

## What is human security?

**The goal of *national security* is the defense of the state from external threats. The focus of *human security*, by contrast, is the protection of individuals.**

Secure states do not automatically mean secure peoples. Protecting citizens from foreign attack is certainly a necessary condition for the security of individuals, but it is not a sufficient one. Indeed, during the past century, far more people have been killed by their own governments than by armies from abroad.

The term *human security* is now widely used to describe the complex of interrelated threats associated with international war, civil war, genocide, and the displacement of populations. Human security means, at minimum, freedom from violence, and from the fear of violence.

Human security and national security should be – and often are – mutually reinforcing. But this is not always the case. Human security can be threatened both by weak states which allow warlords and militias to flourish,

and by strong states which themselves commit abuses such as torture and summary execution.

Everyone who uses the term *human security* agrees that its primary goal is the protection of individuals. But which threats individuals should be protected from remains contested.

The “broad” concept of human security, first outlined in the 1994 *Human Development Report* from the United Nations Development Programme, argues that human security rests on two pillars: freedom from want and freedom from fear. The broader view of human security includes food security, adequate shelter, security from poverty, and sometimes from “threats to human dignity.” Its proponents rightly argue that hunger, disease, and natural disasters kill far more people than war, genocide, and terrorism combined. And these threats are often inter-related.

The “narrow” concept of human security focuses on freedom from violence. This includes criminal as well as political violence, for the

boundary between the two is not always easy to draw. Is there any practical difference between a criminal gang which grows narcotics and guards its crop with guns, and insurgents who grow drugs to finance their rebellion? Just where does the boundary lie between an off-duty soldier who sexually assaults someone, and a deliberate military campaign of rape, which can be a war crime?

These two approaches to human security are both people-centered, and are complementary rather than contradictory. But because the “broad” concept includes everything from poverty to genocide, it has so far proved too all-embracing to be helpful in policy development.

This atlas, based on data from the *Human Security Report 2005* (Oxford University Press) and the *Human Security Brief 2006*, uses the *narrow* concept of human security, and maps the incidence and severity of global violence.

It is divided into five parts.

**Part 1: When States Go to War** looks at the decline in armed conflicts which involve government forces – both conflicts between states, and conflicts within states.

**Part 2: Warlords and Killing Fields** examines armed conflicts which do not involve government forces, as well as genocides and other “one-sided” mass killings of civilians.

**Part 3: Counting the Dead** asks how far we can rely on the reported death tolls, from all forms of armed conflict as well as from one-sided violence.

**Part 4: Measuring Human Rights Abuse** shows that we have few reliable figures on torture, child soldiers, ethnic cleansing, and other gross human rights violations, but that some comparisons can be made between different states.

**Part 5: Causes of War, Causes of Peace** explores the reasons why armed conflicts and their death tolls have declined, and still seem to be declining.