

Human Security

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The components of human security are not new. Victimization and impunity are as old as time. Infectious diseases are as old as the plague. Civil wars date from the Treaty of Westphalia, at least. With Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points, principle had begun, nearly a century ago, to take its place beside power. Crime, drugs, and terrorism are contemporary challenges of age-old phenomena. Environmental despoliation is a more recent problem, but even it has been with us for more than generations. Those familiar with the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in the 1970s will recognize in human security the contents of Baskets II and III of those negotiations.

What is new is globalization and the extent to which our fates have become intertwined with those of people who, in another era, would have remained isolated from us. In this era of globalization, human security threats are much more evident and exigent – for example, the reports of Christiane Amanpur of CNN had more impact on Western action in Bosnia, an intranational conflict, than all the cautious advice of the General Staffs of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). What is also new is the lethality of conventional war and the fact that the great majority of wars are now intrastate. Ninety per cent of casualties are civilians, predominately women and children.

These profound changes require a new way of seeing and doing things: a shift in the angle of vision. The first current use of the term 'human security' of which I am aware was by the late Dr. Mahbub Ul Haq in the 1993 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The concept of human security is new in several ways.

Over the past year or so, Canada has spent a good deal of effort to conceptualize the operational content of human security. An examination of a few basic questions will give a flavour of what the Canadian government has been doing.

Human Security: what is it?

Our definition of human security

- a) takes individual human beings and their communities, rather than states, as its point of reference;
- b) uses the safety and well-being of individuals and their communities as the measure of security;
- c) recognizes that the security of states is essential, but not sufficient, to ensure individual safety and well-being;
- d) considers threats from both military and non-military sources (for example, intrastate war, small arms proliferation, human rights violations, crime, and drugs);

- e) regards the safety and well-being of individuals as integral to global peace and security;
- f) is a complement to, not a substitute for, national security;
- g) acknowledges that civil society makes a direct contribution to human security;
- h) brings new techniques and new technologies to the repertory of diplomatic tools – for example, Internet communications and non-traditional alliances between governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the International Committee of the Red Cross; and is, admittedly, a work in progress.

The concept establishes a new standard for judging the success or failure of international security policies – namely, the ability to protect people as well as to safeguard states. It may even require protecting people from their states. It considers both military and non-military threats to safety and well-being; and it points to human rights, democracy, and human development as key building blocks of security. More profoundly, it recognizes that no country is immune from and none is able alone to meet the challenges of globalization.

Does Canada see human security as an alternative to state or national security?

The short answer is no. We are not arguing that states are passé; states have proved more resilient and more necessary than some pundits thought. To paraphrase Robert Keohane and Joe Nye, in the September/October 1998 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, even in the emerging cyber world, order requires rules, rules require authority, and authority is exercised on behalf of people by states. In fact, disintegrating states appear to be as dangerous to their citizens as tyrannies.

Nor would we be so optimistic or even naïve to suggest that the risk of interstate conflict is going to disappear anytime soon. A glance at the situation in south Asia, the Korean Peninsula, the South China Sea, Iraq, the Balkans, the Caucuses, and central Africa suggests otherwise. Moreover, as in the former Yugoslavia, diplomacy is most effective when backed up by military capability. At the same time, however, coalitions of the willing, as experienced in the Persian Gulf or Bosnia indicates, do not tend to demand enormous inputs of military materiel.

The legal framework erected this century, especially in the years following 1945, to promote peace – the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Protocols, the International Court of Justice, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation regime – are the codification of international order. The alliances Canada has joined to ensure its security – the North American Aero-space Defence Command (NORAD) and NATO – remain the cornerstones of Canada's defence and security policy.

What we are arguing is that the network of treaties and international institutions is a necessary, but not sufficient, basis to ensure the security of others and ultimately our own security. National security and human security are opposite sides of the same coin.

Why is Canada promoting this concept?

The human security concept is relevant to Canadians. Sooner or later, directly or indirectly, the security of others becomes our problem.

Thanks in large part to having only the United States for a neighbour, Canada has always been, and continues to be, on of the most secure countries in the world. But it is also one of the most open societies in terms of flow of goods, people, ideas, and capital. That openness creates prosperity and vulnerabilities. Drug trafficking, organized crime, environmental pollution, terrorism, and contagious diseases are among the principal threats to the human security of Canadians, who can legitimately expect their government to protect them from those threats. To this 'negative' human security agenda has to be added a 'positive' human security agenda, which at minimum addresses the root causes of conflicts that pose indirect threats to the security of Canadians and direct challenges to their values as well.

Poverty alleviation is important, as is reform of the international financial system. But human security is more than a question of poverty alleviation and financial stability. Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, to name three centres of conflict, are not among the poorest places on earth. Nor were conflicts there triggered by poverty or by economics. The greatest conflicts in this bloodiest of centuries have been waged among some of its richest people. This means that political approaches are also necessary.

To enhance security, Canadian foreign policy makers believe that both norm-building and practical problem-solving have to be addressed. The success of the Ottawa Treaty to ban anti-personnel landmines was based on this two-pronged approach. The treaty established a new humanitarian norm. It also generated international co-operation to end the very real danger posed by landmines to individuals living in war-ravaged areas. This is also the approach the Canadian government is taking, along with that of several other governments, to curtail the export of military small arms and light weapons. We would like to see a ban on trade in these military weapons to non-state entities – to keep these weapons out of the hands of drug gangs and twelve-year old child soldiers.

Another political objective is to establish new human rights standards. There are many opportunities to advance this goal, including the forthcoming International Labour Organization Convention on the most exploitative forms of child labour and the Optional Protocol of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child concerning recruitment into armed forces. Another political approach is to increase the capacity of the civilian police peacekeepers and NGOs to rebuild security. That is why Canada emphasizes the roles of human rights monitors and civilian police in peace operations, the disarming, demobilizing, and re-integrating of ex-combatants, and the protection of civilians in armed conflict, especially women and children.

A final aspect of the political agenda is to try to strengthen the capacity of societies to manage conflict without resorting, or resorting again, to violence by training legislators, jurists, public servants, military officers, and journalists. These are some of the goals of the Canadian Peacebuilding Initiative, which has been in operation for two years.

It is worth bearing in mind that for many years 'classical' Canadian security policy has not been based on the idea of 'perimeter defence' and outward-oriented alliances. The same logic applies to the human security agenda, albeit in a context of new kinds of threats and new kinds of responses.

This leads to the second reason for advancing the human security concept: it draws upon long-standing Canadian values of tolerance, democracy, and respect for human rights. Canadians are moved by humanitarian impulse, not by cold-blooded calculations of realpolitik. Principle is as important to Canadians as power.

A short digression on soft power versus hard power might help to clarify Canada's approach. In his widely read and highly regarded essay in the autumn 1990 issue of *Foreign Policy*, Joe Nye of Harvard University defined soft power as effectively getting other countries to want what you want – co-optive power in contrast to command power. Just as human security is a necessary complement to national security, soft power is a complement to hard or military power, not an alternative to it. Nye was writing, after all, of the United States. In his analysis, ideals matter, as does success. Nye quoted Ralf Dahrendorf's observation that it is relevant that millions of people around the world would like to live in the United States. Dahrendorf's observation is similarly true for Canada; many millions more people would come if Canada could accommodate them.

Though Canadians rarely allow themselves to believe it, others admire and respect what we have been able to achieve, both at home and abroad. No one believes we are perfect, least of all self-deprecating Canadians. It is a rare Canadian, for example, who is not troubled by the way in which the interests of aboriginal Canadians have been mishandled. We cannot and do not claim perfection, but we can legitimately claim to have built a society that both encourages and benefits from diversity. We have embraced two languages, accommodated multiple cultures, tolerated literally uncounted religions, and integrated people from every country on earth. Even the most fundamental challenge, the separatist issue in Quebec, has been handled with exemplary democratic impulse. The Supreme Court's recent decision establishing fair ground rules is probably an unprecedented accomplishment. And, whatever reservations we might have about the method of calculation, for five of the last six years the UNDP has put Canada at the top of its human development index. It is this respect from others that underwrites Canada's 'soft power'.

Perhaps equally important, the human security agenda plays to Canada's comparative advantages. If we want to promote tolerance and reconciliation, it helps that Canada is a democratic, bilingual, multicultural country. If we want to co-opt other governments to our 'norm-setting humanitarian agenda', a solid record of commitment to multilateralism is an asset.

Where does human security go from here?

Canada's resources and capacity to improve human security abroad are admittedly limited. We may be more effective if we work with others to maximize resources. Here, the government is currently testing a couple of strategies. The first is to establish close working partnerships with a few other countries that

share our outlook. The first such partnership, with Norway, is given substance through the Lysøen Declaration for a Human Security Partnership, which Canada's foreign minister, Lloyd Axworthy, and his Norwegian counterpart, Knut Vollebaek, signed in May 1998. It is not surprising that Norway and Canada reached this agreement. The two countries share many of the comparative advantages listed above, have many of the same values, and see many of the same needs and opportunities.

More than two countries are needed if progress is to be made, however. In September 1998, Canada and Norway met in New York with other countries to begin to define a common agenda on small arms, on protecting civilians in armed conflict, on strengthening humanitarian law, on preventing conflict, and on peacebuilding more generally. We also plan to co-operate with NGOs and INGOs. By mobilizing allies and focusing common efforts on realizable objectives, Canada can make a difference and add value.

There is no doubt that the validity of a human security agenda and the credibility of a government-NGO coalition were both given a huge figurative shot in the arm from the success of the Ottawa process to ban anti-personnel landmines. They were given another shot from the successful negotiation in Rome in the summer of 1998 to create an International Criminal Court. In these instances, Canada showed itself and others that it could achieve worthwhile goals, even where larger countries, at least for the time being, opposed it.

Conclusion

This article addresses only one facet, albeit an extremely active one, of Canadian foreign policy. There is, of course, much more – from promoting hemispheric-wide free trade to revitalizing the Euro-Atlantic security partnership; from contributing to the reform of the international financial system to responding to the economic and social costs of the Asian and Russian meltdowns; from peacekeeping to peacemaking; from preserving the nuclear non-proliferation system to taking a seat on the UN Security Council. Canada has global interests and a global foreign policy to match. Our human security agenda has become part and parcel of that comprehensive foreign policy.