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## UNIT 13 MEASURING HUMAN SECURITY

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### 13.1 INTRODUCTION

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Genuine security is achieved not just through the use or threat of force and physical restriction, but by winning hearts and minds and creating conditions for peace, justice and development. Its most effective form is a ‘soft’ or preventive one that tackles the root causes of political violence by helping the poor, alienated and marginalised to realise their human aspirations.

In the light of political trends following the Cold War, the incompleteness of the traditional notion of national security grew increasingly apparent. This traditional view on security relates to matters of external threats to the state which subsequent to the Cold War became insufficient to identify the diverse aspects contained in the term “security”. In this regard, it was in particular the ultimate lack of attention to security of the individual that initiated a revision of “security”.

Within this setting, human security has emerged as an alternate paradigm for understanding global vulnerabilities on the individual level. This paradigm hence shifted the focus from state security to the security of the people. The proponents of this concept began conceptualising security on an individual level, to address the wide-range of inter-connected human security issues in relation to people’s lives, rights and livelihood. This means ultimately that human security has come to comprise aspects including economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, education

security, community security, political security etc.

“Human security seeks to build upon and combine insights from other perspectives. Subsequently, in addition to examining the state security perspective, human security brings together the security, development and human rights agendas in an integrative, prioritized and strategic way. . . . As a result, human security advocates for inclusive policies that strengthen social cohesion and rejects exclusionary policies and practices that result in an unequal allocation of economic, political, and cultural rights among identity groups and that also, if left unattended, can lead to social exclusion, proliferation of networks of discontent, and possibly higher incidents of conflicts.” (UN Human Security Unit).

### **Aims and Objectives**

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- identify the main elements of human security
- discuss the new global humanist perspectives
- explain the different goals set by United Nations
- analyse different variables implicated to human security
- recognise the different yardsticks of measuring human security

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## **13.2 THE MILLENNIUM REPORT ON HUMAN SECURITY**

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The Secretary-General’s Millennium Report says that the world is progressing towards a new understanding of the concept of security. ‘Once synonymous with the defence of territory from external attack, the requirements of security today have come to embrace the protection of communities and individuals from internal violence.’ It adds, ‘the need for a more human-centred approach to security is reinforced by the continuing dangers that weapons of mass destruction, most notably nuclear weapons, pose to humanity: their very name reveals their scope and their intended objective, if they were ever used.’ In rethinking and reformulating the notion of security, a more comprehensive concept that is capable of addressing the different aspects that affect and influence the life and death of human beings needs to be built.

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## **13.3 DIMENSIONS OF HUMAN SECURITY**

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The human security as a minimum is a number of interwoven dimensions centred on human dignity (Head, 1991):

- Personal and physical security: the right of individuals and communities to preserve their own life and health and to dwell in a safe and sustainable environment.
- Economic security: access to employment and to the resources necessary to maintain one’s existence, with adequate measures taken to reduce maldistribution and artificial scarcity and to permit improvements in the material quality of community life.
- Social security: providing protection from discrimination based on age, gender, ethnicity or social status, combined with access to safety nets, knowledge and information as well as freedom to associate.
- Political security: guaranteeing the right to representation, autonomy (freedom), participation and dissent, combined with empowerment to make choices and a reasonable probability of effecting change. This political dimension includes legal-judicial security: individual and collective access to justice and protection from abuse.

- Ethnic and cultural security: a social climate in which minority populations feel secure in expressing their cultural identity.

### 13.4 PRESENT SITUATION AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Today there are increased opportunities for cooperation in the international system and in various geographic regions. The revolution in communications, the new wave of democracies around the world and globalisation itself has contributed to universalising the values and principles stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Promotion of, and respect for, this declaration requires increased partnerships and more cooperation. Approaching global politics from a human interest perspective, allows one to compare value matrices. This value distinction originates from different theoretical perspectives (Gurtov, 1999). The realist theory looks at international problems and stresses conflict, which means that cooperation between the different actors is not properly gauged. The transnational 'corporate-globalist' view stress economic aspects and the hegemony of a capitalist model of production and division of labour. Even though these 'rules of the game' establish overall preservation, they are seen to be a zero-sum game compared to other values. In the absence of any shared values, both realism and the corporate-globalist approach stress competitiveness as the basis for constant conflict and rivalry.

When one looks at the world with the new global humanist perspective, different values are stressed (Table 13. 1). The need for a more holistic approach means asking the core question: Who speaks for the planet? Based on this question, one looks for other approaches in international relations, which implies thinking about relations in the international system as a 'people issue'.

**Table 13.1**

#### Alternative Values in Main Theories

<b>Realism</b>	<b>Corporate Globalism</b>	<b>Global Humanism</b>
Negotiation	Access	Accountability
Influence	Hierarchy	Management
Mission	Influence	Equal opportunities
Control	Consumption	Decentralization
Systems of alliances	Capitalism	Basic needs
Hegemony	Global culture	Interdependence
National mission	Egalitarian	International regimes
Protectionism	Interdependence	'One world'
Intervention	Laissez-faire	International rights
Maintenance of system	Integration	Transformation of system
Power blocks	Maintenance of system	Global order
	Liberal order	Institutional
		Regulations
		Structure

**Source:** Mel Gurtov, *Global Politics in the Human Interest*, Boulder, Colorado, Lynne Rienner, 1999, pp. 25–26.

Conditions currently exist to form an international coalition of states and civil society organisations to support and promote projects aimed at establishing greater security for people and their development as the core of international security. The United Nations is encouraging this point of view by promoting international law that seeks to guarantee peace and governance and foster positive incentives. 'An innovative international approach will be needed to address the source of insecurity, remedy the symptoms and prevent the recurrence of threats which affect the daily lives of millions of people.' (Chairman's Summary, 1999).

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### 13.5 A NEW GLOBAL ORDER

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Human security visualizes a new global order founded on values and norms intended to develop global humanism. The core issue is to solve the population's basic needs within the framework of globalisation and interdependence. This delicate balance demands, on the one hand, a tendency to unify behavior, consumption and ideals centred on universal values and, on the other, the requirement to recognize and respect diversity and particular identities and cultures. We have seen, however, that globalisation also increases differences and does not—in and of it—meet any needs. It also has an adverse effect on cultural practices and national and local identities.

All of this is taking place in a context of economic and social polarization in various areas of the world. The result is local un-governability, which transfers instability to the global system and regional sub-systems. A 'zero-sum' security concept asserts that there is no absolute security and that the greater security of one actor must mean a greater degree of insecurity for another.

Throughout today's world, traditional measures for protecting national security are failing to prevent tragic violations of the most basic aspects of human security. Territorial sovereignty and military capacity become scarcely relevant when human security concerns such as ethnicity, religion, the environment, governance, the economy and human rights turn into flashpoints for violent conflict.

The failure of models based on the national security perspective points to the urgent need for a new model based squarely on human security. Such a model would permit the UN and national governments to act quickly on early warning signals. Rather than permit the levels of atrocities we have witnessed in places such as Bosnia and Rwanda, a human security framework could alert appropriate actors to uproot the seeds of conflict well before they take hold.

A preoccupation with state-centred security has long been at the heart of foreign policies both in developed and developing countries, and, consequently, has had high priority in policy formulation. It devours great quantities of scarce financial and human resources through spending on armed forces personnel, military hardware and weapons systems. Such misallocations affect the capacity of developing countries to invest resources in addressing human security problems. Paradoxically, then, excessive spending on conventional security measures can indirectly worsen the human security situation, thereby contributing to potential conflicts.

Recent efforts by the world donor community to move to some degree from a state-centred perspective to focus more on indicators of human development is a step towards enhancing the importance of human security.

## 13.6 GOALS SET BY UNITED NATIONS

The goals set by the United Nations for security is a world free from want and fear. Achieving this entails acknowledging a new set of international circumstances, where states advance the multiple threats that confront people. In the last few decades interstate conflicts have declined but there has been an increase in intrastate conflicts. The former Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Millennium Report, entitled 'We the Peoples', stressed that more than five million people died in this type of internal war in the 1990s. There were also mass migrations, refugee crises, destruction of infrastructure and environmental change. These events violate the basic human rights of millions of people and make it hard to create conditions for peace as the foundation for building a better world.

This analysis from the United Nations indicate that conflicts are more frequent in regions with poor countries, so the challenge of protecting more vulnerable populations is even greater. This poses a global and regional dilemma regarding the most suitable mechanisms for achieving stability, peace and fostering cooperation. Even though one cannot completely disallow intervention by other powers in the name of humanitarian intervention, it has shown that in most cases it is not the best option for settling conflicts. The same is true of the system of sanctions. In this framework, operations for maintaining and imposing peace must be reviewed.

In the type of conflict that emerges as the most common at the start of the twenty-first century, control of small arms is important as is the control of nuclear weapons. All of this marks a change in the perspective of the main international actors regarding situations of tension and conflict and regarding security concepts.

The international system has changed dramatically in less than a decade. Not only did the disappearance of the Soviet Union definitively mark this change, but there were also substantial changes that accumulated over time and are expressed with particular strength in the post-Cold War context. The number of state actors participating in the institutionalised international system has multiplied by at least four times since the United Nations was set up in 1945. We have seen the emergence of other actors with increasingly more influence on international relations—not just international agencies capable of changing their surroundings, but a series of transnational forces expressed with particular strength in multinational companies and non-governmental organisations. The communication explosion, technological advances and globalisation have further accelerated the changes. This has meant that the nature of state power has changed.

States have ceased to enjoy monopolistic control or to have the capacity to establish and promote actions in six basic areas.

- *Communications* are no longer controlled by the state. The Internet is the best example; radio and television are also good. However, states do have some regulatory control and authoritarian states still try and control communications.
- *Technological development* depends more on the private sector than on the state. This affects investment capabilities from genetic techniques and cloning to technological developments designed for war.
- *Financial transactions* flow around the world and generate regional and global crises with little capacity for intervention by the state.

- Although states reinsure *investments*, their ability to control decisions about where to invest and from where to get investments is minimal.
- *International migration* and the ability to control the movement of people have also diminished.
- *Trade* has increasingly opened up, and states have evident problems to establish controls and restrictions.

The above means that threat perceptions have been generated that are different than traditional ones and mechanisms of action to cope with them seem, and in many cases actually are, antiquated. At the same time states continue to control national security and internal security and in many cases the states' control over civilians through security mechanisms, surveillance and other means has actually increased. In other words, there has been a rearrangement in state power.

There is a greater flow of information in the world. The links between people are better. Political and social events in a country or region do impact others. Economic decisions made in one part of the world have direct consequences on economic growth and sustainability in other areas. This is the evidence for the substantial changes in the basic concept of sovereignty and demonstrates the reduced capabilities of nations to cope with their main problems (Bergalli, 1996). Hence, coordinating policies, establishing regulations and generating international regimes based on shared values are essential points in designing a new international system for the twenty-first century. Only the ability to act jointly will enable the states to recover their abilities to generate, together with other actors, a legitimate order capable of building a world free from threats and fear.

The basic concept that enables security to be understood in the post-Cold War period is the concept of cooperation. This concept emerges in all reports systematising progress and interpreting the changes in the world. It also plays an important role in divergent views, both for preventing and for promoting peace and international security. New problems that must be incorporated into the concept go beyond military aspects; hence, elements of cooperation are essential. The development of human security concepts are placed within this framework.

Before and during the Cold War, inter-state conflict was the main threat. A conceptual transition is taking place from a Cold War perspective that visualised an enemy expressed in strongly military actions carried out by a state, to a post-Cold War perspective in which threats are diffused, and the weight of military factors has diminished and many of the threats appear not to be linked to state actors, and even not to be linked to any particular territory.

We can say in general, however, that the end of the Cold War has led to a reappraisal of the main theoretical matrices used to evaluate international problems (Snarr, 1998). This will enable progress to be made towards a new paradigm that, while recognising conflict and confrontation, places greater emphasis on working together. This change requires tremendous political will on the part of core actors and specific forms of coordination.

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## 13.7 HUMAN SECURITY: AN EMERGING CONCEPT

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New vulnerabilities demand holistic perspectives. The concept of security at the beginning of the century can be articulated based on relating the concepts of international security,

state security and human security. The way in which that relationship is established will simultaneously meet global needs and the needs of states and the people. To the extent that vulnerabilities and threats to international security increase, pressure will be put on states to take action in a context where individuals and communities are at risk from all kinds of internal threats. Hence, it is essential to foster cooperative multilateralism, or correspondent multilateralism. In turn, interstate crises and conflicts affect human security and international stability. So it is essential to achieve stability in interstate relations by demilitarising the links. Furthermore, human security demands are made on both the state and the international system. The influence of civil society organisations in promoting this level of security is essential. State security is classical security and involves aspects linked primarily to sovereignty and border issues. The weight of military forces and the balance of forces, as well as concepts associated with dissuasion and defence take place at this level.

Human security addresses more local dimensions, although they involve large masses of humanity. It also addresses global issues, such as environmental matters and pandemics. These types of issues are not traditionally approached at the other two levels of security. Building a holistic view requires emphasising that each level must produce specific answers in at least three areas: use of force, prevention of conflicts and international cooperation. Increases in security at one level do not replace nor eliminate demands at other levels. On the contrary, insecurity at one of the three levels affects the other levels. From that point of view, human security is an emerging issue, which can give greater cohesion to interaction between international security and state security.

This outlook, which is greater than the sum of its parts, does not mean expanding the concept of security. To expand would entail militarising different areas or ‘scrutinising’ everything that is important. Rather, new perspectives imply better coordination between levels.

Four substantial elements need to be emphasised in today’s security landscape:

- International security extends beyond its military components;
- International security is transnational, global and interdependent;
- International security is produced by a plurality of actors, the state is no longer the exclusive actor; and
- International security in the twenty-first century has enlarged its agenda and demands that actors work together.

Emphasis on which factor has primacy in the human security, state security and international security trio may vary depending on the scenario. In most, the weight of coordination will fall on state security, because the state continues to be the main international actor. Yet some geographical regions, such as Africa, international security and its main actors could be a larger centre of influence. For example, the response capability of the international system might predominate in the face of political crises in weak or disappearing states.

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## **13.8 PREVENTIVE MEASURES**

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The capacity to generate preventive measures (Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1996) is, therefore, the central point of international action and of the governing agencies

of the international and regional systems (Muthiah, 1999). In this regard, the United Nations faces the urgent challenge and necessity to establish efficient strategies in preventing long and short-term conflicts. Moreover, the United Nations is interested in increasingly targeting preventive actions in the sphere of international security as a crucial element in progressing towards a world free from fear. 'As the United Nations has bitterly and repeatedly discovered over the last decade, no amount of good intentions can substitute for the fundamental ability to project credible force if complex peacekeeping, in particular, is to succeed'(United Nations, 2000).

### **13.8.1 Coercive Measures**

Human security has been taken forward to imply protection through the use of humanitarian intervention when large numbers of people are threatened by the state itself. In such a case, it is argued, the international community can be involved and in the last resort use coercive measures, including sanctions and military forces, as in Bosnia and Kosovo. The legitimate delegation of authority by the United Nations for use of force is considered. The Report on the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) which was accepted by a United Nations sponsored Global Conference states, however that: 'force alone cannot create peace; it can only create the space in which peace may be built.' This assertion is the basic link that allows one to reconsider the relationship between peace, the use of force and political conditions. Political will, restrictions on the use of force in dispute settlement and the development of efficient measures of dissuasion will make more space possible for politics and for building peace.

### **13.8.2 Risk analysis**

Risk analysis is another preventive measure incorporated into the design of development policies and projects. In the state-centred approach, the value of risk analysis lies in the ability to fully understand the context in which conflict might arise, and the factors that will perpetuate conflict.

A similar grid could be applied to analyse security risks from a human-centred perspective. Thus the context in which conflict may arise, and the factors that sustain it, will relate to threats to human dignity such as a lack of food, water, shelter, education, autonomy, or protection from abuse. The ultimate goal would not be the use of force to deter such threats. But understanding them could point to policies and programmes capable of preventing social deterioration and the escalation of conflict. Force then becomes a last resort when all other preventive efforts have failed.

A critical issue in a human-security centred approach lies in the ability to read accurately the indicators of a deteriorating social fabric. Clearly, such ability is vital to uncovering warning signs that might not be visible at first glance. As Prof. Jorge Nef of the University of Guelph states: The key issue of real economic development is not the size of the GNP or the GDP per capita, nor the rate of growth of such indicators, but the essential growth of impoverishment in real terms. Consider the following examples of such impoverishment:

- One-half to two-thirds of Africans live in a state of permanent and deep poverty.
- During the 1980s, the average per capita income fell by about three percent per year in Sub-Saharan Africa and by about 1.3 percent in the highly indebted countries of Latin America. The cumulative figures of economic decline for the 1980s indicate 25 percent for Africans and 10 percent for Latin Americans.



A better ability to read and interpret such socioeconomic indicators will significantly improve the possibility of anticipating and managing conflict before it escalates beyond control.

### **13.8.3 Vulnerabilities of Human Being**

Human security is a wide-ranging concept that demonstrates the weaknesses and vulnerabilities of human beings, as well as their potential. Opportunities for growth and development are increasingly linked, yet can become sources of insecurity. Global interconnection acquires more significance and importance each day. Reducing risks implies greater coordination of national and global policies. The experiences of recent years show that it is essential to agree on the design and then on establishing and executing the international regimes that guarantee a consensual international order. It is the international regimes that can ensure protection for people. Vulnerabilities will be able to be overcome based on the action of international regimes. Coordinating policies inside international regimes will make it possible to increase opportunities for more equal development. Progress can only be made through collaboration. Cooperative global multilateralism and national democracies are the best guarantees to ensure development and protection for people.

### **13.8.4 Non-State Actors**

In many cases, non-state actors like non-governmental organizations have proven to be extremely effective in advocating the security of people and are also important providers of assistance and protection to those in need of great security. In this way civil society organizations are seeking greater opportunity and greater responsibility in promoting human security.

### **13.8.5 Development Agencies**

Development agencies are now engaged in promoting security sector reform, while security organisations have helped channel development assistance in the post-conflict countries.

### **13.8.6 Development of Theories about International Regimes**

The Development of Theories about International Regimes (Krasner, 1991) and about forming global public goods (Kaul, 1999) has acquired greater significance and importance, as have also contributions to negotiation theories (Breslin, 1995) and practical instruments to relieve tension (Krepon, 1999). Theoretical exploration of the field will generate suitable knowledge to improve multilateral relations and the results arising from them; especially those results capable of changing relations in the international system, beginning with cooperative multilateralism (Hoffman, 1998).

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## **13.9 VARIABLES IMPLICATED IN HUMAN SECURITY**

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Human security may be analysed and understood from different variables (Table 13.2). Professor Jorge Nef proposes at least five dimensions—ecology, economy, society, politics and culture. Each of these variables can be visualised at different levels. They are linked mainly to two crucial elements—globalisation and the use of force. Examining these variables enables us to target and structure policy recommendations based on a concept, such as human security, that is still being developed and discussed.

Globalization has universalized such values as human rights, democracy and the market (Held, 1997). This ‘universalization’ has a strongly western flavour. Associated technological and economic processes have generated greater global interdependence with both positive and negative aspects, such as increased trade, wider dissemination of scientific knowledge and more global information. There is also greater danger to the environment, terrorism has acquired a global dimension, organised crime is worldwide, and financial crises know no borders. Generating stability and global governance without proper institutions is hard. Significant deficiencies can be observed in this area. In turn, there is increasing differentiation and multiplication of international actors and that has a bearing on the degree of importance and means of power with which each one deals with the processes and seeks to influence future courses of action. A vision of the future is essential. In this framework within the international system’s current period, different global concepts in specific areas such as security have not been honed.

Political will, restrictions on the use of force in dispute settlement and the development of efficient measures of dissuasion will make more space possible for politics and for building peace. In the case of human security, we can assert that the vulnerabilities of one are manifested as vulnerabilities of all.

**Table 13.2**  
**Variables Implicated in Human Security**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Culture</b> (Knowledge)	<b>Ecology</b> (life)	<b>Economy</b> (wealth)	<b>Society</b> (support)	<b>Politics</b> (power)
Effects Globalization Use of Force	Cultural capital Wisdom Ignorance Identities Values Intolerance and religious wars Local identities clashing with national and global ones	Environmental capital Sustainability Disaster A world of associated effect, such as the ‘greenhouse effect’ Bio-terrorism	Economic capital Prosperity Poverty Dark side of globalization and competition, more inequality Financial crisis Cyberterrorism Money laundering	Social capital Equality Inequality Refugees Migrations Hyperurbanization Polarization Ungovernability Rebellion Citizen security	Political capital Peace Violence Governance Global regimes Cooperation/ Conflict Landmines Child soldiers Small arms Traditional disarmament

**Source:** Jorge Nef, *Human Security and Mutual Vulnerability*, Ottawa, IDRC, Ottawa, 1999.

## 13.10 SUMMARY

In the end, it is a sense of urgency and readiness for action by those actors required to intervene in situations of conflict that determines the success of any form of security analysis. A sense of urgency must also be cultivated as an essential component of the human-centred approach. This readiness for action could help reach the goal of developing preventive measures for conflict resolution, as advocated by UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali in his *Agenda for Peace*. The moral imperative used to justify a

nation's decision to resort to force is the preservation of state stability in other words maintaining the rule of law. In the case of human security, the moral imperative for action is the preservation of human dignity in all its dimensions. If these dimensions of human security took greater priority in the risk analyses of national and international actors, it could at the same time go some way toward meeting crucial objectives of both sustainable development and global security.

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### 13.11 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

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1. Discuss the main elements of Human Security.
2. What are the different yardsticks of measuring Human Security?
3. Discuss the variables implicated in Human Security.
4. What are the different goals set by United Nations?

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### SUGGESTED READINGS

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