

# Social and cultural aspects of protection of the soldier in the context of force protection

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Panel “Protection of the Soldier – an ongoing challenge for politics and industry”



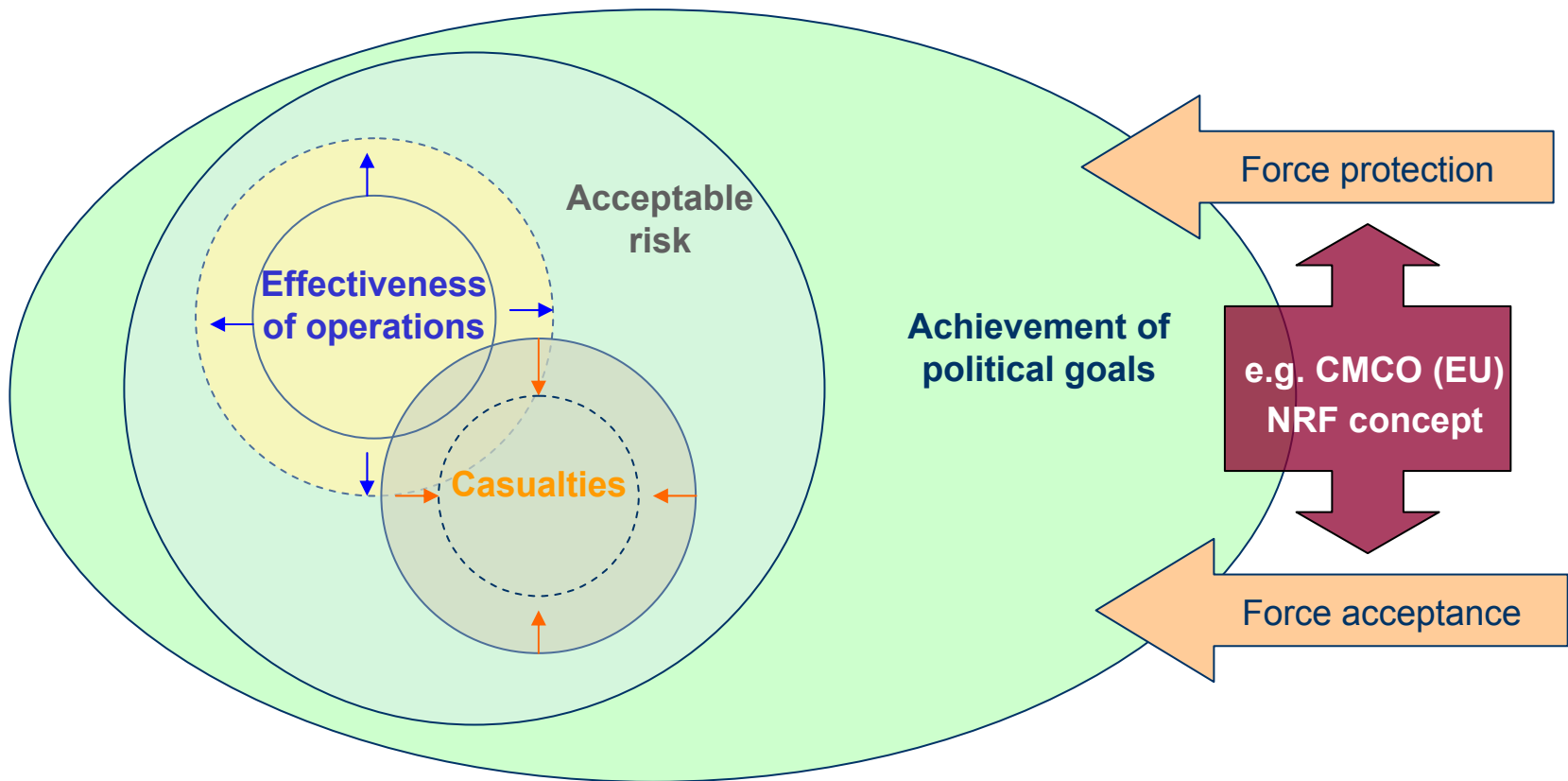
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# Putting protection of the soldier in context

- Protecting the soldier is not an end in itself
- It is embedded into a broader context, particularly of sending a coherent political message
- It therefore follows multiple objectives, sometimes in conflict with others
- Theatres like Afghanistan put all forces at risk (no front line) for years (protracted operations)
- Protection of the soldier thus is not a standing strategy:
- It needs evaluation and adaptation both on the operational and on the political-strategy level

# Protecting the soldier is part of a comprehensive approach



# Challenges

- Force protection requires a holistic definition that encompasses legal, social, psychological and physical protection
- Total force protection is unachievable and unaffordable
- The risk of the soldier has to be balanced against mission objectives to employ the appropriate level of force protection
- Concepts for civil-military interaction at the political-strategic (e.g. CMCO) and at the operational level (e.g. CIMIC) involve protection of the soldier
- Industry/technology is an enabler but not the solution

# Recommendations

- Acknowledge that protection of the soldier is a socio-technical system
- Enhance cross-national initiatives and practices
- Increase the effects and focusing of existing potentials and instruments, rather than increasing the amount of potentials and instruments (EBO principle)
- Close capability gaps in dealing with foreign cultures
- Enhance institutional memory and information sharing
- Analyse operational contexts comprehensively in order to identify the type of soldier (personality) needed
- Apply tailored comprehensive training schemes

# Example: Cultural awareness training

- Basic knowledge of the cultural heritage and history of the mission area
- Basic knowledge of local customs, mentality, and do's and don'ts
- Basic knowledge and skills needed to communicate with all parties concerned

**Soldiering in Unfamiliar Places:**

## **The Dutch Approach**

Lieutenant Colonel Robert H.E. Gooren,  
Royal Netherlands Army, Ph.D.



<http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/milreview/gooren.pdf>

# Thank you!