

Preface

In a world afflicted by major wars, gross human rights abuse, and the threat of ever-more-deadly terrorist attacks, it is not surprising that most people believe political violence to be on the increase.

But, as the *miniAtlas of Human Security* demonstrates, the conventional wisdom is quite wrong. There were 40 percent fewer armed conflicts in 2005 than at the end of the Cold War a decade and a half earlier. The decline in high-casualty conflicts (those with 1,000 or more reported battle-deaths each year) has been even greater – an 80 percent drop over the same period.

The number of refugees has also declined since the end of the Cold War, reflecting the reduction in the political violence that is a major cause of people fleeing their homes. And, although there is little reliable information, it seems likely that the number of children serving as soldiers in rebel and government forces has declined too.

War has aptly been described as “development in reverse.” Its consequences include death, injury, increased disease and malnutrition, large-scale destruction of infrastructure and health services, massive capital flight, and loss of investment. According to Paul Collier, the cost of a typical civil war is around \$50 billion.

The fact that wars exacerbate poverty is hardly surprising, but the evidence strongly suggests that poverty may also be a driver of war. Low incomes per capita mean weak state capacity and create incentives for impoverished, unemployed, and often desperate youth to join rebel movements.

The maps and graphics in the *miniAtlas of Human Security* reveal the surprising changes in war trends since the end of the Cold War. They also highlight the associations between armed conflicts and economic and political development. The text that accompanies the map spreads provides concise analyses of the issues being reviewed.

Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that there can be no development without security – and no security without development. The *miniAtlas of Human Security*, created by the team that produces the influential *Human Security Report*, helps explain why.

Timor-Leste
Eskinder
Debebe/
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