THE HUMAN SECURITY AUDIT

Part II reviews a new global dataset that provides a comprehensive portrait of global political violence for the years 2002 and 2003. It also surveys trends in human rights abuse, criminal violence and human trafficking. It concludes with a discussion of the methodological challenges facing researchers measuring human insecurity.

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Introduction

Leo Erken / Panos Pictures

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Research findings published here for the first time help illuminate both the scope and the depth of human insecurity around the world. But obtaining accurate data remains a major challenge.

Mapping trends in political violence is important both for researchers seeking to understand their causes, and for governments and international organisations attempting to evaluate the impact of security policies.

Part II begins with a detailed review of the new dataset on global political violence that the Human Security Centre commissioned from Uppsala's Conflict Data Program specifically for this report.

The Uppsala/PRIO dataset that was featured in Part I only provides data on the number of 'state-based' conflicts—that is, those waged between a state and another state, or a state and an armed rebel group.

The Uppsala/PRIO dataset does *not* count:

- 'Non-state' conflicts—intercommunal and other armed conflicts in which a government is not one of the warring parties.

- 'One-sided' violence—cases of unopposed deadly assaults on civilians, like that in Rwanda in 1994.

- Death tolls from state-based and non-state conflict, or from one-sided violence.

The new Uppsala/Human Security Centre dataset provides data on all of the above.

Because the new dataset thus far covers just two years—2002 and 2003—it does not yet provide trend data. Even so, it has produced some arresting findings. It reveals, for example, that there have been far more conflicts taking place around the world than are counted by the Uppsala/PRIO dataset. Indeed, in both 2002 and 2003 there were *more* non-state than state-based armed conflicts.

This raises an obvious question. How can we be sure that *all* armed conflicts have declined since the end of the Cold War when we have no record of non-state conflicts before 2002? This question is examined—and answered—in the section that follows.

In the absence of official statistics, Uppsala and the compilers of other conflict datasets rely on reports from the media, NGOs, academics and governments to count battle-related death tolls. The fact that many battle-related deaths are simply not reported, plus Uppsala's strict

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Torture and other gross human rights abuses are often perpetrated in secret, making the collection of reliable trend data very difficult.

data coding rules, mean that a degree of under-counting is inevitable.

Other methods of estimating war deaths, including epidemiological surveys, are in principle more accurate. But they cannot be used to create global datasets.

Another issue that complicates our understanding of trends in political violence is the attachment that the media, and some policymakers, have to many of the myths of contemporary global security, some of which were briefly discussed in the Overview. As one UN report on the difficulties of data collection noted:

> When it comes to statistics ... numbers take on a life of their own, gaining acceptance through repetition, often with little inquiry into their derivations. Journalists, bowing to the pressures of editors, demand numbers, any number. Organizations feel compelled to supply them, lending false precision and spurious authority to many reports.[1]

A classic case of 'numbers taking on a life of their own' is the endlessly reiterated claim that 90% of those killed in today's wars are civilians. In fact, the 90% figure is completely without foundation. (See 'The myth of civilian war deaths' by Kristine Eck of Uppsala University's Conflict Data Program.)

Political violence is a term that embraces more than simply war, genocide and terrorism. It also en-

compasses state repression: torture; extrajudicial, arbitrary and summary executions; the 'disappearance' of dissidents; the use of death squads; and incarceration without trial. All of these are as much part of the human security agenda as they are of the human rights agenda.

But mapping global and regional trends in human right abuse is extremely difficult. The UN's Human Rights Commission is far too politicised a body to even contemplate such an exercise, while the major human rights organisations resist as a matter of principle any attempt to quantify human rights abuse.

Researchers running one little-publicised project—the Political Terror Scale (PTS) now located at the University of North Carolina, Asheville—have been collating and coding data on human rights violations around the world for more than 20 years. PTS data are coded in such a way that making comparisons between countries is relatively simple.

PTS researchers Linda Cornett and Mark Gibney used PTS data to track regional trends in human rights violations from 1980 to 2003 for the *Human Security Report.* Taken as a whole the data reveal little significant variation—certainly nothing like the dramatic post–Cold War decline in armed conflicts.

However, the regional trend data indicate that the human rights situation worsened somewhat in four out of six regions around the world from 1980 to 2003, but that after 1994 it improved modestly in five of the six regions.

In most states, most of the time, far more people are killed or injured by criminal violence than by warfare. But attempts to map the incidence of violent crime around the world confront major data problems. The fact that only a small percentage of countries report violent crime statistics in a regular and timely manner, plus pervasive problems of under-reporting and under-recording, mean that efforts to produce reliable global or regional trend data on violent crime confront nearly insurmountable difficulties.

The discussion of global homicide and rape trends in the section on criminal violence draws on a paper com-

missioned for this report by Graeme Newman of the State University of New York in Albany. This section also includes a discussion by Luke Dowdney of Viva Rio on children and violent crime in Rio de Janeiro.

Human trafficking is another crime that often involves violence, and has been described by UNICEF as the 'largest slave trade in history.'[2] There are no reliable data on the numbers trafficked each year, but there is widespread agreement that trafficking has become a significant cause of human insecurity.

The final section in Part II asks whether or not it is possible to create a human security index modelled on the UN's Human Development Index. It draws on data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, the Political Terror Scale and a relatively new World Bank dataset on political violence and stability, to present a comparison of the world's least secure states. The fact that so many of the same countries appear in all three 'least secure' lists speaks to the interrelated nature of war, human rights violations and political instability.