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Human security and human-centred defence as individual responsibility and collective activity

Introduction

Total defence (TD) results from robust national security structures that possess the ways, means, and ends to pursue not only nation/state interests, but also collective ones as well. NATO provides an excellent example of collective defence. For more than 70 years, the alliance has been instrumental in keeping the peace on the European continent. As successful as NATO has been, it is time for a shift to a TD posture where human defence is the centrepiece around which all security concerns orbit.

The weakening of the Westphalian system requires new approaches to security. Clausewitz's Trinity – Government, People, and Military – is unbalanced. The three-legged stool has tipped over. Clearly, all three legs of the stool are necessary for defence, but in the new paradigm of “war amongst the people,” the civil population takes

on a much larger role and level of importance.¹ No longer does the government and military maintain a monopoly on violence, nor do they own the peace process. The old saying “we are all in this together” applies. Government, military, people, and alliances are the ingredients of *collective defence*.

Once again, it is time to go “back to the future.” We should re-energise civil defence corps activity to support collective defence that includes all aspects of society. Civil society is both a provider and a receiver of defence. A civil defence corps would be locally focused, and individuals would be identified and trained before conflict or humanitarian disaster occur. Considering the outsized role civil society is taking in “war amongst the people,” a loosely configured civil defence network can take responsibility for local defence and peacebuilding. A network that would be loose enough to expand and contract as necessary.² Local actors are necessary in building resilience before, during, and post conflict. Civil defence activities may dominate policing, medical, transportation, and engineering activities. Enhancing civil defence capacities now will ensure they are available and can be surged when necessary. The civil population is no longer background in the drama of militaries clashing to advance the state. Populations are now the dominant force. Lose the population, and you lose the fight and the peace. There are ample examples of resistance movements throughout WWII that demonstrate the power and capacity of civil society.

Civil Military Interaction (CMI)

The pandemic has taught us that science, crisis response mechanisms, a trained civil defence core, and human-defence-minded individuals at the highest levels of society – political, economic, cultural – can work together to frame a resilient and “anti-fragile”³ environment. Our goal is a civil environment where the measure of security policy and effectiveness is based on low death rates and hospitalisations. CMI provides the mindset necessary for different and unequal peacebuilding organisations to work collectively.

It is a crowded security landscape. Militaries no longer have the luxury of dominating the battlespace. In war amongst the people the battlespace is everywhere. Exploited hybrid threats and asymmetric warfare are the new normal.⁴ We cannot intentionally turn a blind eye to this crowded space where autocratic governments,

¹ R. Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*, London: Penguin Books, 2019.

² N. Ferguson, *The Square and the Tower: Networks and Power from the Freemasons to Facebook*, New York: Penguin Press, 2018.

³ N.N. Taleb, *Antifragile: Things that Gain from Disorder*, New York: Random House, 2014.

⁴ T. Matyók, S. Zajc, “Searching for a New Role for Military Forces Responding to Asymmetric Threat”, *Sodobni vojaški izzivi / Contemporary Military Challenges*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2022, pp. 27–44.

oligarchs, unregulated social media platforms, and politicians at all levels of society seek to shape the daily lives of citizens. Resilient and sustainable public policy is not the result of good will, but of what is possible. Going back to the end of Gabriel Garcia Márquez' excellent novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, we recognise how the author presents a simple conclusion: they lived as they did because they could not live any other. Technology is developing and changing much faster than our way of thinking and understanding the world in which we live. Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* offers us a glimpse into a future where technology is uncontrolled. We are facing serious threats that cannot be solved by one person, not even by one nation. The challenges are great. Civil society and the military, following a CMI mindset (NATO) are obliged to find new and innovative ways of working together to advance human security policies that place people first. To paraphrase a Renaissance approach: humans are the measure of all things.

Where to begin? Don Quixote offers a good starting point. His purpose of tilting at all the windmills he came upon is a good metaphor for current approaches to defence. Try and defend everything just as Don Quixote attempted to defeat every windmill. Yet we know that attempting to defend everything, we defend nothing. Cervantes' brilliant novel makes visible an immanent problem for human society: unbeatable dualism illustrated by the idea of a common windmill and knights. When does it pay off to fight and die for one or another cause?

States' responsibility – but how strong is the state?

We can observe a crack in the Peace of Westphalia which has provided a state-driven security wall since 1648. Nevertheless, in the 3rd millennium that crack is growing. Instead of the light of peace shining through the crack we can only see darkness. States and societies are relying on a hodgepodge of approaches to collective defence, civil defence, and many other models, as well as a mixture of all of them, to cobble together a total defence.

Firstly, each state is responsible for the security and wellbeing of their citizens as well as those who are part of bilateral and multi-lateral, i.e., NATO, defence agreements. However, the most efficient model for TD does not yet exist. NATO provides us with a first-generation approach to collective defence. In the 3rd millennium we need to think of second-generation approaches.

Bureaucratic command-and-control (C2) methods for achieving harmonisation and cooperation are too slow to address the complicated, complex, and fluid nature of modern conflict occurring in all domains. We realise, finally, that we are confronting common global threats, such as climate change and pandemics, which resist all our attempts to arrest or eradicate them (even the richest one per cent cannot escape the threats society faces). Threats can only be artificially hidden under artificial

conditions and through artificial means. But, how long? The one per cent may be at the front of the queue for vaccinations, but even their freedom following a Don Quixote defence policy, where all are pitted against each other in a race to the bottom, will be limited and, at the end, they will share a reality with the remaining 99 per cent. We must change the course and recognise that TD is everyone's responsibility. Total for me and total for you. There cannot be two forms of TD.

Many parts of Europe were destroyed during WWII, the wellbeing of the common citizen was low, and motivation for a new order was strong. Institutions were constructed to provide the greatest good for the many and sustain the peace. Today's life in Europe is still good for many citizens and that is why immigrants are travelling towards the continent, risking their lives, and paying smugglers the last of their savings. However, the comfortable life of many Europeans can result in a lack of motivation to deal with the negative impacts of climate change and the need to develop solidarity with the rest of the world. This holds true across the Trans-Atlantic Alliance.

New and strong adversaries

Global climate changes and the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate a troubling lack of global leadership. Local engagement of skilled individuals is missing. Yes, we are on the same boat, but not in the same cabin. The majority are under the deck in dark cramped quarters while on deck there are society's elites enjoying the open air. We can see this in the incoherent approach to making vaccinations available around the world. Irrespective of COVID-19 crisis being a pandemic, Western leaders worked to ensure that their citizens were at the front of the queue, and did not realise, that their attempts would not protect them from things happening on the other side of the world.

We should reinvent civil defence as the holistic concept of individual responsibility and collective action. Crisis management is one of our "new normals". Planners working to design a just future must at all times be aware of the need for individuals to be trained to minimise the potential damage to them and to society, which can result from unmanaged crises such as those stemming from climate changes and pandemics. The role of the state is to provide conditions supporting science and technology development needed to address current and potential crises. The state can shift expenses and investments in civil preparedness from the military to a new civil defence. Why? Because hybrid threats, climate changes, and pandemics can be exploited by bad actors in a much less expensive way than through direct combat.⁵

Civil defence guided by the civil-military interaction mindset is the natural environment by which to achieve stronger forms of structural and individual resilience;

⁵ *Ibidem.*

though it is not easy, vertical and horizontal coordination of government, military, and people must be established and maintained. Academia is essential in educating peace workers for the 3rd millennium. Civil defence should maintain a flat and flexible organisation, a quantum or matrix approach. Resilience simply cannot be built and reinforced during a crisis, resilience is a multitask effort before any crisis: at individual, local and collective levels. Each instance of personal engagement counts.

Medical approaches to wellness provide an example of how civil defence can be envisioned. A medical approach recognises a need to use a building block approach to enhance wellness where blocks can be added and taken away as necessary, based on a patient's needs. There is no one model of civil defence. There are multiple civil defences that rest on each other to create a context-specific response to crisis management. Sometimes in medicine the talking cure is appropriate (diplomacy), at other times, pharmaceuticals may be what is needed (government agencies), while a combination of pharmaceuticals and other therapies may be what is necessary (whole-of-government), and invasive surgical interventions are used as a last resort to protect life (the role of military) when all other methods have proved inadequate to bring the patient to a desired level of wellness.

We need human-centred defence policy and planning, teaching, and practice. Above all, we need a few strong states to stand behind the civil defence concept that merges policy and strategy with local actors. A return to Great Power competition can detract leaders from taking a civil defence approach to crisis management and building resilience. Resources needed to battle climate change and prepare for future pandemics can be siphoned off by the military leaving fewer funds for diplomacy, cooperation, interaction, and solidarity. Rather than engage in collective action as NATO allies and partners, states may pull away from each other. This lessens the strength of a unified response to global threats. Decades of useless repairing of weak states are over. After Afghanistan, we entered a new era defined by Great Power competition. The competition is for the primacy, resources, way of life, and model of state and society. Institutions such as the UN, NATO, and the EU must reform themselves for humankind to survive.

Human security versus nation building

We do not know if the interactions of civil-military actors will help build resiliency, but we hope they will. We do not know if human rights and human needs play a role in building resiliency, but we assume they do. We do not know if civil-military actors enhance cross-cultural information sharing and communication. Will they invent a common language, or will they keep relying on interpreters? Linguistic and cultural barriers are high and not visible at first glance. And, finally there is the main question: what is the overlap of nation-building with human security?

Security is an individual responsibility and a collective activity that requires all elements of society to ensure success. Security cannot be outsourced to the military nor any civilian institution. In the past planning was oriented towards civilian support to military, while now we follow the opposite direction: military support to civilians. Quite expectedly, the resistance by the rigid institutions to change the way of thinking and mode of action necessary to adjust to the change was strong.

Military institutions are rigid, precisely structured, and subordinated to a vertical organisation. The military is not prepared, organised, or trained to work in a horizontal structure and beside civilians in a fluid all-domain approach to defence. This is the opposite of what is needed. Militaries prepare and train for a known and predictable future. Let's go back to the Don Quixote defence policy. What the military needs is an ability to engage all stakeholders, align efforts and resources, and adapt as necessary to a fluid environment.

The need to face the pandemic and a changing climate turned around the whole system of organisation, education, trainings, commanding (having on one side a vertical C2 culture and, on another, a horizontal, ever-changing civilian organisation) necessary to deal with a fluid threat environment. Instead of being interactive stakeholders, they were competing, though not everywhere. Governments do not know how to use different tools and the result is predictable – some are overused and many underused.

Current civil-military relationships often fall short of what is needed to meet emerging human security needs. Changing global antagonisms and hybrid conflicts call for innovative, whole-of-government (singular and plural, governments), whole-of-society approaches to conflict transformation. Everyday lives of today's people are shaped, guided, and limited by numerous visible and invisible actors where governments appear as almost unnecessary. When individuals lose trust in governments, experts, and elites' ability to respond proactively and wisely to crises, society begins to unravel. We should not forget we must start to build resilience before crises manifest themselves, during the crisis and post-crisis; thereby, developing a comprehensive crisis resume.

Theoretically, security is in the hands of governing elites who provide political, economic, and cultural leadership. Leadership is provided through traditional forms of policy development and with traditional forms of interior security and exterior defence, but collective defence can exist at a strategic level only while at a tactical level human security depends on individual resilience. War between states and their armies is being replaced by war between individuals, moving from open battlefields to the narrow streets of towns, into the houses, into private rooms, coming through wireless interconnections.

Parallel defence in a parallel world?

Collective defence and individual (human) security are not necessarily two sides of the same coin, they are often two different currencies where it is almost impossible to calculate their real exchange rate or value. Parallel systems and parallel worlds are produced daily, hidden agendas influence daily life on Wall Street and in the favelas, not in the same way but with visible results. Today's wicked problems require interventions that mobilise all aspects of society in a joint peacebuilding response. Approaches to contemporary crises and complex peace operations requires strategies and practices that integrate actors and agencies of civil society, the military, government, and academia. There is no wholly military-centric, nor exclusively civil-centric answer to today's complex issues.

In medicine, we receive smart and generic advice – an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. We remember most of smart advice when it is too late: conflict is warming up, the why-who-what is becoming more and more foggy and blurred, more and more actors are coming with their own goals and agenda, and we have numerous conflicts of interest within a basic conflict among multiple stakeholders (West Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq, NATO versus the Russian Federation, China versus others in the Pacific).

Resilience is crisis prevention and management at a socio-political level and is recognised as the first line of defence in meeting human-security challenges in an unpredictable world. Although resilience is recognised as *a priori* good, and the benefits of resilient individuals, communities, and nations are well accepted, there is limited research available on how to make resilience happen; specifically, how to educate individuals to resolve and transform stakeholder conflicts in complex environments populated by numerous stakeholders, i.e., corporations, platforms, non-governmental organisations, governmental organisations, international organisations, military organisations, proxies, hired warriors, security companies, local stakeholders, etc., all with competing agendas. Knowing who is making a profit out of the chaos leads us to some answers, but not necessarily to solutions.

Nation-state capacities to respond to violent and non-violent crises are being challenged by an ever-increasing number of black swans. Whole-of-society collaborative response structures and systems are essential for building societal resilience in reacting to crises. A growing number of actors in an operational environment can lead to a destructive stakeholder conflict. Current analyses of stakeholder conflict and its impact on building resiliency focus primarily on *what* needs to be done to limit negative outcomes with little emphasis on *how*.

Our proposed joint curriculum development project will address the missing “how” of building resiliency. In theory, life can be simple and solutions may just be round the corner, but in the real world the story unfolds in unpredictable ways with

inherent dynamism and moves in directions never imagined. Yesterday's paradigms were outdated yesterday. Is it possible to be a day ahead before things happen?

Institutions are changing slowly and politicians are rarely interested in anything but their next election. Corruption is ever-present and the bill for politicians' uninformed decisions is handed to future generations. Rural areas are more and more depopulated, urban spaces are growing, and the term "community" is misused to define a collection of atomised individuals. Rethinking local communities and their role in our individual lives is one of the most important steps that can be taken towards resilience. Resilience, security, and defence must belong again to the local community. Small is human-sized and beautiful.

Violent conflicts and humanitarian disasters are experienced at community levels. Irrespective of this circumstance, civil-military responses to conflicts and humanitarian disasters are often focused at political and strategic levels of engagement leaving the operational and grassroots unattended. The strength of individuals to do something for themselves is moral power. Individuals and local communities have given the responsibility for building resilience to traditional instruments of power: the military, national guard, and the police. Traditional power brokers do not always act in favour of the population; rather, they are instruments of political, economic, and ideological elites.

The traditional power approach to resilience is pursued irrespective of the observation that it is among the common people where human rights can have the most positive effect for themselves individually and a wider human security. Rights do not exist outside of a legal and codified framework. The United Nations declaration or convention on human rights provides such a framework. They also exist on the local plain from the perspective of the individual and their communities striving to make their lives better. Fundamentally, human rights are about how a person or group of people can live politically. That inequality is best tackled by those who experience and know it intimately, whether the cause is systemic or due to an eruption of violence. By working together with the local actors and institutions, joint civil military efforts can be repositioned to provide the necessary supports.

The escalating number of armed interventions around the globe, defined by military humanitarian doctrine, requires new forms of peace leadership incorporating all aspects of society. Peace and stability operations demand an individual's skilled working in complex operational environments, ones no longer dominated exclusively by states. The doctrines of the Responsibility to Protect (operationalisation of the Right to Protect or R2P) and the Responsibility to Rebuild require peace and stability operators to be active and responsible at all levels of society integrating Track I (formal), Track II (NGO and IO), and Track III (grassroots) diplomatic efforts simultaneously. Peace and defence diplomacy are massively ignored today even in the main institutions as the UN, NATO, and the EU. We must develop, as

we have already stated, a curriculum, a common platform of coeducation devising a common base to educate more in individual specialisations.

Not collective defence, nor civil defence, nor individual defence will be enough alone, or are enough when we are facing pandemics and climate changes. The answer is total defence. Algorithms fast and precise enough to react even before crises erupt, delivering to each specialist a list of tasks that they must fulfil, are an important wheel in a precise instrument. Another example of total defence is working as a member of a symphonic orchestra where each musicians represent its own sound and rhythm but, at the end, the symphony is a masterpiece. However: there is only one conductor, the one who decides when a single instrument enters. No musician is more or less important than the others. Yes, there is always the first violin, but there is a conductor's assistant prepared to replace the conductor shall they be accidentally missing.

Conclusion

Today's complex environments are often occupied by state-sanctioned armed combatants, non-state actors, international organisations, non-governmental organisations, media, and local populations, etc. Multi-level, multi-modal peace leadership now includes conflict prevention, assistance to civilian governance, and expanded forms of military-civilian cooperation. Single-minded approaches to peacebuilding are simply no longer relevant.

Who is the audience of our work? Are we going to wait until they come to our table, or are we going to present our specific product to them? Will we provide an academic approach against more active dissemination and constructing a net?

Following the Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice "to save succeeding generations" and to "reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small," and further "to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours," we must unite our strength to maintain international peace and protect the environment, the only one in which we can live, prosper, and be safe in every respect. It will not be enough if cards are only reshuffled, they must be replaced, and new rules engaged. Civilian and military players must learn how to play under new rules. This is not an easy task and many think-tanks, conferences, many published articles and finally a New Comprehensive and Interactive Peace College available to all on the globe via the Internet will help those changes become a reality and something between fiction, fairy-tale, and lost opportunities will become a fortress of new human security.

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Abstract

Collective defence and individual (human) security are not necessarily two sides of the same coin, they are often two different currencies where it is almost impossible to calculate their real exchange rate and value. Current civil-military relationships often fall short of what is needed to meet emerging human security needs. We are confident that the positive interactions of civil-military actors help build resiliency. Human rights and human needs play a significant role in building resiliency. We call for the re-invention of civil defence as the holistic concept of individual responsibility and collective action. We need human-centered defence policy and planning, teaching, and practice. We need strong states to stand behind the civil defence concept that merges policy and strategy with local actors. Security is an individual responsibility and a collective activity that requires all elements of society to ensure success. Security cannot be outsourced to the military, nor any single civilian institution.

Key words: human security, individual responsibility, collective action, civil-military interaction, reimagine civil defence