). Their rule, however, is crucially dependent on the acquisition of legitimacy in the eyes of their constituents (Mampilly 2011). Here, statehood – that institutionalizes power relations – both at the national and local level is object of a constant and conflictual "*negotiation*" process among the different [inter]national 'power poles' (Plecard and Hagman 2010). Thus, to conclude, the study of the role played by INGOs is crucial to shed more light on this 'negotiation' process: what institutions during conflicts are 'legitimate', what are the grounds of their legitimacy and in which ways they are constructed.

A look at the institutions that regulate civilian life created *during* conflicts is indeed crucial to understand how stable political institutions can be built in the aftermath of conflicts (Plecard and Mechoulan 2015, 6).

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