

### Box 4.3.1 The *Human Security Report*

October 2005 saw the first edition of the *Human Security Report*, produced by the Human Security Centre at the University of British Columbia. This aims to give “a comprehensive and evidence-based portrait of global security” with specific reference to violence against individuals. Its overall message is a positive one: contrary to conventional wisdom, since the end of the Cold War, “civil wars, genocides and international crises have all declined sharply.” It notes that:

- The total number of armed conflicts has declined by over 40 percent since the early 1990s.
- In 2004 there were twenty-five ongoing secessionist conflicts—the lowest annual rate since 1976.
- Between 1988 and 2000 there was an 80 percent decline in the number of genocides and politicides.
- Wars, on average, are growing less deadly: in 2002 the average armed

conflict claimed 600 lives, compared with 38,000 in 1950.

The report argues that one major factor in promoting security has been a surge in peacekeeping, by the UN in particular. The number of UN peace operations has more than doubled since 1988, when there were just seven, and there has been an even greater proliferation in preventive diplomacy and peace-making activities. The report notes a recent RAND study that found that two-thirds of UN nation-building operations can be judged a success, but that only half of US missions reached the same level.

It also demonstrates a number of long-term trends that may shape the need for, and types of, future operations:

- By the beginning of the twenty-first century, wars in sub-Saharan Africa were claiming more lives than all those

in the rest of the world: battle deaths in the region were close to zero in 1950, but have now risen to an annual average of 100,000.

- There is a clear correlation between poverty and war: a state with an annual per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of \$250 has a 15 percent chance of collapsing into war within a five-year period. In contrast, where per capita GDP is \$2,500, the probability is two percent.
- Nonetheless, both economic and ethnic discrimination are in decline worldwide: in 1950, 45 percent of governments practiced some sort of ethnic discrimination compared to 25 percent in 2002.

While emphasizing positive themes, the report states that there is “no room for complacency” and urges a continuation in the “international activism” it identifies as the key driver for peace in the 1990s.