WHAT IS HUMAN SECURITY?

The traditional goal of 'national security' has been the defence of the *state* from external threats. The focus of human security, by contrast, is the protection of *individiuals*.

Human security is a relatively new concept, now widely used to describe the complex of interrelated threats associated with civil war, genocide and the displacement of populations.

Human security and national security should be—and often are—mutually reinforcing. But secure states do not automatically mean secure peoples. Protecting citizens from foreign attack may be a necessary condition for the security of individuals, but it is certainly not a sufficient one. Indeed, during the last 100 years far more people have been killed by their own governments than by foreign armies.

A new approach to security is needed because the analytic frameworks that have traditionally explained wars between states—and prescribed policies to prevent them—are largely irrelevant to violent conflicts *within* states. The latter now make up more than 95% of armed conflicts.

All proponents of human security agree that its primary goal is the protection of individuals. However, consensus breaks down over precisely what threats individuals should be protected from. Proponents of the 'narrow' concept of human security focus on violent threats to individuals or, as UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan puts it, 'the protection of communities and individuals from internal violence'.

Proponents of the 'broad' concept of human security argue that the threat agenda should include hunger, disease and natural disasters because these kill far more people than war, genocide and terrorism combined. Human security policy, they argue, should seek to protect people from these threats as well as from violence. In its broadest formulations the human security agenda also encompasses economic insecurity and 'threats to human dignity'.

The broader view of human security has many adherents—and it is easy to see why. Few would dispute the desirability of protecting people from malnutrition, disease and natural disasters as well as from violence. Moreover there is considerable evidence to suggest that all of these societal threats are interrelated in the mostly poor countries in which they are concentrated.

While still subject to lively debate, the two approaches to human security are complementary rather than contradictory.

For both pragmatic and methodological reasons, however, the *Human Security Report* uses the narrow concept.

The pragmatic rationale is simple. There are already several annual reports that describe and analyse trends in global poverty, disease, malnutrition and ecological devastation: the threats embraced by the broad concept of human security. There would be little point in duplicating the data and analysis that such reports provide. But no annual publication maps the trends in the incidence, severity, causes and consequences of global violence as comprehensively as the *Human Security Report.*

The methodological rationale is also simple. A concept that lumps together threats as diverse as genocide and affronts to personal dignity may be useful for advocacy, but it has limited utility for policy analysis. It is no accident that the broad conception of human security articulated by the UN Development Programme in its much-cited 1994 *Human Development Report* has rarely been used to guide research programs.

Scholarly debate is a normal part of the evolution of new concepts, but it is of little interest to policymakers. The policy community is, however, increasingly using the concept of human security because it speaks to the interrelatedness of security, development and the protection of civilians.