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HUMAN SECURITY: THE HARD EDGE

At the opening of the 54th session of the UN General Assembly, Secretary General Kofi Annan delivered one of the most resounding endorsements ever of the principles underlying Canada's Human Security Agenda. Taking stock of the NATO-led intervention in Kosovo and the UN-authorized mission in East Timor, the Secretary General observed:

State sovereignty, in its most basic sense, is being redefined — not least by the force of globalization and international cooperation. States are now widely understood to be instruments at the service of their peoples, and not vice versa. At the same time individual sovereignty — by which I mean the fundamental freedom of each individual, enshrined in the charter of the UN and subsequent international treaties — has been enhanced by a renewed and spreading consciousness of individual rights. When we read the charter today, we are more than ever conscious that its aim is to protect individual human beings, not to protect those who abuse them.¹

Minister Axworthy, in his address to the same session of the General Assembly, made clear the Canadian stance on this issue, saying that:

The search for global peace increasingly turns on issues of personal safety. Modern conflict takes a hugely disproportionate toll on civilians. In this world, the protection of people must be central to the Council's work. It must provide the sub-text to our future collective action and the impetus behind our efforts to prevent conflict, keep the peace, enforce sanctions and support the collective will of the United Nations.

Statements made during the opening session of the General Assembly made it clear that consensus on the issue is still some way off. The emerging debate is too often cast in mutually-exclusive terms, pitting national sovereignty against human interests, values against power, realists against moralists, Western values against Asian values, North against South. As stated by the Secretary General, part of the problem is related to the fact that as the international system is rapidly changing, our concept of national interest has "failed to follow suit."

The nation-state, which first emerged on the European continent with the Treaty of Westphalia, has progressively become the basis of international relations.

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Ultimately, it was enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations as the central organizing principle. Throughout post-war history, it grew in strength as colonial empires disintegrated and many new nation-states were formed. History does not, however, proceed in a straight line. Starting again in Europe, this time in the 19th Century, and in parallel with the consolidation of national sovereignty, has been the rise of another powerful phenomenon. The rise of democracy, including both the liberalization of society and the democratization of war, combined with staggering advances in the lethality of weapons systems and latterly the scope and the nature of information technologies, has given birth to another concept, human security, which puts people and their safety as a new organizing principle.

This evolution began to be reflected in international treaties starting with the Lieber Code in April 1863, which marked the first attempt to codify the existing laws and customs of war, the 1864 Geneva Convention for the amelioration of the condition of the wounded in armies in the field, and the Hague Convention of 1899, the Hague Declarations on Asphyxiating Gases and Expanding Bullets. Statesmen such as Gladstone and Wilson brought principle increasingly into the practice of statecraft.

The end of the Second World War marked further advances towards creating a body of law and practices,

particularly in the field of human rights law, giving increased preponderance to the protection of individual rights and safety. In fact, Articles 55 and 56 of the UN Charter imply an affirmative obligation of member states to take joint and separate action to promote “universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.” The development of a corpus of humanitarian law was carried further by the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Conventions against Genocide and against Torture, the 1977 Protocols additional to the four 1949 Geneva Conventions, which strengthen the protection of victims of international (Protocol I) and non-international (Protocol II) armed conflicts. The process was recently taken a major step forward with the conclusion of the negotiations establishing the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

CANADA AND HUMAN SECURITY

It is no accident that Canada has in recent years taken a lead in defining and promoting the concept of human security. First, Canadian foreign policy has for many years been a mix of interests and values. In traditional terms, Canada is one of the most secure countries in the world; in contemporary terms, Canada is one of the most open societies in terms of free circulation of goods, people, ideas and capital. In fact, the prosperity of our country has always depended largely on open borders. As a trading nation, 42 percent of our GDP is derived from trade. In some ways, even before the effects of globalization started to become clear, Canada was already more exposed than most other countries to the indirect spillover effects of international instability.

The second reason why Canada is advancing the human security concept is that it embodies long-standing Canadian values of tolerance, democracy and respect for human rights. Canadians are moved by humanitarian impulse, not by the cold-blooded or rational calculations of realpolitik. Principles are often more important than power to Canadians. Although a distinctive character of Canadians’ political culture, this impulse is far from unique to Canada as the rapid advancement of international humanitarian law implies. Numerous like-minded governments have, for example, joined the “Human Security Partnership” launched by the 1998 Canada-Norway Lysøen Declaration.

The fact is that the concept of human security has gained currency with the civil society in Canada and progressively with emerging international civil society. The international system is no longer exclusively dominated by states; Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), particularly in the humanitarian assistance sector, are growing in importance and number. Called to fill a void left by the reluctance of states to address intrastate con-

flicts, humanitarian NGOs have asserted themselves as powerful and independent international actors. Nor are NGOs the only new effective players. Corporations also play a major role. So do drug cartels and terrorist organizations. The capacity of civil society to mobilize public opinion and to bypass the usual diplomatic channels to influence governments directly was clearly demonstrated by the Canadian-led Landmines Treaty campaign.

The power of ideas, such as the concept of human security, translates into status and influence. Image and values are an instrument of “soft power”, inducing other countries to want what you want. As noted by the European scholar Ralph Dahrendorf, it is relevant to American power and influence that millions of people around the world would like to live in the United States. This is true in its own way, as well, for Canada, which has been at the top of the UN Development Program’s (UNDP) Human Development Index for five of the last six years.

It has been over a century since Canada faced a direct external threat to its territorial integrity or political stability. Canada’s traditional approach to security has not for a long time been based on perimeter or border defence, but on forward defence and collective security. In fact, our foreign and security policy has always been aimed at addressing threats that, while being geographically distant, could compromise the stability of the international system or come eventually to threaten us. Our reliance on multilateralism and our quest for a rule-based international system are rooted in this geostrategic reality. Human security is very much “forward defence”.

Globalization has created vulnerabilities for all the countries of the world. Footloose production and capital and the revolution in information technology know no borders. This free flow of ideas and technology, people and capital, has brought with it a new series of threats spawned by increased interdependence among countries. The risks posed by organized crime, drug trafficking, terrorism, alien smuggling and infectious disease cannot be fought exclusively within national borders without incurring major economic losses. Human security is everyone’s forward defence.

A recently published study on the conflict in Sierra Leone demonstrates how the economic opportunity presented by the breakdown in law and order has sustained violence and allowed profitable criminal activities to flourish. Initially benefitting local “disorganized crime”, the conflict began attracting organized crime that is now using the country as a safe haven not only for international trafficking of diamonds, but for guns and drugs, and for money laundering. In addition to generating refugees, which in themselves can pose a threat to neighboring states and international security, this

type of conflict can also magnify the pernicious and deleterious effects of organized crime on international economic and security systems. Eventually these effects reach Canada, with our fates becoming increasingly intertwined with those of people who previously would have remained isolated from us.² As we discovered last December, for example, Algerian terrorists are linked to organized crime in Montreal. Moreover, in its last “Public Report” (1998), the Canadian Security Intelligence Service identified 45 terrorist organizations operating in Canada.

DEFINING HUMAN SECURITY

From this perspective, it is clear that a concept of security predicated exclusively on the protection of the state and its territorial integrity is no longer adequate. Adding a human security³ dimension to foreign policy, alongside national security, entails:

- elevating the concern for the safety or protection of people, of individual persons and their communities, particularly the most vulnerable segments of a population;
- treating the safety of people as integral to achieving global peace and security;
- addressing threats from both military and non-military sources (e.g. intrastate war, state failure, human rights violations, terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking);
- using new techniques and diplomatic tools in order to achieve our goals;
- recognizing the emergence of non-state actors as significant players in the international system.

Human security is not a substitute for or an alternative to national security. It is the other side of the coin. Nor does human security imply that states are passé. As Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye have reminded us recently, order requires rules, rules require authority, and authority is exercised on behalf of peoples by states⁴. In fact, as we have shown earlier, disintegrating states appear to be as dangerous to their own citizens as do tyrannies. It does imply, however, that the assumption that public safety can always be addressed solely within the confines of domestic policy has been overtaken by events.

What Canada is arguing is that the existing network of interstate treaties and international institutions is a necessary but insufficient basis to ensure the security of people — other people in particularly precarious circumstances but also, ultimately, ourselves. There is a continuity between national security and human security.

THE HUMAN SECURITY AGENDA

The norm-setting and practical problem-solving agenda that derives from the Canadian human security agenda is aimed at:

- the continuum of preventing armed conflicts and, should that fail, intervening to prevent or stop human suffering, alleviating the effects of armed violence on populations and rebuilding governance structures once the conflict is over;
- countering effectively direct threats posed to personal safety, whether, for example, landmines in Africa or terrorism in North America.

Through international negotiations and precedent-setting actions, Canada will seek to develop norms and employ appropriate international agreements, and mechanisms. In some cases the norms and mechanisms are already in place, but the implementation and the will to enforce them need reinforcement.

With regard to armed conflict, two areas appear to be of the greatest priority: 1) developing ways and means of enforcing existing humanitarian law (e.g., the Geneva Conventions and Protocols); and 2) developing new norms. The establishment of the International Criminal Court will facilitate the former, and concrete follow-up to the UN Secretary General's 40 recommendations on the Protection of Civilian in Armed Conflicts — the theme of the Canadian Security Council presidency in 1999 — will facilitate the latter. In this respect, the UN resolution concerning the peace-support operation in Sierra Leone is the first welcome concrete progress. It contains dispositions enabling, under the UN flag, military forces to protect not just themselves but civilians too. Article 14 of the Security Council's Resolution 1270 (October 22, 1999) creating the United Nations Mission to Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) placed the protection of civilians under the dispositions of Chapter VII of the Charter. Rules of engagement reflecting this mission have been drafted to allow the UN contingent to act effectively and expeditiously.

As for direct threats to personal safety, the ongoing negotiation on a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime under the auspices of the UNGA holds the promise of creating the necessary synergies for fighting this phenomenon. Its three protocols dealing with trafficking in firearms, smuggling in aliens and trafficking in persons (women and children) would complement the work undertaken by the G-8 Lyon Group, which deals with judicial and law enforcement cooperation, as well as with corruption. In this context, making acts of corruption involving public officials a criminal

offense under the Convention against Transnational Crime will help in further fighting the criminalization of weakened states. The 2001 UN Conference on Small Arms will provide the basis for a major step forward. Also significant will be the adoption of the Optional Protocol on war-affected children and, if concluded, the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography.

An international co-ordinated approach aimed at reform of the security sector will also help in preventing conflicts and in fighting organized crime. In many countries, the security forces intended to protect public safety are in fact the main threat to personal safety. Corrupt and unaccountable security institutions are an immediate cause of state failure. Effective security institutions are prerequisites for successful international cooperation on transnational organized crime, drugs and terrorism, and are critical to the rebuilding of war-torn societies. Canada has conducted training on civil-military relations and human rights through the Department of National Defence's Military Training Assistance Programme. Last September, at the Francophone Summit, Canada launched, in cooperation with CIDA and the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre, a Peace and Security Training Programme aimed at supporting security sector reform in Francophone Africa. Strengthening



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and increasing the role of civilian police in the delivery of this programme and in peace support operations are also fields where Canada has recognized expertise and where it could assume leadership.

HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION

Secretary General Annan's speech to the 54th session of the UN General Assembly put this issue squarely on the table. In a seminal speech on 20 September 1999, he said:

If the new commitment to intervention in the face of extreme suffering is to retain the support of the world's peoples, it must be — and must be seen to be — fairly and consistently applied, irrespective of region or nation. Humanity, after all, is indivisible.

Not all intervention needs to be forceful, but more than any other type of intervention, military intervention for the sake of humanitarian assistance needs clear guidelines. Recognizing that there are legitimate questions, limits and standards respecting the international community's engagement in the internal affairs of states for humanitarian ends, Canadian Minister of Foreign, Lloyd Axworthy stated that:

Clear and consistent criteria are needed against which the necessity, or not, of humanitarian intervention — including enforcement — can be judged and applied. These tests must be very demanding, based on fundamental breaches of international humanitarian and human rights law.⁵

KOSOVO: A CASE IN POINT

Since the end of Operation "Allied Force", the NATO military intervention in Kosovo has generated a whole new body of political science literature, conducting the post mortem of the intervention and trying to draw lessons from it. What it all boils down to, however, as Czech President Vaclav Havel said in his extraordinary address to the House of Common last year is that:

...decent people cannot sit back and watch systematic, state directed massacres of other people. Decent people simply cannot tolerate this, and cannot fail to come to the rescue, if a rescue action is within their power.

There were no strategic purposes to NATO intervention in Kosovo. There was no oil, no geographic commanding height nor maritime sea lane, no rare precious resources, no scientific secret, no Hitler-in-the-making to dominate Europe and no potential global conflagration to be nipped in the bud.

The important consideration here is that the war against Serbia was a war of values, a war for human security and, once started, wars for values must be won or the values themselves are placed at risk. Humanity and credibility were at stake for NATO and for Canada. During the debate on the NATO intervention in Kosovo



Canadian Forces Photo by: LCdr Chris Henderson

in the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs on 31 March 1999, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Axworthy clearly captured the essence of the issue:

Canada has become a champion in promoting an international human security regime to protect civilians — one in which human rights are respected, in which regional conflicts are resolved through negotiation and confidence building, and in which war criminals are not allowed to act with impunity. We are also working hard to consolidate the multilateral system that was created to make the world better, through the evolving standards of international law and new rules of behaviour, in institutions such as the United Nations, the OSCE [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe] and NATO. Kosovo presents a challenge to all these important principles.

In this regard, it might be worth remembering here that the North Atlantic Alliance was not only born out of realist considerations, but also of idealism. Half a century ago, NATO members agreed to be guided by the four freedoms of the wartime alliance: the freedom from want, the freedom from fear, the freedom of worship and the freedom of assembly. Not surprisingly, the political debates that opposed East and West for 30 years in the CSCE process were largely about the preeminence of individual rights over state rights.

If the humanitarian intervention in Kosovo had failed, in such strategically favorable circumstances — i.e., against a small land-locked country on the margins of Europe opposed by all its neighbours and literally on the border of NATO, the most powerful military Alliance in history, there might well not have been another humanitarian intervention. The unity of purpose of the Alliance might have dissolved and, ultimately, NATO itself might have been undermined, with incalculable consequences for European security and stability. From this perspective, the stakes were far from trivial.

When NATO went to war for the first time on the 50th Anniversary of the Alliance, Canadian pilots flew ten per cent of all the strike missions of the air campaign. They gave tangible meaning to Canada's commitment to its values and to NATO. This crisis has validated the traditional attachment of Canada to the political dimension of the Alliance and the significance of human security in NATO.

History looks inevitable in retrospect, but those who live it know otherwise. One thing that has been confirmed by the crisis in Kosovo is that a commitment to the protection of people also requires a commitment to back diplomacy with the threat of military force and, when necessary, with the use of force. Another lesson learned is, as the very precariousness of the Kosovo

operation demonstrated, that NATO *qua* NATO will only rarely, if ever, be brought to act beyond the confines of continental Europe. In fact, any such military intervention will remain a difficult endeavor. Doubts remain that a coalition of democracies is ideally suited to wage war in cases where their national security and defence is not immediately at stake. For those who hoped or feared that NATO would play the role of a Globocop, Kosovo has shown the limits. NATO has, nevertheless, established a new benchmark — i.e., that humanitarian imperatives can be a *casus belli*. How the formal international legal and normative framework for future forceful humanitarian intervention will develop remains to be seen.

As this article attempts to make clear, there is much more to human security than humanitarian intervention. In the first place, an ounce of conflict prevention is worth a pound of humanitarian intervention. Further, there is much more to protecting people than responding to conflict, actual or apprehended. The concept of human security and the precedents it sets provide a framework for putting people at the center of international relations. Human security is becoming a new central organizing principle of international relations.



NOTES

1. See also Kofi Annan, "Two Concepts of Sovereignty", in *The Economist*, 18 September 1999.
2. Ian Smellie, Lansana, Gberie, Ralph Hazleton, *The Heart of the Matter, Sierra Leone, Diamonds and Human Security*, Ottawa: Partnership Africa Canada, January 2000.
3. In the 1994 UNDP Human Development report, the concept of 'human security' is defined in broader terms as the summation of seven distinct dimensions of security: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political. Canada has been promoting a narrower definition which is more practicable and less unwieldy as a policy instrument.
4. See R.O. Keohane and J.S. Nye, Jr., *Power and Interdependence in the Information Age*, Fall 1998.
5. Lloyd Axworthy, Address to the 54th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, 23 September 1999.