

Since it is the state that provides physical and cultural safety and regulates political and economic access, the prime objective of group mobilization tends to be greater access to political decision-making.³ Studies that have tracked such movements over time have shown that government responses have played a significant role in determining outcomes. In situations where governments recognize, listen to and accommodate dissatisfied groups, grievances tend to be lessened or resolved. Problems arise when governments ignore or repress these concerns. These studies have also found that mobilization typically begins with nonviolent protest, but may escalate to violence when concerns are ignored. In authoritarian regimes, the escalation tends to occur more rapidly, because the state is likely to be repressive rather than reformist, denying rather than addressing human needs. In democracies, the progression tends to be slower, thus allowing time for governments to respond.⁴

In response to this analysis, the concept of "human security" has been advanced as the best foundation upon which "state security" can be built. The evidence suggests that the most secure states are those that are able to provide the greatest human security to their populations.⁵ Weak states are those that either do not, or cannot, provide human security. Often this very weakness leads political elites into a vicious cycle which further weakens their security. In an attempt to increase their physical safety, they often amass the trappings of strength, investing heavily in military hardware or employing repressive tactics. But diversion of resources away from their peoples' needs or massive repression (although it may seem effective in the short-term) typically leads to greater discontent among the populace and increased long-term vulnerability for the elite. Consequently, assisting states in their capacity to enhance human security offers a promising approach to conflict prevention.

There has also been a corresponding political recognition that the international community should assume greater responsibility for assisting states that have serious problems which they cannot solve on their own. Zaagman (1995b) has noted that simply tracking events and admonishing governments that are having difficulties is insufficient--"a more positive commitment is needed".⁶ And indeed, a number of multilateral organizations have now begun to work in this direction.

BUILDING CONFIDENCE THROUGH A COOPERATIVE SECURITY APPROACH

The previous analysis suggests that problems within states may require a somewhat different approach than disputes between states. Since governments must consent to involvement by the international and regional community, at least at an early stage, a cooperative security methodology is more likely to be effective than a collective security approach.⁷ Attempts to exert influence by coercive methods often backfire and create counter-coercion or reactance (the latter being a situation whereby the government resists the attempt to influence in an effort to reassert its freedom)--thus making persuasion less, rather than more likely.