

Review Essay

Responsible Intervention

Mary Kaldor

Humanitarian Intervention

Thomas G. Weiss. Cambridge: Polity, 2007. \$19.95/£12.99.
176 pp.

The Impossible Mandate? Military Preparedness, the Responsibility to Protect and Modern Peace Operations

Victoria K. Holt and Tobias C. Berkman. Washington DC: The
Henry L. Stimson Center, 2006. \$20.00. 241 pp.

Development, Security and Unending War: Governing the World of Peoples

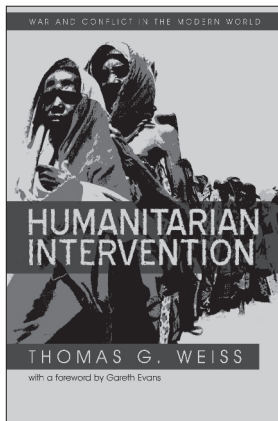
Mark Duffield. Cambridge: Polity, 2007. £18.99. 280 pp.

Those of us who favour humanitarian intervention, that it is to say the use of military force in another state in order to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe,¹ tend to assume that the international community can play God. We tend to treat the new multilateral phenomenon we call the 'international community' as if it were, like Hegel's state, the embodiment of universal values. The reality is that the international community is a complex network of self-interested, inefficient and sometimes corrupt nations, international institutions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that often leave the places where they intervene in more of a mess than before. So are we wrong to favour humanitarian intervention? Can we push the international community towards a more universalist and effective performance?

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Humanitarian Intervention by Thomas Weiss and *The Impossible Mandate?* by Victoria Holt and Tobias Berkman start from the premise that the international community can indeed play God, even if it has not succeeded so far. Weiss was the research director of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), which produced the influential report that translated 'humanitarian intervention' into the 'responsibility to protect'.² He has written a clear and straightforward account of the changing meaning, history and practice of humanitarian intervention, which offers an invaluable introduction to the subject. He discusses a number of new concepts, such as the changing meaning of sovereignty, and traces the way in which the 'responsibility to protect' paradigm has emerged. The develop-

ment of new forms of warfare involving the deliberate targeting of civilians, a very high level of population displacement, and a war economy financed through criminal activities, combined with the post-Cold War international political context, set the stage both for greater interest in humanitarian intervention and the reconceptualisation of the term. Francis Deng, who was the representative of the United Nations secretary-general for internally displaced persons between 1994 and 2004, was the first to develop the notion of sovereignty as responsibility. The doctrine



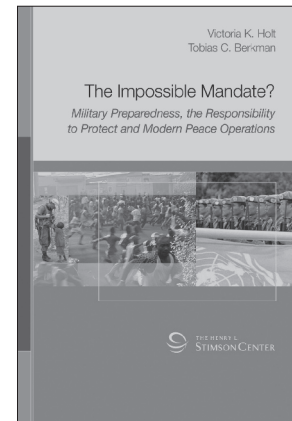
stipulates that when states are unable to provide life-supporting protection and assistance for their citizens, they are expected to request and accept outside offers of aid. Should they refuse or deliberately obstruct access to their displaced or other affected populations, and thereby put large numbers of them at risk, there is an international responsibility to act.³

Along with responsibility, the other key element of the new humanitarianism is an emphasis on protection. According to Weiss, the responsibility to protect shifts the terrain from the rights of the interveners to the rights of the victims.

The ICISS report came out in 2000. The concept of the responsibility to protect was taken up in 2005 by the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, appointed by then Secretary-General Kofi Annan, as well as by Annan's own report, *In Larger Freedom*.⁴ It was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at the 2005 World Summit, even though the wording still requires United Nations Security Council approval. All this happened against the backdrop of the 'war on terror'. To some, it might seem like progress, but Weiss ends his book by asking, 'so what?' Even if the concept of the responsibility to protect has been formally taken up, do not the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan discredit notions of humanitarian intervention? It is a question he leaves largely unresolved.

Doing the impossible

The great merit of *The Impossible Mandate?* is its focus on implementation. Most studies of humanitarian intervention tend to deal with the 'why': when it is justified and on what grounds, and how it should be authorised. This book deals with the 'how', the ways in which the responsibility to protect can be implemented on the ground. The book makes the important point that what the authors call 'coercive protection' is different both from traditional peacekeeping, which aims to separate sides and maintain ceasefires, and from war fighting, in which the aim is to defeat an adversary. Protection of civilians is often a secondary or indirect goal for both peacekeeping and war fighting, but not the primary mission. The book provides a diligent and systematic investigation into the extent to which nations and international institutions have introduced the protection of civilians into military doctrine, training or the definition of capabilities. (It is a pity the book does not have an index, as it could be a very useful reference work.) It is clear that the protection of civilians has increasingly entered the security lexicon, particularly for the United Nations. Even for the UN, however, the authors are only able to identify one Standardised Training Module that deals directly with protection.⁵ For most individual nation-states that contribute to UN and other multilateral opera-



tions, protection is not seen as the main goal, although many nations do refer to it, particularly Canada and the United Kingdom. As one US officer quoted in the book notes, 'while eighty per cent of US missions are civilian-related, eighty per cent of training requested is for combat' (p. 147).

The book includes a fascinating case study of the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). It shows how the UN found itself having to respond to developments on the ground by upping the level of troops, strengthening the mission's mandate and eventually learning by doing in order to increase its capacity to protect. Since 2005, UN forces have acted more aggressively in disarming Congolese militias and protecting civilians, especially in the Ituri and Kivu provinces. It has established a protection framework and set up joint working groups. Military protection activities include:

removal of threats against civilians by a 'cordon-and-search operation and/or disarmament of individuals threatening the civilian population', the establishment of 'buffer zones between combatants' and safe areas 'with adequate military protection', utilization of an 'area domination' strategy through frequent patrols, overflights, and 'mobile temporary operations bases', escorting humanitarian and human rights actors to areas, and evacuating populations out of danger zones. (p. 174)

For example, the book describes how the 3,700-strong Pakistani brigade in South Kivu introduced some innovative techniques, partly derived from experience on the Afghan-Pakistani border. The brigade's *Operation Night Flash* organised village-defence committees to alert peacekeepers to imminent attacks, reportedly through banging pots and blowing whistles.

The weaknesses of MONUC are also discussed. For instance, the authors argue that the EU mission *Operation Artemis*, which was launched in 2003 to shore up the UN mission, was an important turning point. EU personnel were better prepared than their UN counterparts to assume a protection role: their mission benefitted from appropriate capabilities including satellite equipment and a medical capacity; the presence of special forces; and an emphasis, assisted by the troops' knowledge of the French language, on

bottom-up communication. It is also noted that MONUC has been criticised for employing excessively aggressive tactics – Médecins Sans Frontières, which claims to be treating large numbers of civilians injured in efforts to disarm militias, is particularly critical. There is further concern that MONUC is too closely associated with the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique de Congo (FARDC), which has absorbed several militias and preys on the civilian population. Thus, the title of *The Impossible Mandate?* refers to the difficulty of striking a balance between inadequate force (which fails to protect civilians as in Rwanda or Srebrenica or indeed the Congo) and excessive force, in which those who are supposed to be protected are killed, injured or forced to flee. Nevertheless, the authors conclude that coercive protection is possible provided states and international institutions make the necessary adjustments in capabilities, doctrines and training.

To some extent, this is already happening. Although the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have discredited humanitarian intervention among the general public, they have caused a profound rethinking among militaries (especially the US military) and governments about how to protect civilians, how to link security and development and how to build legitimate states. The growing concern with coercive protection is evident, for example, in the new *US Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (published after Holt and Berkman's book went to press) prepared by General David Petraeus and General James Amos.⁶ The manual puts the protection of civilians at the heart of US military doctrine. It argues for an 'appropriate level of force' and includes such protection-orientated observations as 'sometimes the more force you use the less effective it is'; 'some of the best weapons for Counter-insurgency do not shoot'; and 'sometimes the more you protect your force the less secure you will be'.⁷

Nevertheless, the overall document is still couched in the framework of national security, of war between the United States and its enemies. In Iraq, some of the new counter-insurgency techniques have been applied in the 'surge', and this has undoubtedly contributed to the reduction in violence and the improvement in security. But the Iraq mission suffers from two shortcomings. First, the continued emphasis on defeating enemies means that air-strikes – which involve 'collateral damage', or civilian casualties

– are still an important component of military tactics. Secondly, the surge has not been paralleled by political and economic efforts to increase the legitimacy of Iraqi authorities, which is necessary if improved security is to be sustained. In Afghanistan, NATO planners are similarly preoccupied with the need to adjust tactics to put more emphasis on protection and to somehow link security and development.

Human security or unending war?

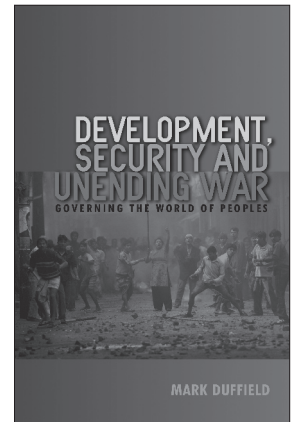
The failings of the Iraq and Afghanistan missions underscore why I prefer the term ‘human security’ to either humanitarian intervention or the responsibility to protect. Human security is about the security of the individual and the community in which he or she lives; it thus involves the protection of individuals and communities. It also emphasises the inter-relationship between different types of security – freedom from fear as well as freedom from want. Perhaps most importantly, human security is what citizens experience in a law-governed society; hence intervention for human security is intrinsically linked to the legal framework and efforts to establish or restore the rule of law.

It is therefore useful to think about human security in terms of law enforcement. Law enforcement is different from either peacekeeping or war fighting – it is much more like policing. Treating humanitarian intervention as international law enforcement has several advantages. First, it highlights the fact that military personnel are not the only relevant actors – others include police, legal experts and development specialists. While Holt and Berkman do stress the need for civil–military coordination, the human-security approach goes beyond coordination in defining a shared mission and a new methodology or doctrine that applies to everyone. Second, ‘spoilers’ are treated as criminals rather than enemies; the aim is to arrest them and minimise their activities rather than to defeat them. Thirdly, it underlines the importance of establishing legitimate political authority, which affects the way that militaries are used. The aim is to create space for peaceful political processes rather than to impose a political solution through victory or defeat. Human security is thus radically different from counter-insurgency, which is what is practised by the Americans in Afghanistan and

Iraq, the Russians in Chechnya, and the Israelis in the West bank and Gaza. Civilian protection, development and state-building are being recognised as necessary in these regions, but as means to an end (defeating terrorists) rather than as ends in themselves.

This whole debate is profoundly challenged by Mark Duffield's original and stimulating book, *Development, Security and Unending War*. Duffield tends to assume that the international community knows how to implement humanitarian intervention, but he argues that such actions are not genuinely humanitarian – rather, they are part of a broader Western globalising agenda. In other words, they are effective but not universalist. Duffield points to the conclusions of the *Human Security Report*,⁸ which shows that there has been a decline in wars and the number of people, including civilians, killed in them. He sees this as evidence of the success of the international community's pacification efforts. (Of course, pacification is not the same as protection, which Duffield himself points out; even where the international community has succeeded in sustaining ceasefires, there remain high levels of human-rights violations, organised crime, and violence against women.) But he sees this success not as a sign of a new universalism but rather as a new form of colonialism. He argues that human security is a technique of 'biopolitics' (as opposed to geopolitics), a Foucauldian term designating a 'form of politics that entails the administration of processes of life at the aggregate level of population' (p. 5). A human-security state is one in which 'the core economic and welfare functions of the population are designed and managed by international actors and agencies' (p. 28).

Duffield believes the global development project is a security project, a way of containing the excluded peoples of the underdeveloped world. According to Duffield, the underdeveloped world is irrelevant to the main economic blocs. 'Their only relevance is political, an excess freedom to move, flow and circulate, thus potentially destabilizing international society's finely balanced and interconnected way of life' (p. 187). For Duffield, the key difference between the populations of the developed and under-



developed worlds is social insurance. Insurance companies, Duffield points out, estimated the cost of Hurricane Charlie in Florida, which killed 25 people in 2004, at \$14 billion. The estimate for the Indian Ocean tsunami, which killed 200,000 people, was half that amount. Instead of insurance, the international community proposes self-reliant community-based development as a form of (inadequate) social protection for people in underdeveloped areas. Yet self-reliant development is necessarily subject to periodic crises, since people in underdeveloped states remain much more vulnerable to risk than people in the developed world. The consequence is a permanent emergency managed by humanitarian assistance. This permanent emergency is the unending war of the book's title. Notions like contingent sovereignty or fragile states are ways in which the new colonial paradigm of human security has been elaborated. Duffield compares development or human security to native administration in the colonial period. Like native administration, it is a more humane form of colonialism; the alternative, he argues, is extermination or eugenics.

Duffield's book turns the liberal vision of the world upside down. He causes us to question humanitarian impulses and treats well-meaning concern about the protection of civilians or the alleviation of poverty merely as methods of mitigating or condoning the fundamental inequity of contemporary capitalism. He discusses the way in which the NGO community has been co-opted by the international community in the post-Cold War world and has become the 'alter ego or conscience of capitalism', or 'the ambassadors of people-centred, community-level development that emphasize[s] self-reliance' (p. 62). He points to the implicit racism of terms such as 'good enough governance', espoused by the UK Department for International Development. But his is a counsel of despair. After all, concepts of humanitarian intervention, the responsibility to protect or human security are surely preferable to the 'war on terror' or to endless new wars, which might be the consequence of doing nothing. Duffield would probably agree, but he does not propose anything better. He talks somewhat vaguely about unlocking the emancipatory potential of development, but offers no guidance except to propose solidarity with the uninsured populations of the world.

Duffield's book could be regarded as a sort of deconstruction of books like those by Weiss, Holt and Berkman. It causes us to question whether we (the international community) can or should try to act as benevolent third parties in complex, difficult and dangerous crises in different parts of the world. Even if one profoundly disagrees with Duffield's cynicism about humanitarian efforts, the book does draw attention to two underlying truths of which all those engaged in humanitarian efforts should be aware. One is that crises are the 'dark side' of globalisation. What happens in the underdeveloped world cannot be isolated from what happens in the developed world. Problems of transnational crime – drug running, human trafficking or oil smuggling, for example – or of refugees and asylum-seekers are as much a responsibility for the states of the developed world as they are for what Duffield (actually rather optimistically) calls the human-security states of the underdeveloped world. The other is that much of what is undertaken in the name of humanitarianism or development is implicitly racist. In principle, humanitarianism, the responsibility to protect and human security presuppose the equality of all human beings. In practice, however, humanitarianism is often understood as something that is done abroad, where different standards of human rights and development apply. Human security ought to be about overcoming the division between the developed and underdeveloped parts of the world. It ought to be about providing insurance or protection for all. It ought to be about constructing a global rule of law, under which human rights override the military pursuit of geopolitical interest and everyone is treated as a citizen of the privileged parts of the world.

What *Humanitarian Intervention* and *The Impossible Mandate?* show us, of course, is that this is very difficult in practical terms – more difficult than Duffield allows. Weiss, Holt and Berkman have not convinced me that coercive protection is possible, but I do think that liberals have a responsibility to make the case and to investigate, as these authors do, the obstacles, problems and gaps that need to be solved if this is to happen, even if inadequately.

Notes

- 1 Adam Roberts has defined humanitarian intervention as 'coercive action by one or more states involving the use of force in another state *without the consent* of its authorities, and with the purpose of preventing widespread suffering or death among its inhabitants'. Quoted in Weiss, p. 5.
- 2 International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 'The Responsibility to Protect: The Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty', December 2001, <http://www.iciss.ca/report2-en.asp>.
- 3 Weiss, p. 23.
- 4 Kofi Annan, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, Report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, A/59/565 (New York: United Nations, 2004), <http://www.un.org/secureworld/report.pdf>; Kofi Annan, 'In Larger Freedom; Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All', Report of the Secretary-General, 21 March 2005, <http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/>.
- 5 This module was based on a draft prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights entitled 'Protection of Human Rights by Military Peace-keepers'. The draft offered different techniques for military protection.
- 6 Department of the Army and United States Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual No. 3-24*, Marine Corps Warfighting Publication No 3-33.5, Washington DC, December 2006.
- 7 *Ibid.* pp. 1–27.
- 8 Human Security Centre, University of British Columbia, *Human Security Report: War and Peace in the 21st Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).