Human Security

By Paul Heinbecker

The components of human security are not new. Victimization and impunity are as old as time, infectious diseases as old as the plague. Crime, drugs and terrorism are age-old phenomena. What is new is globalization - the extent to which our fates have become intertwined with those of people who previously would have remained isolated from us. Also new is the fact that most wars are now intrastate. Ninety percent of the casualties are civilians, predominantly women and children.

The first current use of the term "human security" that I am aware of appeared in the 1993 and 1998 U.N. Human Development Reports, authored by the late Dr. Mahbub El-Haq. Over the past year or so, Canada has begun to conceptualize the operational content of human security. This article will illustrate what we have been doing.

Human Security: What is it?

by our definition, human security:

- takes individual human beings and their communities, rather than states, as the measure of security;
- recognizes that the security of states is essential, but not sufficient, to ensure individual well-being;
- considers threats from both military and non-military sources (e.g. intrastate war, small arms proliferation, human rights violations, crime and drugs);
- regards the safety and well-being of individuals as integral to achieving global peace and security;
- complements, but does not substitute for, national security;
- brings new tools to the repertory of diplomacy - e.g. internet communications and non-traditional alliances between governments, NGOs and INGOs (such as the International Committee of the Red Cross).

The concept establishes a new standard for judging the success of international security policies: the ability to protect people, not just 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.

Is human security an alternative to state security? The short answer is no. States are not passé. 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 own citizens as tyrannies.

The risk of inter-state conflict is not going to disappear soon. Just glance at the situation in South Asia, the Korean Peninsula, the South China Sea, Iraq, the Balkans, the Caucasus, and Central Africa ! Moreover, diplomacy is most effective when backed up by military capability. The network of treaties and international institutions is a necessary but not sufficient basis to ensure others' and ultimately our own, security.

Why is Canada Promoting This?

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

Canada is one of the most secure countries - and one of the world's most open societies in terms of flows of goods, people, ideas, and capital. Its openness creates prosperity and vulnerabilities. Drug trafficking, organized crime, environmental pollution, terrorism, and contagious diseases are among the threats to human security, and Canadians expect protection from these threats, and from conflicts that pose indirect threats to Canadians' values.

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

To enhance security, we need to address both norm-building and practical problem-solving. The success of the

Ottawa Treaty in banning anti-personnel mines was based on this two-pronged approach. The Treaty established a new humanitarian norm and also generated international cooperation to end the danger posed by landmines to individuals in war-ravaged areas. We are taking this approach in curtailing the export of 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 Organisation Convention on the most exploitative forms of child labor and the Optional Protocol to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child on recruitment into armed forces. Another political approach is to increase the capacity of the civilian police peacekeepers, and non-governmental organizations to rebuild security. We emphasize the roles of human rights monitors and civilian police in peace operations, the disarming, demobilizing, and reintegration of ex-combatants, and the protection of civilians in armed conflict, especially women and children.

A final aspect of the political agenda is to strengthen the capacity of societies to manage conflict without resorting to violence by training legislators, jurists, public servants, military officers, and journalists. These are goals of the Canadian Peacebuilding Initiative.

This leads to the second reason for advancing the human security concept - that it appeals to long-standing Canadian values of tolerance, democracy, and respect for human rights. Canadians are moved by humanitarian impulse, not by calculations of realpolitik.

In *Foreign Policy* in the Fall of 1990, Joseph Nye defined "soft power" as getting other countries to want what you want. It is "cooptive power" in contrast to "command power." Just as human security complements national security, soft power complements hard or military power. In Nye's analysis, ideals matter, as does success. Nye quoted the European scholar 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 point is also true for Canada; millions more people would come if we could accommodate them.

Canadians cannot claim perfection, but we have built a society that benefits from diversity. For five of the last six years, the U.N. Development Program (UNDP) has put Canada at the top of its Human Development Index. It is this respect by others that underwrites our soft power. The human security agenda plays to our advantage. If we want to promote tolerance and reconciliation, it helps to be a democratic, bilingual, multicultural country. If we want to coopt other governments to our norm-setting humanitarian agenda, it helps to have a solid record of multilateralism.

Where Does Human Security Go From Here?

We need to work with other countries and maximize each others' resources. In this regard, we are 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 Lysoen Declaration for a Human Security Partnership, which Minister Axworthy and his Norwegian counterpart Knut Vollebaek signed. Norway and Canada share many of the same comparative advantages listed above, and many of the same values.

In September, we met in New York with Norway and other countries to define an 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 work cooperatively with NGOs. The validity of a human security agenda and the credibility of a government-NGO coalition were boosted by the success of the Ottawa process to ban landmines and by the negotiation in Rome to create an International Criminal Court.

Conclusion

There is more to Canadian forgein policy than Ihave mentioned here - 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 Asian and Russian meltdowns, from peacekeeping to peace making, to preserving the nuclear non-proliferation system. Canada's human security agenda has become part of a comprehensive foreign policy.

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