

## BELARUS ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE USE OF FORCE: LUKAŠENKA AND NATO OPERATION IN LIBYA

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**Abstract:** Describing and analysing Lukašenka's views on NATO operation in Libya give the opportunity to draw wider conclusions about Belarus attitude towards the use of force in international relations. Belarus opposition to NATO operation in Libya contributes to the development of just war discussion. This paper touches upon the dilemma between regime change/sovereignty/no interference and protection of civilians by using force highlighted by the conflict in Libya.

**Keywords:** Use of Force, Belarus, NATO Operation in Libya, Just War.

## СТАЎЛЕННЕ БЕЛАРУСІ ДА ЎЖЫВАННЯ СІЛЫ: ЛУКАШЭНКА І АПЕРАЦЫЯ НАТО Ў ЛІВІІ

**Анотацыя:** Апісанне і аналіз поглядаў Лукашэнкі на аперацыю НАТО ў Лівіі дае магчымасць зрабіць глыбейшыя высновы пра стаўленне Беларусі да ўжывання сілы ў міжнародных адносінах. Негатыўнае стаўленне Беларусі да аперацыі НАТО ў Лівіі развівае дыскусію справядлівай вайны. Гэты тэкст разглядае дyleму паміж змай рэжыму/суверэннасцю/неўмяшальніцтвам і абаронай цывільнага насельніцтва пры дапамозе сілы, якая актуалізавалася ў Лівіі.

**Ключавыя словы:** ужыванне сілы, Беларусь, аперацыя НАТО ў Лівіі, справядлівая вайна.

*Introduction*

Every time force is used as means of addressing challenges to peace and security in international relations, it attracts attention of many decision makers in many countries. Libyan intervention and Lukašenka are no exception.

The goal of this paper is to describe and analyse Lukašenka's attitude towards NATO's operation in Libya.

This paper addresses the following aspects. Firstly, this paper outlines the main characteristic of NATO's operation in Libya. Secondly, it describes the basic features of Belarus' stance towards the use of force. Thirdly, the paper attempts to provide the main explanations of why Lukašenka's attitude towards NATO operation in Libya was negative. In other words – why Lukašenka believes Libyan intervention was not a *just war*?<sup>1</sup>

*NATO's operation in Libya – short introduction*

NATO's operation in Libya (called also Operation Unified Protector - OUP) was implemented on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 1973, which authorized 'all necessary measures', but prohibited 'occupation force' (UN SC resolution 1973, 17.03.2011). NATO's operation consisted of three main elements 1) protection of civilians; 2) enforcement of No Fly Zone (NFZ); 3) enforcement of arms embargo.

The most militarily difficult and politically controversial was the mission to protect civilians. This was the core of the whole operation and the main purpose for its conducting. Referring to NATO's chief A. F. Rasmussen, "Our mission is to protect the civilian population." (Rasmussen, April 2011)

*Belarus and the use of force, Libyan case*

As for any other country, including neutral, force can be used in self defence. The same as for NATO members, Belarus and other countries both within the Union State (US) and Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) have committed itself to defend each other (US – "united defence area", CSTO – "get military assistance").

Belarus' official policy is relatively silent on the use of force authorised by the UN Security Council (The Military Doctrine of Belarus). However, Lukašenka traditionally has had a negative stance on the use of force by the West (most being on the basis of this second option). And it is UN SC, who permitted the use of force in such cases as Afghanistan and Iraq. The next chapter will show that Libya is no exception.

*NATO operation – why not a just war?*

There are two main reasons of why Lukašenka believes NATO's operation in Libya was not just: 1) regime change and 2) killing of civilians.

<sup>1</sup> For more information on Just War Theory tradition see: Fisher, 2011; Brough et al, 2007.

Before explaining these two reasons, it is worth paying attention to another aspect. What is Lukašenka's worst case scenario? This is a combination of elements of a 'typical Western strategy for regime change'. First, the mass media is used to create more protestors. For example, Lukašenka invited to "stop thinking that the main function of the mass media is to inform" (Lukašenka, 2011). Then Western leaders call for a military intervention to protect these protestors (Lukašenka, 2011). Since the West has difficult experience in terms of using troops on the ground, the focus would be on air operations.

Coming back to the two reasons, to a large extent Lukašenka believes that all military operations authorised by the UN SC have violated state sovereignty and interfered in state's internal affairs. In February 2012 Lukašenka stated that "direct military intervention of NATO in internal affairs of sovereign Libya led to the collapse of a dynamic and developing state" (Lukašenka, 2012). As a result, operations leading to regime change cannot be just.

Secondly, NATO's operation did not protect civilians, but, in opposite, caused more civilian deaths. Lukašenka described NATO's action as "aggression which led to killing of the leadership of a great country. It was Special Forces of NATO countries who killed Gaddafi. It was worse than fascist in those times. If this kind of politics spreads around the globe, we all will be in trouble" (Lukašenka, 2012). Lukašenka calls this type of NATO operations a Western way of implementing democracy. He equals this democracy to killing of civilians (Lukašenka, 2012)

### *Conclusions*

Lukašenka is generally critical about the use of force on the basis of UN SC mandate. With regard to Libyan intervention, regime change and killing of civilians are the two main reasons for being against it. Hence, for Lukašenka NATO's operation in Libya cannot be just. Yet, the question remains - was the protection of civilians possible without regime change?

And is the vice versa true? If force is used to fight against regime change, then is it justifiable? Apart from criticising NATO for causing civilian deaths, Lukašenka is less vocal on protection of civilians.

Another interesting question to address is if Lukašenka can imagine himself being "in the shoes of Gaddafi"? Lukašenka has been the target of Western democracy promotion, not yet through military means. Having such an ally as Russia makes it almost impossible. Moreover, despite of all opposition protests, Lukašenka has skilfully contained protesting to a manageable size (opposite to the Arab Spring), so that there is little ground for calls of "protection of civilians or 'protesters'".

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