Chapter 28

Human security

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Reader’s Guide

This chapter examines the origins of the concept of human security, debates surrounding its definition and scope, some of the threats to human security in the world today, and international efforts to promote human security. It proceeds in four parts. The section, ‘What is human security?’, traces the origin and evolution of the concept, and examines competing definitions offered by scholars and policy-makers. The next section reviews debates and controversies about human security, especially over the analytic and policy relevance of the notion, and the broad and narrow meanings of the concept (‘freedom from fear’ versus ‘freedom from want’). The third section examines some of the threats to human security today. While the concept of human security encompasses a wide range of threats, due to lack of space, this section will focus on the trends in armed conflicts as well as the interrelationship between conflict and other non-violent threats to human security, such as poverty, disease, and environmental degradation. The final section analyzes the international community’s efforts to promote human security and concludes by identifying the major challenges to promoting the notion of human security today.
The concept of human security represents a powerful, but controversial, attempt by sections of the academic and policy community to redefine and broaden the meaning of security. Traditionally, security meant protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states from external military threats. This was the essence of the concept of national security, which dominated security analysis and policy-making during the cold war period. In the 1970s and 1980s, academic literature on security, responding to the Middle East oil crisis and the growing awareness of worldwide environmental degradation, began to think of security in broader, non-military terms. Yet, the state remained the object of security, or the entity that is to be protected. The concept of human security challenges the state-centric notion of security by focusing on the individual as the main referent object of security. Human security is about security for the people, rather than of states or governments. As such, it has generated much debate. Critics wonder whether such an approach would widen the boundaries of security studies too much, and whether ‘securitizing’ the individual is the best way to address the challenges facing the international community from the forces of globalization. On the other side, advocates of human security find the concept to be an important step forward in highlighting the dangers to human safety and survival posed by poverty, disease, environmental stress, human rights abuses, as well as armed conflict. These disagreements notwithstanding, the concept of human security captures a growing realization that, in an era of rapid globalization, it must encompass a broader range of concerns and challenges than simply defending the state from external military attack.

What is human security?

The origin of the concept of human security can be traced to the publication of the Human Development Report of 1994, issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 1994). The Report defined the scope of human security to include seven areas:

- Economic security—an assured basic income for individuals, usually from productive and remunerative work, or, in the last resort, from some publicly financed safety net.
- Food security—ensuring that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to basic food.
- Health security—guaranteeing a minimum protection from diseases and unhealthy lifestyles.
- Environmental security—protecting people from the short- and long-term ravages of nature, man-made threats in nature, and deterioration of the natural environment.
- Personal security—protecting people from physical violence, whether from the state or external states, from violent individuals and sub-state factors, from domestic abuse, and from predatory adults.
- Community security—protecting people from the loss of traditional relationships and values, and from sectarian and ethnic violence.
- Political security—ensuring that people live in a society that honours their basic human rights and ensuring the freedom of individuals and groups from government attempts to exercise control over ideas and information.

Unlike many other efforts to redefine security where political scientists played a major role, human security was the handiwork of a group of development economists, such as the late Pakistani economist Mahabub ul Haq, who conceptualized the UNDP’s Human Development Report. They were increasingly dissatisfied with the orthodox notion of development, which viewed it as a function of economic growth. Instead, they proposed a concept of ‘human development’ which focuses on building human capabilities to confront and overcome poverty, illiteracy, diseases, discrimination, restrictions on political freedom, and the threat of violent conflict: ‘Individual freedoms and rights matter a great deal, but people are restricted in what
Box 28.1 A contested concept

‘Human security can be said to have two main aspects. It means, first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or in communities. Such threats can exist at all levels of national income and development.’ (UNDP 1994)

‘Human security is not a concern with weapons. It is a concern with human dignity. In the last analysis, it is a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, an ethnic tension that did not explode, a dissident who was not silenced, a human spirit that was not crushed’. (Mahbub ul Haq 1995)

‘For Canada, human security means from pervasive threats to people’s rights, safety or lives... Through its foreign policy, Canada has chosen to focus its human security agenda on promoting safety for people by protecting them from threats of violence.’ (Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada 2000)

‘the concept of human security had better be confined to freedom from fear of man-made physical violence, also referred to as direct, personal violence.’ A broader understanding of human security as freedom from structural violence will undermine the clarity of the notion and make it difficult to develop priorities and devise effective policy responses.’ (Sverre Lodgaard 2000)

‘Human security may be defined as the preservation and protection of the life and dignity of individual human beings. Japan holds the view, as do many other countries, that human security can be ensured only when the individual is confident of a life free of fear and free of want.’ (Japanese Foreign Ministry Official, 2000, http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/human_secu/speech0006.html)

‘Human security can no longer be understood in purely military terms. Rather, it must encompass economic development, social justice, environmental protection, democratization, disarmament, and respect for human rights and the rule of law... Moreover, these pillars are interrelated; progress in one area generates progress in another.’ (Kofi Annan 2001)

‘The objective of human security is to safeguard the “vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment”’. (UN Commission on Human Security 2003)

they can do with that freedom if they are poor, ill, illiterate, discriminated against, threatened by violent conflict or denied a political voice...’ (UNDP 2005: 18–19).

Closely related to the attempt to create a broader paradigm for development was the growing concern about of the negative impact of defence spending on development, or the so-called ‘guns versus butter’ dilemma. As a global study headed by Inga Thorsson of Sweden concluded, ‘the arms race and development are in a competitive relationship’ (Roche 1986: 8). Drawing upon this study, a UN-sponsored International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development in 1986 in Paris sought ‘to enlarge world understanding that human security demands more resources for development and fewer for arms’.

The move towards human security was also advanced by the work of several international commissions. They offered a broader view of security which looked beyond the cold war emphasis on East–West military competition. Foremost among them was the Report of the Palme Commission of 1982, which proposed the doctrine of ‘common security’. The Report stressed that: ‘In the Third World countries, as in all our countries, security requires economic progress as well as freedom from military fear’ (Palme Commission 1982: xii). In 1987, the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (also known as the Bruntland Commission) highlighted the linkage between environmental degradation and conflict: ‘The real sources of insecurity encompass unsustainable development, and its effects can become intertwined with traditional forms of conflict in a manner that can extend and deepen the latter’ (Bruntland et al. 1987: 230).

Along with attempts to broaden the notion of security to include non-military threats, there was also a growing emphasis on the individual as the central object of security. The Palme Commission’s notion of common security became the conceptual basis of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). The CSCE made East–West security cooperation conditional upon the improvement of the human rights situation in the former Soviet bloc. The North–South Roundtable on the ‘Economics of Peace’, held in Costa Rica in 1990, called for a shift from ‘an almost exclusive concern with military security ... to a broader concern for overall security of individuals from social violence, economic distress and environmental degradation’ (Jolly and Ray 2006: 3).

In the post-cold war era, the importance given to people’s security has grown in salience. One reason for this is the rising incidence of civil wars and intra-state conflicts involving huge loss of life, ethnic cleansing, displacement of people within and across borders, and disease outbreaks. Traditional national security approaches have not been sufficiently sensitive towards conflicts that arise over cultural, ethnic, and religious differences, as happened in
Eastern Europe, Africa, and Central Asia in the post-cold war era (Tow and Trood 2000). Another reason is the spread of democratization and the post-cold war emphasis on human rights and humanitarian intervention. The latter involves the principle that the international community is justified in intervening in the internal affairs of states accused of gross violation of human rights. This has led to the realization that while the concept of national security has not been rendered irrelevant, it no longer sufficiently accounts for the kinds of danger that threaten the societies, states, and the international community. The notion of human security has also been brought to the fore by the crises induced by accelerating globalization. For example, the widespread poverty, unemployment, and social dislocation caused by the Asian economic crises of the 1990s underscored the vulnerability of people to the effects of economic globalization (Acharya 2004).

Debates over human security fall into two categories. First, believers and sceptics of the concept disagree over whether human security is a new or necessary notion and what are the costs and benefits of adopting it as an intellectual tool or a policy framework. Second, there have been debates over the scope of the concept, mainly among the believers themselves.

For critics of human security, the concept is too broad to be analytically meaningful or useful as a tool of policy-making. Roland Paris has argued: ‘Existing definitions of human security tend to be extraordinarily expansive and vague, encompassing everything from physical security to psychological well-being, which provides policymakers with little guidance in the prioritization of competing policy goals and academics little sense of what, exactly, is to be studied’ (Paris 2001: 88).

Another criticism is that such a concept might cause more harm than good: ‘Speaking loudly about human security but carrying a Band-Aid only gives false hopes to both the victims of oppression and the international community’ (Khong 2001: 3). The definition of human security is seen to be too moralistic compared to the traditional understanding of security, and hence unattainable and unrealistic (Tow and Trood 2000: 14).

A third and perhaps most powerful criticism of human security is that it neglects the role of the state as a provider of security. Buzan argues that states are a ‘necessary condition for individual security because without the state it is not clear what other agency is to act on behalf of individuals’ (Buzan 2001: 589). This criticism has been echoed by others, especially scholars with a realist orientation.

Advocates of human security have never totally discounted the importance of the state as a guarantor of human security. As the Report of the Commission on Human Security (UN Commission on Human Security 2003) acknowledges, ‘Human security complements state security’. Nor do they claim that human and traditional security concerns are always antithetical. Weak states are often incapable of protecting the safety and dignity of their citizens. But whether traditional state security and human security conflict with each other depends very much on the nature of the regime that presides over the state. In many countries, human security as security for the people can and does get threatened by the actions of their own governments. Hence, while the ‘state remains the fundamental purveyor of security … it often fails to fulfil its security obligations—and at times has even become a source of threat to its own people’ (Mack 2004: 366). At the very least, from a human security perspective, the state cannot be
regarded as the sole source of protection for the individuals… measures such as a ban on landmines, using women and children in armed conflict, child soldiers, child labour, and small arms proliferation, the formation of an International Criminal Court, and promulgating human rights and international humanitarian law. (Mack 2004: 366).

Another major debate about human security has occurred over the scope of the concept: whether it should be primarily about 'freedom from fear' or 'freedom from want'. The former view, initially articulated by the former Canadian External Affairs Minister, Lloyd Axworthy, focuses on reducing the human costs of violent conflicts through measures such as a ban on landmines, using women and children in armed conflict, child soldiers, child labour, and small arms proliferation, the formation of an International Criminal Court, and promulgating human rights and international humanitarian law. (Mack 2004: 366).

But the differences between the two conceptions of human security can be overstated, since both regard the individual as the object of security, and both acknowledge the role of globalization and the changing nature of armed conflict in creating new threats to human security. Moreover, both perspectives stress safety from violence as a key objective of human security, and both call for a rethinking of state sovereignty as a necessary part of promoting human security. (Hubert 2004: 351).

There is considerable overlap between the two conceptions: "[D]evelopment ... [is] a necessary condition for human security, just as security is a necessary condition for development" University of British Columbia, Human Security Center (hereafter Human Security Report) 2005: 155). Seeking freedom from fear without addressing freedom from want would amount to addressing symptoms without the cause. As the following section shows, while the deaths caused by armed conflicts have declined, other challenges to the safety and well-being of the individual have remained, and in some cases escalated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Freedom from want</th>
<th>Freedom from fear</th>
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<tr>
<td>Original proponents</td>
<td>Development economists, Mahabub ul Haq, Amartya Sen</td>
<td>Western governments (Canada, Norway)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Main stimulus</td>
<td>Dissatisfaction over orthodox growth-oriented development models; guns versus butter concerns</td>
<td>End of the cold war; rise of complex emergencies, ethnic strife, state failure, humanitarian intervention</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of threats addressed</td>
<td>Non-military and non-traditional security concerns: poverty, environmental degradation, disease, etc.</td>
<td>Armed conflicts, violence against individuals</td>
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<td>Main policy goal</td>
<td>Promoting human development, defined as 'building human capabilities— the range of things that people can do, and what they can be. ... The most basic capabilities for human development are leading a long and healthy life, being educated and having adequate resources for a decent standard of living ... [and] social and political participation in society'. These capabilities are undermined by poverty, disease and ill-health, illiteracy, discrimination, threat of violent conflict, and denial of political and civil liberties. (UNDP 2005: 18–19)</td>
<td>Protecting people in conflict zones; reducing the human costs of conflict through a ban on landmines and, child soldiers; protecting human rights; developing peace-building mechanisms.</td>
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Table 28.1 Two conceptions of human security
A pioneering report released by the Human Security Center at the University of British Columbia (2005) points to several significant trends in armed conflicts around the world (see Box 28.2 for some of the Report’s main findings).

What explains the downward trend in armed conflicts around the world? The report lists several factors: growing democratization (the underlying assumption here being that democracies tend to be better at peaceful resolution of conflicts); rising economic interdependence (which increases the costs of conflict); the declining economic utility of war owing to the fact that resources can be more easily bought in the international market-place than acquired through force; the growth in the number of international institutions that can mediate in conflicts; the impact of international norms against violence, such as human sacrifice, witch-burning, slavery, duelling, war crimes, and genocide; the end of colonialism; and the end of the cold war. Another important reason identified by the Report is the dramatic increase in the UN’s role in areas such as preventive diplomacy and peacemaking activities, post-conflict peacebuilding, sanctions, the willingness by the UN Security Council to use military action to enforce peace agreements, the deterrent effects of war crime trials by the International Criminal Court (ICC) and other tribunals, and the greater resort to reconciliation and addressing the root causes of conflict. The 80 per cent decline in the most deadly civil conflicts since the early 1990s, argued the Report, is due to the dramatic growth of international efforts at preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, and peacebuilding (Human Security Report 2005: Part V).

Yet, the picture is not entirely positive. The decline in armed conflicts reported by the Human Security Report is from 1991 onwards. The number of armed conflicts had actually increased between 1960 and 1990–1, especially intra-state conflicts (which jumped from twelve in 1960.
to 49 in 1991). And there are still 121 active armed conflicts during the 1989–2005 period (some of them started before 1989). As Figure 28.1 shows, armed conflicts are now on the same level as during the 1970s, and markedly higher than during the 1950s and early 1960s.

And there are some horrific costs associated with these conflicts. For example, deaths directly or indirectly attributed to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 1998 have surpassed casualties sustained by Britain in the First World War and Second World War combined. The conflict in Sudan’s Darfur region has displaced nearly 2 million people. (UNDP 2005: 12). In Iraq, a team of American and Iraqi epidemiologists estimates that Iraq’s mortality rate has doubled since the US invasion: from 5.5 deaths per 1,000 people in the year before the invasion to 13.3 deaths per 1,000 people per year in the post-invasion period. In all, some 655,000 more people have died in Iraq since the invasion in March 2003 than would have died if the invasion had not occurred (Brown 2006: A12).

The share of civilian casualties in armed conflict has increased since the Second World War. Civilians accounted for 10 per cent of the victims during the First World War and 50 per cent of the victims during the Second World War. They constitute between 80 and 85 per cent of the victims of more recent wars. Many of these victims are children, women, the sick, and the elderly (Gendering Human Security 2001: 18). Although death tolls from organized campaigns against civilians have declined in recent years, the number of such campaigns increased by 55 per cent between 1989 and 2005, although death tolls from these campaigns have declined (University of British Columbia, Human Security Center 2006: 3).

International terrorist incidents and the number of fatalities increased worldwide between 2002 and 2005. Most of the increases were associated with the war in Iraq, where the number of fatalities grew from about 1,700 in 2004 to approximately 3,400 in 2005 (National Counterterrorism Center 2005). Excluding Iraq, however, terrorist action killed fewer people worldwide in 2005—1,500 as opposed to 3,000 in 2004 (National Counterterrorism Center 2005).

Furthermore, some of the most serious issues of human security in armed conflicts still need to be overcome, such as child soldiers and landmines. According to one study,
75 per cent of the armed conflicts today involve child-soldiers (Human Security Report 2005: 35). Landmines and unexploded ordnance cause between 15,000 and 20,000 new casualties each year (United States Campaign to Ban Land Mines, date accessed 3 February 2007). Despite the justified optimism generated by the Ottawa Treaty (to be discussed later), there remain 80 million live mines undetected—someone steps on a landmine every 28 minutes—and 80 per cent of those killed or injured by landmines are civilians (Koehler 2007).

Finally, the decline in armed conflicts around the world is not necessarily irreversible. Some of the factors contributing to the decline of conflicts, such as democratization and the peace operations role of the UN, can suffer setbacks due to lack of support from major powers and the international community. And there remain serious possible threats to international peace and security which can cause widespread casualties, such as a conflict in the Korean peninsula, and war between China and Taiwan.

Battle deaths are not itself an adequate indicator of threats to human security posed by armed conflict. Many armed conflicts have indirect consequences on human life and well-being. Wars are a major source of economic disruption, disease, and ecological destruction, which in turn undermine human development and thus create a vicious cycle of conflict and underdevelopment. As the Human Development Report (UNDP 2005: 12) puts it: ‘Conflict undermines nutrition and public health, destroys education systems, devastates livelihoods and retards prospects for economic growth.’ It found that out of the 52 countries that are reversing or stagnating in their attempts to reduce child mortality, 30 have experienced conflict since 1990. A British government White Paper on International Development notes:

Violent conflict reverses economic growth, causes hunger, destroys roads, schools and clinics, and forces people to flee across borders. ... Women and girls are particularly vulnerable because they suffer sexual violence and exploitation. And violent conflict and insecurity can spill over into neighbouring countries and provide cover for terrorists or organised criminal groups. (Department for International Development 2006: 45)

Wars also damage the environment, as happened with the US use of Agent Orange defoliant during the Vietnam War or Saddam Hussein’s burning of Kuwaiti oil wells in the 1990–1 Gulf War, leading to massive air and land pollution. Similar links can be made between conflict and the outbreak of disease: ‘[W]ar-exacerbated disease and malnutrition kill far more people than missile, bombs and bullets’ (Human Security Report 2005: 7).

Disease accounts for most of the 3.9 million people who have died in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (UNDP 2005: 45).

Just as wars and violent conflict have indirect consequences in causing economic disruption, ecological damage, and disease, levels of poverty and environmental degradation contribute to conflict and hence must be taken into consideration in human security research (see Ch.27). One study shows that a country at US $250 GDP per capita has an average 15 per cent risk of experiencing a civil war in the next five years, while at a GDP per capita of $5,000, the risk of civil war is less than 1 per cent. (Humphreys and Varshney 2004: 9; Department for International Development 2005: 8). While no direct link can be established between poverty and terrorism, terrorists often exploit poverty and exclusion in order to tap into popular discontent—taking advantage of fragile states such as Somalia, or undemocratic regimes such as in Afghanistan in the 1990s, to plan violence (UNDP 2005: 47).

Environmental degradation, which is often linked to poverty, is another source of conflict (Homer-Dixon 1991, 1994). Analysts have identified competition for scarce resources as a source of possible conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbours, India and Pakistan, Turkey and Syria, Egypt and Ethiopia (Rice 2006: 78). The world’s poorer countries, where families often see the need for more children to compensate for a high infant mortality rate and to raise their income potential, account for a significant proportion of the growth in the world’s population, which has doubled between 1950 and 1998 (Rice 2006: 80). Population growth, in turn, contributes to resource scarcity and environmental stress, often resulting in conflict. For example, South Asia, one of the poorest and most heavily populated regions of the globe, faces intensified competition and the possibility of conflict over scarce water resources. Examples include the Indo-Pakistan dispute over the Wular Barrage, the Indo-Bangladesh water dispute over the Farakka Barrage, and the Indo-Nepal dispute over the Mahakali River Treaty (Power and Interest News Report 2006). The potential for political upheaval or war as a consequence of environmental problems is evident in a host of poor regions around the world, including North Africa, the sub-Saharan Sahel region of Africa (including Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Mali, Niger, and Chad), the island
Box 28.3 Key facts about disease

Those who take a broad definition of human security look not only at threats to the survival and safety of the individual from violent conflict, but also from such non-violent factors as disease, environmental degradation, and natural disasters. Below are some of the key trends in disease.

- The world has seen the appearance of at least 30 new infections diseases, including avian flu, HIV/AIDS, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, Hepatitis C, and West Nile virus, in the past three decades. Twenty diseases previously detected have re-emerged with new drug-resistant strains (Rice 2006: 79).
- AIDS is the leading cause of death in Africa and the fourth leading cause of death worldwide. Around 40 million people worldwide are infected with HIV, 95% of whom live in developing countries. In 2004, approximately 5 million people were newly infected with the virus. HIV/AIDS killed more than 20 million people worldwide, and 3.1 million people died of AIDS-related causes in 2004. It is estimated that per capita growth in half of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa is falling by 0.5–1.2% each year as a direct result of AIDS. By 2010, per capita GDP in some of the hardest-hit countries may drop by 8% and per capita consumption may fall even farther (The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/about/aids/).
- Malaria causes about 350–500 million infections in humans and approximately 1–3 million deaths annually (Breman 2001: 1–11)–this would translate as about one death every 30 seconds (Greenwood, et al. 2005: 1487–98). The majority, which amounts to 85–90% of malaria fatalities, occurs in sub-Saharan Africa. The economic impact of malaria has been estimated to cost Africa US$12 billion every year (World Health Organization n.d.).
- Annually, 8 million people become ill with tuberculosis, and 2 million people die from the disease worldwide (Centers for Disease Control 2005). Presently, tuberculosis is the world’s greatest infectious killer of women of reproductive age and the leading cause of death among people with HIV/AIDS (PR Newswire Europe 2002).
- The outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza that began in South-East Asia in mid-2003 and have now spread to parts of Europe are the largest and most severe on record. To date, nine Asian countries have reported outbreaks (listed in order of reporting): the Republic of Korea, Vietnam, Japan, Thailand, Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Indonesia, China, and Malaysia (World Health Organization 2006).

nations of the western Pacific Ocean, the Ganges River basin (principally north-eastern India and Bangladesh), and some parts of Central and South America (Petzold-Bradley, Carius, and Vincze 2001). Darfur illustrates the linkage between poverty, environmental degradation, and conflict. Traditional inter-communal conflict in Darfur over scarcity of resources and land deteriorated as a result of desertification and a shortage of rainfall. In the 1970s and 1980s, droughts in northern parts of Darfur sent its nomadic population to migrate southwards in search of water and herding grounds, and brought them into conflict with the local tribes (Environmental Degradation and Conflict in Darfur 2004).

Natural disasters can also affect the course of conflicts by either exacerbating or mitigating them. The December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami changed the course of two separatist conflicts: Aceh in Indonesia and Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka. In Aceh, where the government announced a ceasefire to permit relief work, improved prospects for reconciliation followed. In contrast, the conflict in Sri Lanka, where relief supplies did not reach rebel-held territory, saw an escalation of violence.

From the foregoing discussion, we can establish a conceptual link between the broader and narrower understandings of human security (see Figs 28.2 and 28.3).
Women, conflict, and human security

The relationship between gender and human security has multiple dimensions. The United Nations Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality notes five aspects: (1) violence against women and girls; (2) gender inequalities in control over resources; (3) gender inequalities in power and decision-making; (4) women's human rights; and (5) women (and men) as actors, not victims (United Nations Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality 1999: 1). Recent conflicts have shown women as victims of rape, torture, and sexual slavery. For example, between 250,000 and 500,000 women were raped during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Such atrocities against women are now recognized as a crime against humanity (Rehn and Sirleaf 2002: 9).

War-affected areas often see a sharp increase in domestic violence directed at women and a growth in the number of women trafficked to become forced labourers or sex workers. Women and children comprise 73 per cent of an average population, but account for 80 per cent of the refugees in the world today, and perhaps a larger percentage as internally displaced persons. Another important aspect of the gender dimension of human security is the role of women as actors in conflicts. This involves considering the participation of women in combat. In the Eritrean war of independence, women made up 25–30 per cent of combatants. A similar proportion of women are fighting with the Tamil Tigers. Women play an even larger role in support functions, such as logistics, staff, and intelligence services in a conflict. It has been noted that women become targets of rape and sexual violence because they serve as a social and cultural symbol. Hence violence against them may be undertaken as a deliberate strategy by parties to a conflict with a view to undermine the social fabric of their opponents. Similarly, securing women's participation in combat may be motivated by a desire among the parties to a conflict to increase the legitimacy of their cause. It signifies 'a broad social consensus and solidarity, both to their own population and to the outside world' (Gendering Human Security 2001: 18).

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the need to secure the greater participation of women in international peace operations. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations noted in a 2000 report that:

Women's presence [in peacekeeping missions] improves access and support for local women; it makes male peacekeepers more reflective and responsible; and it broadens the repertoire of skills and styles available within the mission, often with the effect of reducing conflict and confrontation. Gender mainstreaming is not just fair, it is beneficial. (cited in Rehn and Sirleaf 2002: 63)

In 2000, the UN Security Council passed a resolution (Security Council Resolution 1325) mandating a review of the impact of armed conflict on women and the role of women in peace operations and conflict resolution. The review was released in 2002, entitled Women, Peace and Security (UN 2002). In his introduction to the report, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan noted that that 'women still form a minority of those who participate in peace and security negotiations, and receive less attention than men in post-conflict agreements, disarmament and reconstruction' (UN 2002: ix). There is still a long way to go before the international community can fully realize the benefits of greater participation by women in UN peace operations and conflict resolution activities.
Key Points

- There has been a noticeable decline in the number of armed conflicts and battle deaths caused by conflicts. Factors contributing to this trend include rising economic interdependence among nations, the end of colonialism and the cold war, and the growing role of international institutions and the international community in peace operations.
- But the outlook is not all rosy. The world has experienced horrific acts of violence and genocide in recent years in places like Congo, and new forms of violence may emerge. The growing number of failed or failing states, such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Burma, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan pose a growing threat to human security.
- There is an interactive relationship between armed conflict and non-violent threats to human security such as poverty and disease. Wars and internal conflicts can lead to impoverishment, disease outbreaks, and environmental destruction. Conversely, poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation can lead to weakening and even collapse of states. Human security research should look not just at the direct and indirect consequences of conflict, but also the range of socioeconomic, political, and ecological factors that contribute to conflict. Such an understanding of human security opens the way for reconciling the two conceptions of human security as freedom from fear and freedom from want.
- Women feature in armed conflicts both as victims and actors (in combat and support roles). Rape and other forms of sexual violence against them increasingly feature as an instrument of war and are now recognized as crimes against humanity. The international community is seeking ways to increase the participation of women in UN peace operations and conflict resolution functions.

Case study: Human insecurity in South-East Asia

Whether going by its narrow (freedom from fear) or broad (freedom from want) conception, South-East Asia faces some of the most critical challenges to human insecurity in the world. The region, comprising Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Burma (Myanmar), Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Brunei, and Singapore, has witnessed some of the worst violence of the twentieth century. The Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia killed about 1.7 million (a quarter of the Cambodian population) during its brutal rule between 1975 and 1979 (Yale University Cambodian Genocide Program). In Indonesia, anti-Communist riots in the mid-1960s, which accompanied the transition from President Sukarno to President Suharto, claimed about 400,000 lives (Schwarz 1999: 20). The US war in Vietnam produced 250,000 South Vietnamese, 1.1 million North Vietnamese, and 60,000 American casualties (Olson 1988). Ethnic and separatist movements in East Timor and Aceh have claimed 200,000 and more than 2,000 lives, respectively (Wessel and Wimhofer 2001). And while there are no proper collated figures for ethnic separatism in Myanmar—usually low-scale, random casualties and conflicts—600,000 internally displaced persons from these conflicts have been recorded (US Department of State 2003).

The region has been free of major conflict since the fighting in Cambodia (1979–91) ended. But internal conflicts in Southern Thailand, Southern Philippines, and Myanmar pose a serious challenge to human security. Military rule, which accounted for some of the worst human rights violations in the region, continues in Myanmar, has returned in Thailand, and remains a possibility in Philippines.

South-East Asia also faces other threats to human security. Absolute poverty levels have declined, but the prevalence of underweight children under 5 years of age in South-East Asia is third highest in the world (28%), after sub-Saharan Africa (30%), and South Asia (47%). In Asia, national HIV infection levels are highest in South-East Asia. The outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza, which began in South-East Asia in mid-2003 and have now spread to parts of Europe, are the largest and most severe on record.

South-East Asia has also experienced a range of transnational threats in recent years. These include the Asian economic crisis of 1997, described by the world Bank as ‘the biggest setback for poverty reduction in East Asia for several decades’ (Ching 1999). Other challenges include the recurring haze problem (1997, 2006) from forest fires in Indonesia, the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003, and the Indian Ocean Tsunami that devastated coastal areas in Indonesia, Thailand, and other South-East Asian nations in December 2004 and killed at least 200,000 people in Asia, with Indonesia suffering 128,000 dead and 37,000 missing.

Conceptually, South-East Asia shows a link between underdevelopment and conflict. Its poorest areas—Indonesia, Cambodia, Myanmar, and the southern regions of Thailand and Philippines—have been especially prone to conflict. Economic development has led to relative stability in Singapore and Malaysia.

Source: Acharya (2007).
The role of the international community

Because of the broad and contested nature of the idea of human security, it is difficult to evaluate policies undertaken by the international community that can be specifically regarded as human security measures. But the most important multilateral actions include the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Anti-Personnel Land Mines Treaty. The ICC was established on 1 July 2002 with its headquarters in The Hague, the Netherlands, although its proceedings may take place anywhere. It is a permanent institution with the power to exercise its jurisdiction over persons for the most serious crimes of international concern (Rome Statute, Article 1). These crimes include genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression, although the Court would not exercise its jurisdiction over a definition of the crime and set out the conditions under which it may be prosecuted. The ICC is a ‘court of last resort’. It is complementary to national criminal jurisdictions, meaning that it can only exercise its jurisdiction when national courts are unwilling or unable to investigate or prosecute such crimes (Rome Statute, Article 1). The Court can only prosecute crimes that were committed on or after 1 July 2002, the date its founding treaty entered into force. Since its establishment, the ICC has been involved in the prosecution of some high-profile war criminals in the former Yugoslavia, Liberia, and Congo, including the former President of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milošević (whose trial ended without a verdict after he was found dead in his cell in March 2006), and former Liberian President Charles Taylor.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production, and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, signed in Ottawa on 3–4 December 1997, bans the development, production, acquisition, stockpiling, transfer, and use of anti-personnel mines (Ottawa Treaty, Article 1, General Obligations, 1997). It also obliges signatories to destroy existing stockpiles. Among the countries which have yet to sign the treaty are the People’s Republic of China, the Russian Federation, and the United States.

The surge in UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations has contributed to the decline in conflict and enhanced prospects for human security. The number of UN peacekeeping operations increased three-fold between the first forty years of the UN’s founding and the twenty years since—from 13 to 47 missions (United Nations Peacekeeping website, UN n.d.). More recently, a UN Peacebuilding Commission was inaugurated in 2006. Its goal is to assist in post-conflict recovery and reconstruction, including institution-building and sustainable development, in countries emerging from conflict. The UN has also been centre-stage in promoting the idea of humanitarian intervention, a central policy element of human security (see Ch.30; see also International Commission on Intervention and state Sovereignty 2001). The concept of humanitarian intervention was endorsed by the report of the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, A More Secure World (2004: 66, 106), the subsequent report by the Secretary-General, entitled In Larger Freedom (UN March 2005), and finally by the UN Summit in September 2005.

UN Specialized Agencies play a crucial role in promoting human security. For example, the UN Development Programme and the World Health Organization (WHO) have been at the forefront of fighting poverty and disease respectively. Other UN agencies, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), have played a central role in getting particular issues, such as refugees and the rights of children and women, on to the agenda for discussion, and in providing a platform for advocacy and action (MacFarlane and Khong 2006).

Non-governmental organizations contribute to human security in a number of ways: as a source of information and early warning about conflicts, providing a channel for relief operations, often being the first to do so in areas of conflict or natural disaster, and supporting government or UN-sponsored peacebuilding and rehabilitation missions. NGOs also play a central role in promoting sustainable development. A leading NGO with a human security mission is the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Established in Geneva, it has a unique
authority based on the international humanitarian law of the Geneva Conventions to protect the lives and dignity of victims of war and internal violence, including the war-wounded, prisoners, refugees, civilians, and other non-combatants, and to provide them with assistance. Other NGOs include Médicine Sans Frontières, (emergency medical assistance), Save the Children (protection of children), and Amnesty International (human rights).

Challenges to human security Promotion

Yet, whether viewed as freedom from fear or freedom from want, the concept of human security has not replaced national security. The Human Development Report of 2005 estimates that the rich nations of the world provide $10 to the military budget for every $1 they spend on aid. Moreover, the current global spending on HIV/AIDS, ‘a disease that claims 3 million lives a year, represents three day’s worth of military spending’ (UNDP 2005: 8).

Why the continued importance of national/state security over human security? For developing countries, state sovereignty and territorial integrity take precedence over security of the individual. Many countries in the developing world are artificial nation-states, whose boundaries were drawn arbitrarily by the colonial powers without regard for the actual ethnic composition or historical linkages between peoples. State responses to ethnic separatist movements (now conflated with terrorism), which are partly rooted in people’s rejection of colonial-imposed boundaries, have been accompanied by the most egregious violations of human security by governments. Moreover, many Third World states remain under authoritarian rule. Human security is stymied by the lack of political space for alternatives to state ideologies and restrictions on civil liberties imposed by authoritarian regimes to ensure their own survival, rather than providing security for the their citizens.

In the developed as well as developing world, one of the most powerful challenges to human security has come from the ‘war on terror’ led by the United States in response to the 9/11 attacks. These have revived the traditional emphasis of states on national security (Suhrke 2004: 365). Although terrorists target innocent civilians and thus threaten human security, governments have used the war on terror to impose restrictions on, and commit violations of, civil liberties. The US decision to put Saddam Hussein on trial in an Iraqi court rather than the ICC illustrates the continued US defiance of a key policy instrument of human security, even though it focuses on the more Western-oriented conception of ‘freedom from fear’. The US questioning of the applicability of the Geneva Conventions, the abandoning of its commitments on the issue of torture in the context of war in Iraq, and Russia’s flouting of a wide range of its international commitments (including the laws of war, CSCE and OCSE (Organization for security and cooperation) commitments, as well as international and regional conventions on torture) in the context of its war in Chechnya have further undermined the agenda of human security.

Key Points

- The most important multilateral actions to date to promote human security include the International Criminal Court and the Anti-Personnel Land Mines Treaty.
- UN agencies such as the UNHCR, UNICEF, and UNIFEM have been crucial in addressing human security issues such as refugees and the rights of children.
- Canada and Japan are two of the leading countries which have made human security a major part of their foreign policy agenda. Their approach, however, shows the contrast between the ‘freedom from fear’ and ‘freedom from want’ conceptions of human security respectively.
- Non-governmental organizations promote human security by acting as a source of information and early warning about conflicts, providing a channel for relief operations, supporting government or UN-sponsored peacebuilding and rehabilitation missions, and promoting sustainable development.
- The September 11 attacks on the United States and the ‘war on terror’ have revived the traditional state-centric approach to national security at the expense of civil liberties and human security.
The concept of human security reflects a number of developments that have incrementally challenged the traditional view of security as the protection of states from military attack. What initially began as a rejection of orthodox notions of economic growth in favour of a broader notion of human development has been reinforced by new security threats such as genocides in the Balkans and Africa, the Asian financial meltdown of 1997, and the threat of global pandemics. The concept of human security represents an ongoing effort to put the individual at the centre of national and global security concerns while expanding our understanding of the range of challenges that can threaten individual safety and well-being to encompass both armed conflict as well as social, economic, and ecological forces. To be sure, human security has a long way to go before being universally accepted as a conceptual framework or as a policy tool for national governments and the international community. The linkages between armed conflict, poverty, disease, and environmental stress are poorly understood and need clarification and elaboration. Nonetheless, there can be little doubt that threats to human security, whether understood as freedom from fear or freedom from want, are real world challenges which cannot be wished away or dismissed because of a lack of agreement over the concept and meaning of human security. Notwithstanding debates about the utility and scope of human security, there is increasing acceptance that the traditional notion of security, focusing on state sovereignty, would no longer suffice and that the international community must develop new responses to ensure the protection of people from transnational dangers in an era of globalization. The challenge for the international community is to find ways of promoting human security as a means of addressing a growing range of complex transnational dangers which have a much more destructive impact on the lives of people than conventional military threats to states.

Questions

1. What is human security? How is it different from the concept of national security?
2. Is redefining the concept of security to focus on the individual useful analytically and for policy formulation?
3. Describe the main difference between the two conceptions of human security: ‘freedom from fear’ and ‘freedom from want’. Are the two understandings irreconcilable?
4. Some studies show that the incidence of armed conflict in the world is in long-term decline. What are the reasons for this trend?
5. How do you link health with human security?
6. How are poverty and conflict interconnected?
7. What are the various ways in which the international community is engaged in promoting human security?
8. What are the main areas of progress in the promotion of human security by the international community?
9. What are the obstacles to human security promotion by the international community?
10. Why do we need to give special consideration to the suffering of women in conflict zones?

Guide to Further Reading


Visit the Online Resource Centre that accompanies this book to access more learning resources on this chapter topic at http://www.oup.com/uk/orc/baylis_smith4e/

Notes
1 The author would like to thank Brian Job, Andrew Mack, and Peter Wallensteen for their comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.
2 For an earlier account of conflicts in the Third World which anticipated this decline, see Acharya (1993) and Acharya (1997)
3 This estimate is from the Uppsala Conflict Data Project (UCDP), Uppsala University. The author is grateful to Peter Wallensteen and Lotta Harbom of the UCDP for drawing this to his attention.