The military and human security

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Introduction
Human security is a people-centred approach which has gained considerable attention in recent years. How human security is defined and applied is still a matter of discussion and growing experience. Despite the different definitions, interpretations and accents, the various understandings of human security share several common characteristics. Human security:

- tends to start from individual citizens and the communities in which they live, rather than from states;
- approaches person-centred security as an integral element of international peace and security;
- recognises that the security of states is essential but not sufficient to guarantee person-centred security and well-being;
- focuses on threats to persons, whether their origin may be military or non-military; and
- considers security a continuum that starts with conflict prevention and extends over intervention to conflict resolution.²

This article will focus on the role of the military in the field of human security. As a matter of fact, from a broad perspective, human security might already be said to be playing a direct or indirect part in military doctrine and operations through: the Geneva Conventions; the development of Peace Support Operations doctrines; progress in international law relating to arms control and criminal courts; the growing interest among militaries in engendering goodwill on the part of the local population through ‘hearts and minds’ strategies, including activities which improve local infrastructure and livelihoods; and Rules of Engagement.

In this article, firstly the potential roles for the military in the field of human security will be surveyed. This will be followed by examining the emerging concept of the ‘responsibility to protect’. Next, the concept of a ‘Human Security Doctrine’ will be discussed, followed by civil-military relations in humanitarian operations. At the end some concluding remarks will be made.

Potential roles for the armed forces
Civilians now constitute the majority of war casualties, an atrocious and alarming trend that persuaded the previous United Nations (UN) Secretary-General to call

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for the creation of a ‘culture of protection’ in dealing with situations of armed conflict.\(^3\) The primacy of human rights is what distinguishes the human security approach from traditional state-based approaches. The debate on sovereignty and the conditions under which human rights concerns should take precedence over sovereignty has been a central preoccupation of both practitioners and analysts of foreign policy in recent years. As a consequence, in human security operations, the protection of civilians, not defeating an enemy, is an end in itself. The main objectives of humanitarian operations are to save lives, to alleviate human suffering; and to offer the prospect of resuming a dignified existence.

From a military perspective, humanitarian operations can be conducted as part of a broader peace support operation or in a non-peace support operations scenario, which has the alleviation of human suffering as its main objective. Both are conducted under circumstances in which the competent authorities are unable, and in some cases unwilling, to assist in providing adequate aid to the population.

In a peace support operation, there are a series of discrete measures to provide protection for targeted populations. One set of protective measures relates to the protection of humanitarian action and includes the defence of aid convoys and the maintenance of humanitarian corridors. It could also include the use of security forces to protect the storage and distribution of aid as well as the controversial use of ‘technicals’ in Somalia. A second set of measures relates to the physical protection of populations in discrete locations. Here it may be useful to distinguish between larger safe zones, where people remain in their homes and communities, and safe havens, where people from the surrounding area seeking protection congregate.

More in detail, Victoria Holt distinguishes the following potential roles for military forces in civilian protection:

1. **Protection as an obligation within the conduct of war.** In war, military forces are required to abide by the Geneva Conventions and other international laws to minimise civilian death and injury and the destruction of civilian objects, and to allow for relief provided by impartial humanitarian actors. The occupying power is responsible for the basic security and welfare of the civilian population.

2. **Protection as a military mission to prevent mass killings.** According to the principles outlined by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), a protection mission is organised and deployed specifically to actively prevent large-scale violence against civilians.\(^4\)

3. **Protection as a task within UN-mandated peace operations.** ‘Civilian protection’ is seen as one of many tasks for peacekeepers, but is unlikely to be the operation’s central, organising aim.

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