Human Security in Complex Operations

BY MARY KALDOR

Complex operations take place in zones of insecurity. In these zones, ordinary people face a range of everyday risks and dangers. They risk being killed, tortured, kidnapped, robbed, raped, or displaced from their homes. They risk dying from hunger, lack of shelter, disease, or lack of access to health care. They are vulnerable to man-made and natural disasters—hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, or fires. These risks and dangers feed on each other. They are very difficult to eliminate; hence, the current preoccupation with "persistent conflict" or "forever wars." These have a tendency to spread both to neighboring regions—growing zones of insecurity in places such as East Africa, Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Middle East, or the Balkans—and, indeed, to the inner cities of the industrialized West.

Yet our security forces, largely based on conventional military forces designed to meet a foreign attack, are unsuited to address these risks and dangers; indeed, the application of conventional military force can often make things worse—as we have learned painfully in Iraq and Afghanistan. Already, a range of private actors, security contractors, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), militia, warlords, and criminal gangs have rushed to fill the vacuum created by the failure of public institutions to provide security, contributing both to security and, more often than not, to greater insecurity.

Human security is a concept that can facilitate both the way we understand complex operations and how we design the toolkit for addressing these risks and dangers. It offers a narrative that is quite different from the war on terror and it implies a set of principles for using both

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military and civil capabilities combined. In this essay, I first define human security and then elaborate the principles of human security. I briefly suggest the differences between a human security approach and contemporary counterinsurgency doctrines. Finally, I deal with the criticisms that have been leveled at the concept.

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The version of human security presented in this article was developed in a human security study group that I convene, and which reported to Javier Solana, the European Union's High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, and now to his successor, Cathy Ashton. The study group included military and civilian practitioners as well as academics from all over Europe. Our initial brief was to produce a report on the kind of security capabilities Europe needs. We concluded that instead of traditional armed forces, Europe needs a combination of military and civilian capabilities designed to address complex operations. We decided to call the new doctrine human security.[1]

Defining Human Security

There are three elements to our definition of *human security*. First, human security is about the everyday security of individuals and the communities in which they live rather than the security of states and borders; it is about the security of Afghans and Americans and Europeans, not just the security of the United States or Europe.

Second, it is about different sorts of security, not only protection from the threat of foreign enemies. It is about addressing the variety of risks and dangers experienced in those places where complex operations are conducted. It is about both freedom from fear and freedom from want. This is perhaps the most contested aspect of the definition of human security. The so-called broad definition of human security was first put forward in the 1994 *Human Development Report* published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The report argued that the concept of security has "for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from a nuclear holocaust. It has been related more to nation-states than to people."[2] The report identified seven core elements, which together made up the concept of human security: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. At that time, the main concern was to make sure that the peace dividend expected from the end of the Cold War would be devoted to development. The aim of the 1994 *Human Development Report* was to use the concept of security to emphasize the urgency of development. This broad definition of human security was adopted by the Japanese government and taken up by the report of the United Nations (UN) High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change titled *In Larger Freedom*, and in the Secretary-General's response to that report.[3]

A narrower definition of the concept of human security, developed by the Canadian government, is closely associated with the concept of Responsibility to Protect—the idea that the international community has a responsibility to protect people threatened by genocide,

Girls wait for school supplies handed out by Afghan National Civil Order Police

U.S. Army (G.A. Volb)

ethnic cleansing, and other massive violations of human rights when their governments fail to act. This definition is reflected in the *Human Security Report*, published in 2005, and the subsequent Human Security Briefs, documents that provide valuable information about political violence—particularly violent conflicts.[4]

My definition of human security emphasizes what the UNDP calls personal security—the security of human beings in violent upheavals. This broad definition tends to neglect security as conventionally defined and to assume that if we solve the problems of material deprivation, the rest will follow. While violence cannot be disentangled from all the other dimensions of insecurity, it is also the case that a functioning economy or effective protection against disasters depends on security in the way it is conventionally defined (that is, physical safety). And how we address the problems of violence in zones of insecurity is still not well understood.

The third element of the definition of human security is about the interrelatedness of security in different places. Violence and resentment, poverty and illness, in places such as Africa, Central Asia, or the Middle East travel across the world through terrorism, transnational crime, or pandemics. Instead of allowing insecurity to travel, we need to send security in the opposite direction. The kind of security that Americans and Europeans expect to enjoy at home has to spread to the rest of the world. We cannot any longer keep our parts of the world safe while ignoring other places. The world is interconnected through social media, transportation, and basic human sympathy. In other words, human security is about the blurring of the domestic and the international—it is about a global form of the kind of law-based security that is typical of

well-ordered societies, a law paradigm rather than a war paradigm.

The Principles of Human Security

It follows that implementing human security is more like law enforcement rather than classic warfighting operations. We need something like domestic emergency services at a global level. These services would include both civilian and military capabilities (police, humanitarian services, engineers and firefighters, legal experts, and the military). They would operate under principles that are quite different from conventional military operations.

The principles have to cover both ends and means. There has been a lot of recent discussion about the "responsibility to protect" and the conditions under which it is right to use military force. But there is much less discussion about how military forces should be used in such a role, yet this is critical for effective protection. There are also discussions about which civilian elements of crisis management are to be used, with an emphasis on helping to establish a rule of law, but much less about how and when these elements should work together with the military. Thus, the principles apply to both *how* and *why*, both *ends* and *means*.

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The principles do not only apply to hot conflict situations. A distinction is often drawn between the "prevention" of crises and post-conflict reconstruction. But it is often difficult to distinguish among different phases of complex operations precisely because there are no clear beginnings or endings and because the conditions that cause conflict and crisis—fear and hatred, a criminalized economy that profits from violent methods of controlling assets, weak illegitimate states, or the existence of warlords and paramilitary groups—are often exacerbated during and after periods of violence. As Rupert Smith argues, "In the world of industrial war the premise is of the sequence peace-crisis-war-resolution, which will result in peace again, with the war, the military action, being the deciding factor. In contrast, the new paradigm of war amongst the people is based on the concept of a continuous criss-crossing between confrontation and conflicts."[5] The principles for a human security policy should therefore apply to a continuum of phases of varying degrees of violence that always involves elements of both prevention and reconstruction.

In the European Union study group, we developed six principles:

Principle 1: The Primacy of Human Rights. The primacy of human rights is what distinguishes the human security approach from traditional state-based approaches. Although the principle seems obvious, there are deeply held and entrenched institutional and cultural obstacles that have to be overcome if it is to be realized in practice. Human rights include economic and social rights as well as political and civil rights. This means that human rights such as the right to life, right to housing, or right to freedom of opinion are to be respected and protected even in the midst of conflict.

What this principle means is that unless it is absolutely necessary and legal, killing is to be avoided. For the military it means the primary goal is protecting civilians rather than

defeating an adversary. Of course, sometimes it is necessary to try to capture or even defeat insurgents, but it has yet to be seen as a means to an end—civilian protection—rather than the other way around. Torturing suspects who have been arrested is also illegitimate and illegal. Causing greater human suffering as a result of an intervention would seem questionable. So-called collateral damage is unacceptable. At the same time, the application of this principle to saving life directly under threat from other parties might involve the frequent use of force and a much more robust interventionist policy. Interventions would aim to prevent a repeat of future Srebrenicas or Rwandas.

The primacy of human rights also implies that those who commit gross human rights violations are treated as individual criminals rather than collective enemies; the aim is to arrest and bring them to justice rather than kill them.

Principle 2: Legitimate Political Authority. Human security depends on the existence of legitimate institutions that gain the trust of the population and have some enforcement capacity. Legitimate political authority does not necessarily need to mean a state; it could consist of local government or regional or international political arrangements such as protectorates or transitional administrations. Since state failure is often the primary cause of conflict, the reasons for state failure have to be taken into account in reconstructing legitimate political authority. Measures such as justice and security sector reform; disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration; extension of authority; and public service reform are critical for the establishment of legitimate political authority.[6]

This principle explicitly recognizes limitations on the use of military force. The aim of any intervention is to stabilize the situation so that a space can be created for a peaceful political process rather than to win through military means alone. In the end, a legitimate political authority has to be established through debates involving the people. The most that can be achieved through the use of military force is stabilization. Again, this is a difficult cognitive shift for the military since they tend to see their roles in terms of defeating an enemy. This principle explicitly recognizes the impossibility of victory but aims instead to establish safe zones where political solutions can be sought. The military's job is enabling rather than winning. Thus, techniques such as creating safe havens, humanitarian corridors, or no-fly zones are typical of a human security approach.

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Principle 3: Multilateralism. A human security approach has to be global. Hence, it can only be implemented through multilateral action. Multilateralism means more than simply "acting with a group of states." In that narrow sense nearly all international initiatives might be considered multilateral. Multilateralism is closely related to legitimacy and is what distinguishes a human security approach from neocolonialism.

First, multilateralism means a commitment to work with international institutions and through the procedures of international institutions. This means, first and foremost, working within the UN framework, but it also entails working with or sharing-out tasks among other

regional organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; the African Union, Southern African Development Community, and Economic Community of West African States in Africa; or the Organization of American States.

Second, multilateralism entails a commitment to creating common rules and norms, solving problems through rules and cooperation, and enforcing the rules. Nowadays, legitimate political authority has to be situated within a multilateral framework. Indeed, state failure is partly explained in terms of the failure of traditionally unilateralist states to adapt to multilateral ways of working.

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Third, multilateralism has to include coordination rather than duplication or rivalry. An effective human security approach requires coordination among intelligence, foreign policy, trade policy, development policy, and security policy initiatives of individual states and other multilateral actors, including the United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and regional institutions, as well as private actors such as NGOs. Institutional coordination is always difficult to achieve since it usually means adding yet another layer of bureaucracy. Human security offers an alternative narrative that can provide conceptual coherence as well.

Principle 4: The Bottom-up Approach. Notions of "partnership," "local ownership," and "participation" are already key concepts in development policy. These concepts should also apply to security policies. Decisions about the kind of security and development policies to be adopted, whether to intervene with military forces or through various forms of conditionality and how, must take account of the most basic needs identified by the people who are affected by violence and insecurity. This is not just a moral issue; it is also a matter of effectiveness. People who live in zones of insecurity are the best source of intelligence and, indeed, are the only ones who can actually build long-term security. Thus, communication, consultation, and dialogue are essential tools not simply to win hearts and minds but to gain knowledge and understanding and to lay the basis for the construction of appropriate institutions. This principle seems obvious, but there is often a built-in tendency to think "we know best." After all, bottom-up includes criminals, the mafia, and warlords. The solution is to talk to everyone, and it should not be so difficult to identify people of conscience and integrity who could act as local guides.

Particularly important in this respect is the role of women's groups. The importance of gender equality for development, especially the education of girls, has long been recognized. The same may be true when managing complex operations. Women play a critical role in contemporary conflicts, both in dealing with the everyday consequences of the conflict and in overcoming divisions in society. Involvement and partnership with women's groups should be a key component of a human security approach.

Principle 5: Regional Focus. Twenty-first century risks and dangers have no clear boundaries. They tend to spread through refugees and displaced persons, through minorities

who live in different states, through criminal and extremist networks, and through the ripple effect caused by natural disasters. Indeed, most situations of severe insecurity are located in regional clusters. The tendency to focus attention on areas defined in terms of statehood has often meant that relatively simple ways of preventing the spread of violence are neglected. Time and again, foreign policy analysts have been taken by surprise when, after considerable attention had been given to one conflict, another conflict would seemingly spring up out of the blue in a neighboring state. The war in Sierra Leone could not be solved without addressing the cause of conflict in Liberia, for example. Today's war in Afghanistan can only be contained if neighboring states, especially Pakistan and Iran, are involved.

Principle 6: Clear Transparent Civilian Command. In complex operations it is critical to have a single local commander who understands the local situation and can communicate with centers of political power in the international arena. That person should be a civilian, a UN Special Representative, for example. It is extremely difficult to achieve military-civil coordination and the trust of multilateral agencies if the person in charge is military. Civilians fear that they will become targets in a shooting war or will be used to identify enemies rather than to meet needs.

These six principles imply a much more effective means of achieving security. It is precisely because the spread of terrorist techniques, used by fundamentalists of various stripes, is becoming a serious threat that we need a different approach; the use of conventional military force in a warfighting mode actually increases insecurity and enhances conditions favorable to terrorist recruitment. In practical terms, application of the principles would transform the way we assess insecurity (in terms of indicators such as casualties, human rights violations, or disease instead of measuring foreign military capabilities) and the nature of our security capabilities. For example, communication would mean a two-way dialogue instead of strategic messaging; intelligence would be human and bottom-up intelligence instead of technical and top-down; and technological requirements would involve communication and transport capabilities and less expensive and sophisticated weaponry.

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Counterinsurgency versus Human Security

The U.S. counterinsurgency (COIN) manual, published in December 2006, turned out to be a powerful critique of the use of conventional warfighting tactics applied in Iraq and Afghanistan, and it used some language associated with a human security approach.[7] It emphasized the key objective of legitimacy and establishing a government that can guarantee a rule of law. It put protection of civilians at the heart of the doctrine. It argued for an "appropriate level of force," suggesting "[s]ometimes the more force you use the less effective it is"; "[s]ome of the best weapons for Counterinsurgency do not shoot"; and "[s]ometimes the more you protect your force the less secure you will be."[8] It also called for the integration of military and civilian activities.

Farah Wholesale Market, a joint Afghan government and USAID project, accommodates up to 80 traders and facilitates sale of fruits and vegetables

U.S. Air Force (Rylan K. Albright)

The doctrine was applied successfully during the surge in Iraq and has been adapted for Afghanistan. General Stanley McChrystal, then-commander in Afghanistan, produced a comprehensive report in August 2009 proposing an integrated military-civilian campaign. The plan went even further than General David Petraeus's COIN strategy for Iraq. It emphasizes protecting civilians rather than defeating enemies and even uses the term *human security*. It covers such issues as sustainable jobs, access to justice, governance, and communication, and the importance of the Afghan role in these endeavors. It deals with "irreconcilables" through isolation rather than direct attack.[9]

But counterinsurgency is different from human security. At a tactical level, counterinsurgency is, first and foremost, a military doctrine as seen through a military prism. In particular, rules of engagement are determined by the "laws of war" (*jus in bello*) rather than by civil law, which offers guidelines for policemen. Thus, a judgment about whether hitting a military target justifies civilian casualties must be made differently from the same judgment in a domestic or civil context. The war-minded way of thinking is integrated into military units, however much they are drilled in the importance of population security. As long as population security is a tactic rather than a goal or a strategy, the starting point for soldiers will be how to identify targets or disrupt networks rather than the needs of the people; this means they risk deploying force that will escalate the conflict. There may indeed be times when military action has to be used against terrorists or insurgents, putting civilian lives at risk. But this is never the priority under a human security approach. Moreover, the starting point for a judgment about when to use lethal force is different; for a human security approach, the starting point is self-defense or

the defense of a third party. The balance of judgment is, therefore, more likely to be on the side of saving lives.

At a strategic level, COIN and, indeed, "long war" remain situated within a framework of "us" and "them." It is about the conflict between the West and the global network of Islamic extremists even if it is no longer framed as the war on terror. A human security approach is about how to make everyone safe; it dispenses with easy dualisms. Human security is about a common global effort to make people safe. Of course, interstate war is perhaps the biggest threat to human security, but the threat lies in the threat of war itself, not a foreign attack; it is a threat to all human beings, not just to Americans and Europeans. Traditional war-thinking will always find an echo among competing powers or in notions of jihad. It provides an argument for Russian militarists, Chinese traditionalists, and, of course, angry young Muslim men.

Despite the McChrystal report there remains a huge tension between the efforts to defeat the Taliban and al Qaeda and the efforts to achieve population security—a tension perhaps epitomized in Operation *Enduring Freedom* and the International Security Assistance Force, even though General Petraeus is commander of both. The tension is reflected in continuing collateral damage, albeit much less than before. It is reflected in Afghan perceptions; many Afghans believe that they are pawns in a wider power game and therefore do not know which side to support. And of course it is reflected in the military nature of the operation. Even though McChrystal's report goes a long way in the direction of human security, its implementation has been hampered both by the fact that it was *his* report and *not* the report of civilian leaders such as the late Richard Holbrooke, President Barack Obama's Special Representative to the area, or Kai Eide, former UN Special Representative in Afghanistan, and by the fact that this thinking has not yet penetrated the culture of individual military units.

Criticisms

Two contradictory sets of criticisms have been raised in relation to the concept of human security. The first set of criticisms is about the concept of human security and can be found within the wider public debate. There are those who oppose all military interventions, especially those on the left who argue that human security is a cover for neoimperialism—a way to justify military interventions. And there are those, especially on the right, who favor military intervention and who argue that the concept is too soft and lacks teeth. The second set of criticisms comes from practitioners who are in the field and responsible for complex operations. One argument is "We're doing human security; we just don't call it that." And the other opposite argument is "Human Security is too lofty and ambitious; it is not practical or realistic."

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The criticism of human security as neoimperialism is about the use of humanitarianism to justify the use of conventional military force. Critics such as Noam Chomsky talk about the new "military humanitarianism" and argue that the war in Kosovo provided a precedent for the

wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.[10] In this line of argument, the term human security is merely a convenient cover for self-interest and for fighting wars. The criticism of human security as too soft, on the other hand, is just the opposite. It is about the way the development community has seized the security bandwagon as a way of promoting development efforts.

My answer is that human security is a hard concept. It is about protecting individuals and communities, and sometimes this involves the use of military force and can be even more risky than conventional warfighting. On the other hand, military force is used in a way that

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is quite different from the way it is used either for warfighting or peacekeeping. A humanitarian intervention, however, is different from a classic military intervention. It is different from imperialist interventions because it takes place within an international mandate, that is, within the framework of international law. And it is different in the way it is carried out since it is aimed at protecting people rather than fighting an enemy; indeed, conventional warfighting is in itself a humanitarian catastrophe. Actually, so-called hard security is often soft. Advanced systems are intended not for use but for communication—that is the point of deterrence.

As for the practical arguments, it is true that human security encompasses many of the concepts currently used in complex operations, especially by the UN and European Union—for example, crisis management, military-civil cooperation, or conflict prevention. Indeed, the last two decades have involved a dramatic learning process for security practitioners—the military, humanitarian agencies, as well as politicians. The statistics provided in the human security reports show that there has been a decline both in the number of wars and in the number of people killed in wars, and I believe this can be attributed to that learning process. Of course, if it were not for the fact that human security is already implicit in much of the work of practitioners in complex operations it would not be practicable.

The concept of human security does, however, take existing practice further. It offers a shared narrative that can explain what people are trying to do and a sense of global public service. It draws on the debates generated by these concepts as well as other terms used more broadly in the current global discourse such as "responsibility to protect," "effective multilateralism," and "human development" and, together with the principles, offers an easy-to-understand holistic framework that can serve as a coherent guiding doctrine. For example, the problem of using military and civilian capabilities together is not just a problem of coordination or integration. In classic wars, civilians always insisted on their autonomy from the military. Their ability to operate depended on "humanitarian space"—their neutrality and impartiality was important to allow them to help noncombatants, prisoners of war, and the wounded on all sides. Many humanitarian and development agencies fear that association with the military will undermine their ability to work, and indeed this has happened in Iraq and Afghanistan, where the international institutions are perceived to be on the side of coalition forces. But in contemporary wars, where civilians are targets, humanitarian space is disappearing. In a human security operation, the job of the

military is to protect and preserve that space rather than to fight an enemy. Thus, human security is not just about developing a culture of coordination and civil-military cooperation; it is about an entirely new way of functioning in crises that is best described by a new language of human security. Coordination is not about organizational arrangements, although they are important; it is about coherent goals and methods and how they are defined.

So is it utopian to suggest that human security offers a new language for addressing contemporary risks and dangers? The challenge is cognitive rather than practical. Human security does require a transformation in ways of thinking. Traditional concepts of security are deeply embedded in armed forces, defense corporations, military laboratories, ministries of foreign affairs and defense, and career structures. This is why any alternative appears utopian. It may be that current financial pressures may provide a reason to cut back some of the expensive toolkit associated with traditional warfighting, and that this does present an opportunity.

But human security is utopian in another sense. The basis for human security is the assumption that all human beings are equal. While this is easy to accept in theory, in practice, national ways of thinking about security mean that European and American lives do receive priority over Iraqi, Afghan, or Congolese lives. Accepting that all human lives are equal in practice would mean, for example, putting civilian protection before force protection. This is a big challenge for those schooled in national frameworks of thinking. **PRISM**

Notes

[1] See the reports of the Human Security Study Group: *A Human Security Doctrine for Europe: The Barcelona Report of the Study Group on European Security Capabilities*, September 15, 2007, available at <www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/Publications/HumanSecurityDoctrine.pdf>; *A European Way of Security: The Madrid Report of the Human Security Study Group*, November 8, 2007, available at <www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/PDFs/Madrid%20Report%20Final%20for%20distribution.pdf>; and *Helsinki Plus: A Human Security Architecture for Europe*, May 2010, available at <www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/PDFs/Helsinki%20Plus%20Human%20Security%20ArchitectureLR.pdf>.

[2] United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 1994* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[3] United Nations, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*, report of the Secretary-General, 2005, available at <www.un.org/largerfreedom/contents.htm>.

[4] Human Security Centre, University of British Columbia, *Human Security Report: War and Peace in the 21st Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect*, December 2001.

[5] Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 16–17.

[6] See Herbert Wulf, "The Challenges of Re-Establishing a Public Monopoly of Violence," in *A Human Security Doctrine for Europe: Project; Principles; Practicalities*, ed. Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor (Oxford: Routledge, 2005).

[7] U.S. Army Field Manual 3–24 and Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No. 3–33.5, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army/Headquarters Department of the Navy, 2006).

[8] Ibid., 1–27.

[9] "United States Government Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan," August 10, 2009.

[10] Noam Chomsky, *The New Military Humanism: Lessons from Kosovo* (London: Pluto, 1999).