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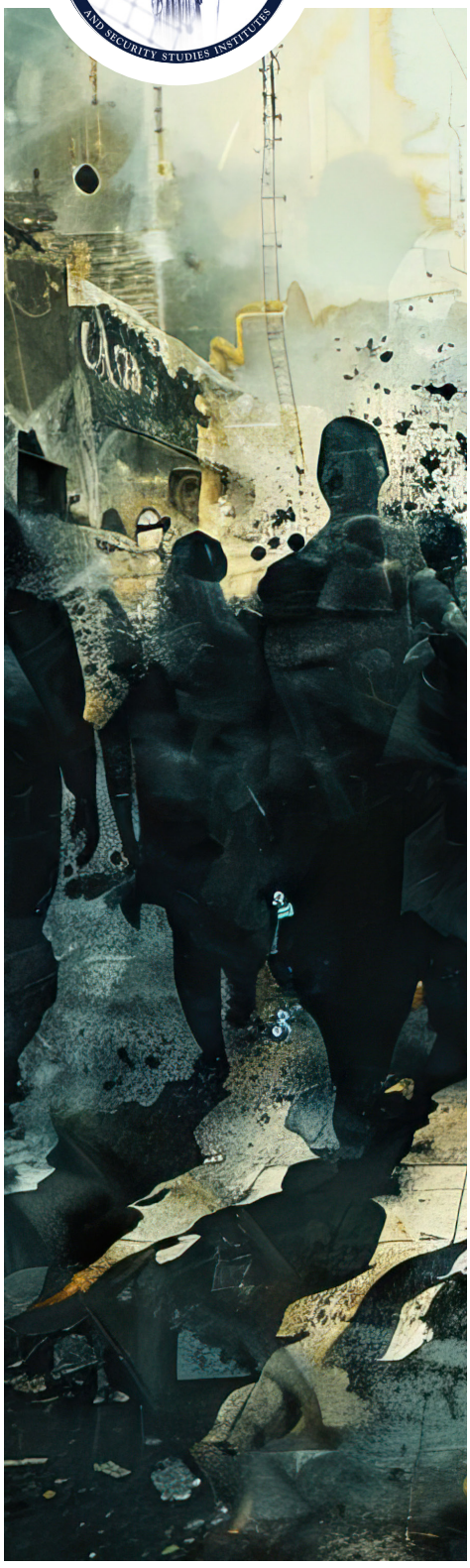

2025

HUMAN SECURITY

An informational report developed from insights from the Partnership for Peace Consortium Capstone

9–11 December 2025

Polish Naval Academy, Gdynia

Partnership for Peace Consortium

OF DEFENSE ACADEMIES AND SECURITY STUDIES INSTITUTES

Human Security: An informational report developed from insights from the 2025 PfP Consortium Capstone

Produced by

PfP Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes
Gernackerstrasse 2
82467 Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany
www.pfp-consortium.org
PfPConsortium@marshallcenter.org

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Compiled, Edited, and Designed by

Dr. Sae Schatz, Executive Director, PfP Consortium (2024–2026)

Reviewed, Printed, and Distributed by

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg, Deputy Director of Research, Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security
Dr. Colin Magee, Senior Evaluator, Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security
Canadian Defence Academy

Contributors

Dimitar Drinkov, Assistant Professor, Rakovski National Defence Academy
Yanitsa Petkova, Assistant Professor, Rakovski National Defence Academy
Alexandra Green, Managing Digital Editor, *Canadian Military Journal,* Canada Department of National Defence
Jamie Wichelo, 2LT, Concepts / Doctrine, Dellaire Center for Peace a& Security, Canadian Armed Forces
Cadet Malani Sotelo-Leon, ROTC Cadet, University of North Georgia Corps of Cadets
Cadet Sylas Sisson, BDE Command Sergeant Major, University of North Georgia Corps of Cadets
Rossella Muzzeddu, Project Officer, Defence Capacity Building, NATO HQ
Eleonore Thierry d'Argenlieu, Programme Officer, NATO OPS, NATO HQ

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Acronyms

ADL ..... Advanced Distributed Learning
AI ..... Artificial Intelligence
CIMIC ..... Civil-Military Cooperation
COIN ..... Counterinsurgency
CRSV ..... Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
DCAF ..... Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance
DEEP ..... Defense Education Enhancement Program
NBPG10 ..... Nordic-Baltic states plus Poland and Germany
NCO ..... Non-Commissioned Officer
NGO ..... Non-Governmental Organization
OPP ..... Operations Planning Process
PfP ..... Partnership for Peace
PfPC ..... PfP Consortium
PME ..... Professional Military Education
Ret ..... Retired
WPS ..... Women, Peace, and Security

Country Codes

AUT ..... Austria
BGR ..... Bulgaria
CAN ..... Canada
CHE ..... Switzerland
DEU ..... Germany
GBR ..... United Kingdom
GRC ..... Greece
POL ..... Poland
ROU ..... Romania
UKR ..... Ukraine
USA ..... United States

Foreword

From Brigadier General (Ret.) Rolf Wagner, Chair of the PfP Consortium Senior Advisory Council and German Deputy Director of the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies

IT IS MY PLEASURE to introduce this report on the PfP Consortium's 2025 capstone event on Human Security, held at the Polish Naval Academy in Gdynia.

Human Security is not a new topic for the Consortium. For years, elements of it have appeared across our education development efforts, reference curricula, and research initiatives. What we lacked was a coordinated framework for understanding how Human Security relates to military operations, professional military education, and the broader security challenges we face.

This conference represented a significant step toward that coordination. With the establishment of the Human Security in Operations working group earlier in 2025, and with the generous support of our Polish hosts, we brought together nearly one-hundred participants from 25 nations and NATO to examine what Human Security means for defense institutions and how we can better integrate it.

Human Security is ultimately about people: protecting them, understanding their vulnerabilities, and recognizing that military effectiveness depends on how we account for the human dimension of conflict.

We heard perspectives from across the Alliance and from partner nations navigating some of the most demanding security environments in the world. We examined Human Security through multiple lenses, including the protection of civilians, resilience against hybrid threats, and the particular challenges facing the Baltic Sea region. We did not arrive at final answers—nor did we expect to—but we built a foundation for continued work.

I extend my sincere thanks to the Polish Naval Academy and RADM Tomasz Szubrycht for their exceptional hospitality; to NATO International Staff for their continued partnership; to the working group chairs, panel moderators, and to all participants who contributed their time, expertise, and candor.

The task before us now is to translate these discussions into action: to operationalize Human Security for professional military education, to develop the doctrine and guidance our institutions require, and to ensure that the human dimension remains central to how we prepare for and conduct operations.

I look forward to continuing this work together, as allies and partners.


@amw.gdynia
www.amw.gdynia.pl
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1

Introduction: Insights from the 2025 PfP Consortium Conference

DECEMBER 2025, GDYNIA, security professionals from 25 nations and NATO gathered at the Polish Naval Academy, named after Heroes of the Westerplatte, for the PfP Consortium's capstone conference on Human Security. The event drew military educators, policymakers, and practitioners to examine the concept which has gained prominence in strategic discourse yet remains unevenly integrated into defense institutions.

The timing was deliberate. As hybrid threats blur the boundaries between civilian and military domains, and as lessons from Ukraine underscore the human dimensions of modern conflict, the question of how armed forces should conceptualize and operationalize Human Security has become urgent.

Protection of civilians, information and cognitive security, food security, humanitarian access are no longer peripheral concerns. These human-centered factors shape operational success and strategic outcomes.

The two-day conference was less a series of answers than a structured confrontation with hard questions: How should military education institutions teach something such a nuanced and contextualized concept? How do commanders balance Human Security considerations against other operational imperatives? What doctrine, if any, should guide these decisions?

This report synthesizes the insights and recommendations that emerged from the conference. It draws on panel discussions, breakout sessions, and a post-conference survey of participants to map the current state of Human Security thinking from among this select group of allied and partner subject-matter experts.

This report starts by examining the definition of Human Security and its military impacts. It then summarizes implementation challenges, particularly barriers that impede integration into professional military education. The final sections present results from the post-conference survey, which captured participants' assessments of current Human Security integration, priority challenges, and recommendations for action.

The report concludes with reflections on the conference itself and an appendix containing the full program.

2

Defining the problem: What is Human Security, and why does it matter?

HUMAN SECURITY is not a new concept. The term entered international discourse with the *1994 UN Human Development Report,*[1] which framed Human Security as "freedom from fear and freedom from want." This marked a shift from traditional state-centric security toward placing individuals and communities at the center of protection efforts.

Three decades later, the concept has gained prominence in NATO strategic documents, national defense policies, and professional military education. Yet, as the Gdynia conference revealed, the defense community still lacks a shared understanding of what Human Security means in practice and how to operationalize it.

Dr. Colin Magee, a Senior Evaluator at the Canadian Defence Academy's Dallaire Centre of Excellence and co-chair of the PfP Consortium's Human Security in Operations working group, framed the challenge: "Most military doctrine currently acknowledges aspects of Human Security, but lacks structured guidance to systematically integrate it into operations, particularly as it pertains to high-intensity warfare. When Human Security considerations are used, they're often implicit, inconsistent, or discretionary." This gap between acknowledgment and implementation defined much of the conference discussion.

As later revealed in a post-event survey (see in Section 5), event participants ranked Human Security as the second-highest priority among future security challenges, only behind Hybrid Threats, yet only 42% rated the current integration of Human Security into military education as effective. Participants consistently described fragmented, uneven implementation of Human Security concepts across nations and institutions, driven by conceptual ambiguity and the absence of a unified doctrinal framework.

Conference participants noted, for example, that Human Security is frequently conflated with adjacent frameworks and subordinate concepts, including Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC), Women Peace and Security (WPS), protection of civilians, human terrain mapping, and stability operations. Without clarity on what Human Security adds to existing frameworks, practitioners struggle to know what they are being asked to do differently.

Conference participants offered different framings. Dr. Greta Keremidchieva of the Bulgarian Rakovski National Defence College emphasized the original UN pillars: freedom from fear (protection from violence) and freedom from want (protection from chronic threats such as poverty, disease, and displacement). She noted that "military forces alone cannot address the root causes of insecurity," positioning Human Security as inherently requiring cooperation across military, governmental, and civil society actors.

Dr. Magee proposed an operational perspective: Human Security as a people-centric approach that enables the military to understand and address the human dimension of the operating environment. This allows personnel to anticipate and, where appropriate, to address threats to the survival, livelihood, and dignity of populations. His framework (shown in Figure 1) organized Human Security into concentric layers, building on the critical foundations of physical and infrastructure security. Each element maps to potential military roles and tasks.

Wing Commander James Lambert, lead for Human Security with the UK's Cyber and Specialist Operations Command, also shared his experiences as a practitioner. His practical definition of Human Security is as "a way of thinking at the operational and strategic levels, and delivered tactically by people doing CIMIC."

The UK has robust Human Security policy, *Joint Services Publication 985 ("Human Security in Defence").*[2] It emphasizes that Human Security extends beyond any single function, for example, including medics addressing conflict-related sexual violence, intelligence officers reading the human environment, and defense academies integrating the concept into curricula. "Human terrain," he added, "is as important—and I would argue more important—than the physical terrain."

Ms. Virpi Levomaa, a member of the Finnish Defence Forces serving as the Department Head for NATO's Integrated Security Discipline, outlined the Alliance's evolving but fragmented framework. She cited a number of publications, including the *2022 Strategic Concept,*[3] which tasked NATO to implement Human Security across its core tasks, and the complementary *Human Security Approach and Guiding Principles,*[4] which established guiding principles, across five core areas:

- Protection of civilians
- Conflict-related sexual violence
- Combating trafficking in human beings
- Children and armed conflict
- Cultural property protection

In practice, however, Human Security concerns are often complex and overlapping. For example, human trafficking of children for sexual exploitation is related to child protection, gender-based violence, and organized crime simultaneously.

The question of whether Human Security requires a precise, standardized definition divided participants. Dr. Magee argued that "from a military perspective, having a definition that's agreed to is critical for a common frame of reference and a common approach to operations. Without that, people will do whatever they want, and that will be counterproductive." Senior leaders who embrace the

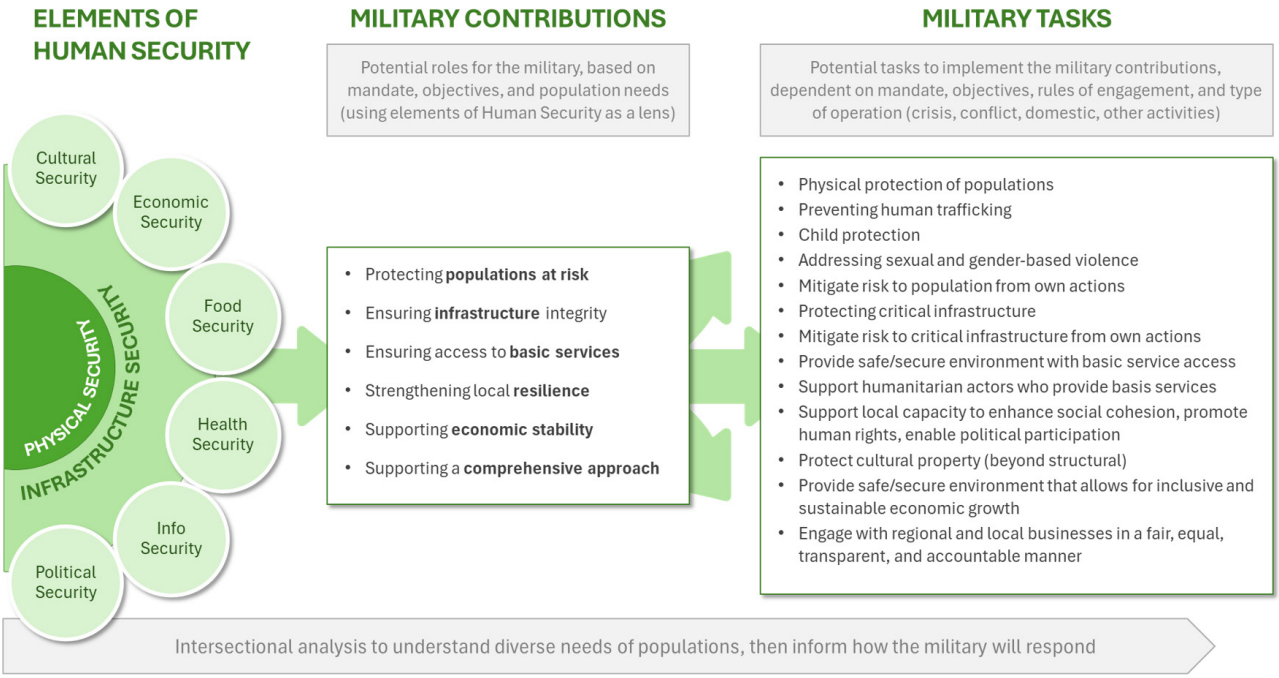


Figure from Dr. Colin Magee. It shows a proposed concept for Human Security, incorporating both the ways of viewing and understanding Human Security (left) as well as the ways of doing and assessing results (right).

concept without understanding its implications may create confusion. Clear definitions at strategic, operational, and tactical levels would enable coherent implementation.

Ms. Levomaa offered a counterpoint. When teaching practitioners, "if we start with all of the definitions and new words, we lose the students." Her approach is to ask practitioners to consider actions that they already take and then show how these actions support Human Security, rather than leading with terminology. Perhaps, she suggested, NATO's contribution is less about standardizing language than promoting a people-centric point of view that can be adapted to national contexts.

Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg, Deputy Director of Research at the Dallaire Centre and co-chair of the PfP Consortium Human Security in Operations working group, offered a synthesis that resonated across these positions: "Human Security is a process and an outcome. It's a verb and a noun." Her approach acknowledged both the conceptual breadth that frustrates doctrine writers and the practical orientation that practitioners require.

What emerged from Gdynia was not consensus on a single definition, but recognition that the definitional work itself remains essential. The proliferation of frameworks, documents, and national interpretations has created a metaphorical iceberg: visible concepts above the waterline and unexamined depth below. Tolerating some ambiguity may be necessary to preserve adaptability across diverse operational contexts.

But without greater clarity on what Human Security asks of military institutions, the concept risks remaining scattered in different curricula and syllabi, with its significance insufficiently addressed and its implementation overcome by competing demands.

3

Dr. Jacek Siewiera keynote on Human Security as strategic necessity

DR. JACEK SIEWIERA, former Secretary of State and Head of the National Security Bureau of Poland, opened the conference with a keynote that framed Human Security as a strategic imperative. His central argument was deceptively simple: "The resource is the human."

In an era of technological acceleration and great power competition, he contended, the human element remains the decisive factor in national security—and Europe is failing to protect it.

Dr. Siewiera brought a unique background to the topic. Trained both as a lawyer and as a physician specializing in anesthesiology, with experience as a combat diver in the Polish Army, he offered a perspective that bridged clinical, legal, and operational domains. This grounding informed his argument that Human Security, despite lacking some of the more obvious appeal of defense technology and weapons systems, addresses "the most important thing—the thing that we fight for, when we fight."

He organized his analysis around three pillars: demography, cognition, and culture.

The Quantitative Dimension: Demography

Dr. Siewiera began with demographics. He argued that demographic decline is eroding allied power. Europe's birth rate has fallen to 1.38, well below the 2.1 replacement rate required to maintain population. This trajectory, Dr. Siewiera argued, represents a strategic vulnerability more consequential than any conventional military threat. The implication he made is that Human Security begins with recognizing the value of the population itself.

When asked how to reconcile demographic concerns with women's professional advancement and personal autonomy, Dr. Siewiera rejected framing the issue as a women's burden. "There is no such thing as a 'duty of the women.' There's a duty of the citizens, if anything, both men and women." The deeper issue, he suggested, is societal: quality of life, social support structures, and whether societies value and invest in the next generation.

Processing Power: Humans and AI

Dr. Siewiera's second pillar addressed the relationship between human cognition and

artificial intelligence. As AI systems become more sophisticated and more integrated into military command and control, he warned of a particular danger: algorithmic self-reference. Large language models and other AI systems increasingly train on content that AI itself has generated. "It's like feeding the algorithm with its own outputs," he explained. "It will degenerate itself."

The antidote is human input. "The more humans you integrate with it, the more creativity you will bring." Human oversight provides not just error correction but the contextual judgment and creative thinking that machines cannot replicate. This applies across domains, from intelligence analysis to targeting decisions to strategic communication.

But Dr. Siewiera warned that cognitive capacity is itself under threat. Information saturation creates "cognitive overload," like the feeling of a fighter pilot overwhelmed by cockpit displays, unable to process the data fast enough to act. Similar dynamics affect citizens navigating digitally saturated environments. "The more people who are distracted or disengaged, the less oversight you'll have."

The strategic implication is that protecting and developing human cognitive capacity is a national security priority. "We are losing the most critical resource: humans. The most important factor for the future is creativity, awareness, and the ability to read the context."

Culture: The Foundation of Resilience

Dr. Siewiera's third pillar, which he identified as most important, concerned cultural identity and social cohesion. Great powers compete not only through military and economic means but through narratives about values, history, and identity. Societies that lack a clear sense of what they are defending become vulnerable to external influence and internal fragmentation.

He pointed to education as a strategic asset. Nations that invest in developing their citizens' capabilities, such as critical thinking and social connection, build long-term resilience. However, nations that allow their populations to become passive consumers of algorithmically curated content cede a strategic advantage.

The risk of disengagement is not merely individual but collective. Dr. Siewiera offered a striking metaphor: "Imagine Europe as a brain where every human being is a neuron. If those neurons are disconnected or have poor processing power, that's like an Alzheimer's brain." Social fragmentation, amplified by unregulated information environments, produces precisely this kind of collective cognitive decline.

Human Security as a Framework

Dr. Siewiera argued for placing the human at the center of strategic thinking across all domains. This argument resonated with practitioners who had experienced the operational consequences of neglecting human factors. As the conference unfolded, participants repeatedly returned to Dr. Siewiera's framing: that Human Security is not a constraint on military effectiveness but a precondition for it.

Human Security is not an "add-on" to strategy. Protecting people is strategy.

4

Human Security challenges, from protecting civilians to building resilience

RADM TOMASZ SZUBRYCHT, PHD, Rector-Commandant of the Polish Naval Academy, reinforced the strategic importance of Human Security in his opening remarks.

"We would think that modern war would be more humanitarian," he observed, "but if we look at war in Ukraine and Gaza, we see that it's not." The lesson is not to abandon humanitarian aspirations but to recognize their strategic weight. "We need to prepare not only the armed forces, but the whole of society: civilian society. This is total defense and the resilience of society."

The imperative, as multiple speakers echoed throughout the conference, is to move from recognizing Human Security's importance to systematically integrating it into military education, operational planning, and practice.

Invoking the Academy's traditional motto, RADM Szubrycht reframed it for the current era: "We used to say, 'sea power through knowledge,' and now we can say 'effective defense through knowledge.'" He argued that we can build resilience and advance Human Security, in part, through educational investments.

Through a combination of panel discussions, lightning talks, and breakout sessions, participants shared their perspectives about where Human Security matters most and how current approaches sometimes fall short. Each session was designed to draw on the diverse experiences of those in attendance.

Discussion-centric sessions allowed groups to explore specific challenges in detail, including the protection of women, children, and vulnerable groups in conflict zones; Human Security threats to national resilience, with particular attention to the South Caucasus; Human Security provisions in ceasefire and peace agreements; the role of Human Security in high-intensity war fighting contexts, and more.

A dedicated panel on the second day examined threats specific to the Baltic Sea region, drawing on perspectives from Poland, Finland, Bulgaria, and other nations navigating an increasingly contested environment.

The subsections that follow synthesize insights from these discussions, organized around the principal challenges that participants identified.

OPERATIONAL RELEVANCE OF HUMAN SECURITY

Is Human Security relevant to war fighting, or is it primarily for peacekeeping, stabilization, and humanitarian operations? Discussions challenged the assumption that Human Security's importance diminishes as conflict intensity increases.

If Human Security is to be taught in PME, then instructors need to understand what it is, and students need to appreciate its relevance to their professional roles. In other words, the concept must be sufficiently defined, clearly connected to operational duties and mission outcomes, and realistically prioritized.

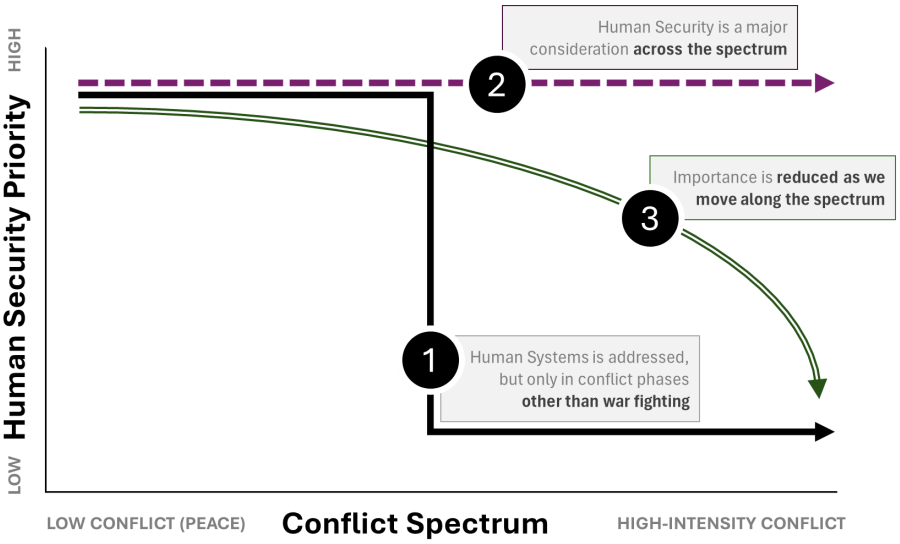
To explore those ideas, Dr. Colin Magee posed a series of questions: Is Human Security an objective to achieve? A lens for understanding the human domain? An approach to achieving broader objectives? A set of unique tasks? The answer, he suggested, may be "all of the above," varying by level (strategic, operational, tactical) and by whether one is treating Human Security as an agenda, an approach, or an outcome.

He presented three models for how Human Security might relate to the spectrum of military operations. (See adjacent figure.) In the first model, Human Security is a consideration across all operations but stops short of high-intensity war fighting; that is, it is applicable in peacekeeping and stability operations but set aside when combat intensifies. In the second, Human Security remains a major consideration across the entire spectrum, including war fighting. In the third, Human Security's importance decreases as operations move toward the high-intensity end. Group discussions explored these models against the operational reality.

The Changing Character of Warfare

Participants began by questioning whether traditional definitions of war fighting still apply. The metal-on-metal clash of armed forces does not reflect the full reality of modern conflict. Hybrid threats blur the line between peace and war, and civilians are increasingly both the targets and the terrain.

Ukraine is an example. The conflict is fought across all domains simultaneously. Kinetic operations remain decisive, but they occur alongside cyber attacks, information warfare, and deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure. "Today's conflicts are fought through society and against society," one representative summarized. Given the hybrid nature of



Dr. Colin Magee proposed three questions with this figure: (1) Is Human Security a consideration across operations except high-intensity war fighting? (2) Or is Human Security a consistent consideration across the entire spectrum, including war fighting? (3) Or does Human Security's importance decreases as operations move toward the high-intensity end of operations?

modern combat, participants agreed that Human Security cannot be relegated to some well-defined post-conflict stabilization phase. It must be considered throughout the range of military operations.

Balancing Against Military Necessity

Participants grappled with a practical dilemma, however: How do commanders balance Human Security considerations against operational imperatives when resources are finite and time is short?

The most desirable state, participants agreed, would integrate Human Security into all military and security activities, with clear definitions and synchronized action across military, civilian, and NGO actors. But military power will not always be present or able to support Human Security. In high-intensity scenarios, war fighting necessarily takes priority, and other organizations—civil society, law enforcement, humanitarian actors—must step in to address human needs.

One participant offered a situational framework. In low-risk scenarios, where kinetic engagement is limited, military forces can actively advance Human Security objectives. In high-risk scenarios, where combat is intense, war fighting becomes a prerequisite for any Human Security outcomes, so forces must first establish security before additionally protection is possible. In other words, under high-intensity conditions, the military's role shifts from direct provision of Human Security to enabling the conditions under which others can act.

Yet participants cautioned against treating this as a simple trade-off. Ignoring Human Security in combat operations creates vulnerabilities that undermine long-term success. Civilian harm fuels grievances. Infrastructure destruction prolongs recovery. Populations that feel unprotected withdraw cooperation.

Implications for Doctrine and PME

"None of this is new," Dr. Magee noted. "In the old days we called it 'understanding second- and third-order effects.'" But Human Security provides a structured framework for analysis that military planners have always needed.

Hence, participants concluded that Human Security should be taught in the context of war fighting, and not only as a separate humanitarian track. But where does Human Security fit in existing military doctrine and educational programs?

For doctrine, several participants pointed to the NATO Operations Planning Process (OPP) as the critical integration point.

In PME, where time is a limiting factor, it cannot be added as another standalone block. Instead, Human Security should be woven into existing educational subjects, including leadership, planning, ethics, and operations.

Exercises are another integration point. Crisis scenarios that include Human Security challenges, such as displaced populations and civilian infrastructure destruction, help students confront these topics in a controlled environment.

Educational scenarios should also incorporate political and operational dilemmas. For instance, the relationship between state security and Human Security adds complexity. States are expected to provide security to their populations; in return, populations support the state. When states fail to provide security, or when they themselves become sources of insecurity, this relationship fractures. Military forces operating in such environments must navigate between supporting state institutions and protecting populations from those same institutions.

Another challenge involves CIMIC. Some NGOs refuse to associate with military actors, complicating the civil-military coordination that Human Security requires. Such realities must be acknowledged in how military leaders are educated.

A Mindset, Not a Checklist

The central conclusion was that Human Security in war fighting is less a set of tasks to accomplish than a mindset to cultivate. It requires understanding how military operations affect populations, anticipating consequences, and making decisions that account for the human domain alongside traditional operational factors.

The benefits of Human Security extend beyond humanitarian outcomes. Commanders experience fewer complaints and safer operations. Civilian populations behave more predictably when treated with respect. Humanitarian actors and political leadership see visible compliance with international norms.

Making the case for Human Security in war fighting (and associated PME courses) relies on demonstrating how it enables military commanders to fight and win. Human Security should not be viewed as a constraint on military action, but rather as a set of methods for improving operational effectiveness and sustainability. Protecting populations builds legitimacy. Preserving infrastructure enables recovery. Understanding the human terrain informs targeting and maneuver. These are operational advantages, not humanitarian concessions.

The challenge for military educators is translating this insight into curricula that prepare officers and NCOs to think in these terms reflexively, not as an afterthought when operations slow, but as an integral part of planning and execution from the outset.

PROTECTING CIVILIANS AND THE VULNERABLE

A theme throughout the conference was the protection of civilians, particularly women, children, and other vulnerable populations. A synthesis from these discussions follows.

Dr. Alexandru Lucinescu of Romania's Institute for Political Studies of Defence and Military History opened his presentation with a stark framing. Four hundred years ago, Thomas Hobbes described life as "nasty, brutish, and short."

That description found fresh relevance in 2024: the UN Human Rights Office recorded more than 120 armed conflicts worldwide, making it the most violent year since World War II. Over 48,000 civilians were killed, and women and children accounted for 79 percent of all civilian casualties, a rate four times higher than in 2021.[5] At least one life was lost every twelve minutes.

These numbers provided the backdrop for the breakout session, "How are Women, Children, and Vulnerable Groups Considered in Conflict Zones?" Chaired by Dr. Carmen Rijnoveanu and Dr. Lucinescu, the session drew on historical case studies and contemporary operational experience to examine how protection responsibilities are understood and where they fall short.

The session adopted a historical approach, using past cases as "mirrors of reflection" for current challenges. For example, Dr. Boyan Zhekov of Bulgaria's Rakovski National Defence College described how Bulgaria accommodated displaced Yugoslav children at the end of World War II, providing clothes, education, medical care, and housing, even as Bulgaria itself faced severe scarcity.

Similar patterns emerged from other historical cases. After the Korean War, thousands of North Korean children were sent to Bulgaria and Romania, where many were adopted and integrated into local communities. Greek children displaced by civil war followed comparable trajectories. These examples demonstrated that societies can absorb displaced children successfully, but also that the outcomes depend heavily on political context, resources, and the duration of displacement.

The cases also raised uncomfortable questions: If Belarus offered to care for Ukrainian children today, how would the international community respond? How do societies balance their own needs against humanitarian obligations to others' children?

The Long Shadow of Trauma

Dr. Katarzyna Wardin of the Polish Naval Academy shifted the discussion from immediate protection to long-term consequences. Removing children from conflict zones may ensure their physical survival, but it cannot erase what they have witnessed. "We can care for children and support their material needs," she observed, "but we cannot change their memories and experiences."

The numbers are staggering. As of mid-2025, 473 million children (one in six globally) live in areas affected by armed conflict; this is the highest figure since World War II.[6] The percentage of children living in conflict zones has doubled in recent decades. These children carry trauma that shapes their development and, ultimately, their societies' futures. "A generation raised in trauma," one participant noted, "is more likely to choose revenge over reconciliation." Post-conflict stabilization efforts that neglect this psychological dimension risk planting the seeds of future conflict.

Several participants argued that trauma remains under-addressed in both military planning and PME. Understanding how conflict affects civilian populations and how those effects compound over time is essential to anticipating second- and third-order consequences of military operations.

Women, Peace, and Security

Dr. Iryna Lysychkina of Ukraine's Kyiv Institute of the National Guard and Ms. Nathalie Gendre of the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) presented work from the PfP Consortium's Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) in PME working group.

Established in 2021 as a Canadian initiative, the group has developed a systematic approach to integrating WPS across military education and authored a how-to guide for PME institutions, called *Integrating Women, Peace and Security in Professional Military Education: An Active Learning Toolkit.* It includes frameworks, recommendations, and active learning tools for what to do (military roles and tasks), what to teach (required knowledge), and how to teach (pedagogical methods).

Members of the working group also contributed to the 2025 edition of *Teaching Gender in the Military,* a peer-reviewed handbook combining theoretical grounding with practical implementation guidance, which is available from the DCAF website: www.dcaf.ch.

"WPS in PME is situated within a broader security landscape where modern conflicts necessitate people-centered, inclusive approaches," Lysychkina explained. Gender perspectives are "crucial for understanding societies, preventing instability, and shaping effective, legitimate military engagement." Considering "gender" in Human Security is not only about women, but about understanding how conflict affects different populations differently and planning accordingly.

Dignity, Data, and Dialogue

In discussions, participants gravitated toward the "dignity, data, and dialogue" framework, which is popular across various contexts.

Dignity means providing humane conditions, such as separate processing lanes for mothers and elderly at checkpoints, making

473 million
CHILDREN LIVE IN AREAS OF ARMED COMBAT

79% OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES ARE WOMEN AND CHILDREN

female personnel available for searches, and providing adequate facilities for women's biological needs. A real-world example from Ukraine was discussed. Female patrol leaders and translators, lacking access to sanitary facilities, instead chose to reduce their water intake, which can lead to direct operational consequences.

Data means collecting age- and gender-disaggregated information from the outset of any operation. In one border situation, analysis revealed that 90 percent of those crossing were elderly, women, and children, because military-age men were fighting or had fled abroad. Without that data, planning assumptions would have been fundamentally wrong.

Dialogue means engaging local leaders, NGOs, and community members to understand the situation on the ground. For example, participants observed that when women are included in military patrol teams, local civilian women are more willing to share information.

Challenges and Gaps

The conference identified persistent challenges with the protection of civilians, women, children, and other vulnerable groups. Implementation remains inconsistent across countries and missions. Facilities for women and children in operational settings are often inadequate. Societies vary in their preparedness to accept and support displaced populations. Cultural factors shape both vulnerabilities and responses; for example, violence against women and children is often rooted in social norms that military actors may not fully understand.

Calls to Action

Conference discussions raised several recommendations. For practitioners: require age- and gender-disaggregated data collection from day one of any operation. This single measure immediately improves planning, resource allocation, and protection outcomes.

For PME institutions: integrate a mandatory module on WPS and vulnerable populations—supported by real case studies—into all officer and NCO curricula. "Not an elective, not an add-on," the group emphasized, "an institutional requirement that builds common understanding and embeds critical thinking about vulnerable populations into professional identity."

Dr. Lucinescu closed with a reflection that captured the session's stakes: "Sometimes the man in uniform is the only one standing between humanity and barbarity. Sometimes that man is the only one making a difference. Don't leave to others the task of building the character of our officers and our soldiers."

THE MENTAL BATTLE SPACE: COGNITIVE WAR

Adversaries go beyond military systems and physical infrastructure; they also attack the human domain directly: perceptions, beliefs, trust, and social cohesion.

Dr. Siewiera's opening keynote emphasized cognitive security (framed as the challenge of cognitive overload, where algorithmically curated content degrades society's thinking abilities). Starting with that opening, cognitive security continued to be a reoccurring theme throughout the event.

"If you look at adversaries' hybrid operations across Finland," Ms. Virpi Levomaa observed, "they're targeting our free will, perceptions, behaviors, and they will use more cognitive and virtual means versus physical." The threat operates primarily in the information and cognitive domains, targeting civilian capabilities and populations rather than military forces directly. "From the Finnish perspective, that's exactly why we need Human Security."

LTG Tomasz Piotrowski of Poland identified psychological operations via social media as a persistent threat, noting that Ukrainian counterparts consider populism—fueled by information operations—to be "the most demanding threat" from Russia. VADM (Ret.) Stanisław Zarychta emphasized that as societies become more digitalized, the attack surface for cognitive warfare expands.

CAPT Jon von Weissenberg, Defense Attaché to Warsaw from Finland connected information security to social cohesion. "Human Security is about trust: trust in institutions, the public service, and communities," he observed. "Russia is trying to increase polarization. If they succeed, we lose the capability to function effectively politically." In this framing, social cohesion itself becomes a form of deterrence and a Human Security priority.

Weaponizing Identity

Ms. Claudia Wallner, a Research Fellow at the UK's Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), delivered a presentation that reframed how defense professionals should think about gender, identity, and Human Security.

The common perception treats these as "soft" issues, important for humanitarian reasons but peripheral to hard security. Wallner challenged this assumption directly: "Adversaries don't make that distinction. They see an attack surface."

Her central argument: gender and identity are being systematically weaponized. What might appear to be domestic culture wars are often adversary tradecraft and strategy. Russia, China, Iran, and other actors exploit social divisions around gender, identity, and cultural values as part of hybrid campaigns that integrate information operations, cyber attacks, legal warfare, and proxy actors.

Wallner presented case studies of disinformation campaigns that used gender-based narratives to target populations and policies. False allegations of sexual violence have been fabricated and amplified to discredit governments, militaries, and individual leaders. Democratic politicians, such as Germany's Annalena Baerbock and Moldova's Maia Sandu, have been targeted with gendered disinformation designed to undermine their credibility and legitimacy.

The strategic purpose is fragmentation. "The use of gender-based narratives is a strategic way to fragment coalitions and alliances," Wallner explained. By exploiting existing social tensions and amplifying divisive content, adversaries erode the trust, participation, and cohesion that democratic societies require to function. The effects extend far beyond the targeted individuals to weaken institutions and alliances.

If adversaries treat gender and identity as attack vectors, then defending against these attacks is security work, not a bureaucratic checkbox. Wallner's recommendation: build gender and identity analysis into threat assessment, intelligence analysis, and response planning. Treating these as peripheral concerns leaves vulnerabilities unaddressed.

Attribution and Response

Unlike kinetic operations, information campaigns are difficult to attribute definitively. They exploit legal gray zones and leverage domestic actors (sometimes unwittingly) as amplifiers. Like other hybrid attacks—drones appearing near European airports, teenagers paid to commit arson or violence, and infrastructure sabotage designed to be deniable—it is often difficult to prove which country drove a particular information operation.

Implications for PME

The discussion yielded several implications for PME. First, information and cognitive security cannot be treated as a specialist domain. Every military professional operates in an information environment and must understand how adversaries exploit it. Second, gender and identity analysis must be integrated into intelligence and planning processes, not siloed as a humanitarian concern. Third, exercises and curricula should incorporate hybrid scenarios that challenge students to recognize and respond to information operations targeting Human Security.

A key part of the solution lies in treating information and cognitive security as operational priorities and equipping military professionals with the analytical tools to address them. Societies will remain vulnerable so long as we treat cognitive security as a political or social concern, rather than an active battle space that adversaries are already exploiting.

Competition in the cognitive realm is not an ancillary concern. In contemporary and future conflict, they are central to Human Security—and to operational success.

CASE STUDIES IN BUILDING RESILIENCE

> Resilience is the capacity of societies, institutions, and individuals to withstand, adapt to, and recover from shocks.

Dr. Elena Mandalenakis, an International Relations and Security specialist from Greece, and Mr. Christoph Bilban, a researcher with the Austrian National Defence Academy, led sessions on Human Security and national resilience.

These sessions built upon a new handbook from the PfP Consortium's Regional Stability in South Caucasus study group, which Dr. Mandalenakis and Mr. Bilban co-chair. The handbook, *Building Resilience Against Human Security Threats and Risks: From Best Practices to Strategies,*[7] applies Human Security theory to real-world case studies.

The cases demonstrate how Human Security threats are interconnected and mutually reinforcing: Food insecurity compounds economic instability. Energy vulnerability creates political leverage for adversaries. Environmental degradation displaces populations and strains social services. These dynamics require what Mandalenakis called "a multidimensional lens," in other words, approaches that recognize how threats cascade across domains.

The implication is that siloed responses that address individual threat categories in isolation will fail to capture these interdependencies. Building resilience requires integrated strategies that account for how shocks in one domain propagate to others.

The Georgia Case

Consider the Georgia case study, where political dynamics have undermined societal resilience. Since February 2022, approximately 1.2 million Russian citizens have entered Georgia, a figure representing a 30 percent increase relative to Georgia's existing population.[8] Many arrived fleeing military mobilization; others came with families and businesses. The influx has reshaped Georgia's socio-economic landscape, with effects on real estate prices, labor markets, and commercial patterns.

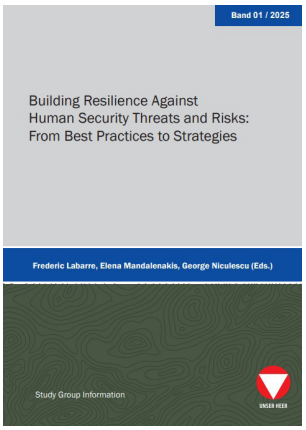
This case also illustrated how competitive political narratives prevented Georgian society from developing coherent resilience to this demographic shift. The ruling Georgian Dream party framed Russian migrants as a positive economic addition, emphasizing

remittances and business investments. Opposition parties addressed the issue differently, warning of threats to national security: expanded Russian soft power, sanctions evasion, intelligence penetration, and growing economic dependence on a hostile state.

Both framings contained elements of truth. But the zero-sum political competition between them meant that Georgian citizens received contradictory messages rather than a shared understanding of risks and opportunities. "The parliamentary process has not effectively informed the Georgian population as to what is at stake security-wise," one participant observed. "As the issue is not apprehended in depth, it fails to develop resilience."

The result is an "absence of resilience" at the psycho-social level. Georgian society remains polarized, unable to develop consensus on how to manage the Russian migration phenomenon. The fear is that any resilience generated would be directed against one political faction or another rather than toward addressing the underlying challenge. "Skillful political maneuvering, masquerading as normal politics in times of acute crisis, prevented multi-varied resilience from blossoming within society."

The Georgia case also illustrated how adversaries can exploit Human Security vulnerabilities through non-kinetic means. Participants noted that Russian migrants have established schools in Georgia operating Russian curricula imported from Moscow, a form of soft power projection that operates below the threshold of traditional security concerns but shapes the information and cultural environment.



Building Resilience Against Human Security Threats and Risks: From Best Practices to Strategies

An open-access handbook from the PfP Consortium Regional Stability in South Caucasus study group

"The government has a blind eye," one participant observed. "They know what's happening but they're not stopping it. This is the soft power of Russia." The current government's posture serves its political interests, creating a situation where Human Security threats go unaddressed because acknowledging them would require politically costly action.

This dynamic—where domestic political incentives prevent societies from building resilience against external threats—recurred across multiple case studies discussed in the session.

The South Caucasus Case

Discussions also examined ways to build resilience through regional cooperation, using the South Caucasus as a case study. Participants noted the August 2025 peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia as a positive development, along with energy cooperation projects, Black Sea initiatives, and the "Prosperity and Peace Corridor" involving Hungary and Romania.

Economic interdependence, several participants argued, can strengthen resilience by creating shared interests in stability. Trade relationships, energy infrastructure, and

transportation networks tie countries together in ways that raise the costs of conflict and create incentives for cooperation. However, participants cautioned that economic ties alone are insufficient. Public diplomacy, defense cooperation, and institutional relationships must accompany commercial links.

Stability is also threatened by the influence of external actors, including Russia, Iran, and increasingly China. "Frozen conflicts" in South Ossetia and Abkhazia remain also unresolved, representing persistent vulnerabilities that adversaries can exploit.

The Finnish Model

CAPT Jon von Weissenberg offered another example of resilience-building. Finland's "comprehensive security model" distributes responsibility across state institutions, the private sector, and individual citizens. "The citizens have a responsibility to take care of the Republic," he explained, "not the other way around."

This model emphasizes trust-building among government and citizens, trust in institutions, trust among communities. It requires clear communication from authorities, strong cooperation between official agencies and volunteers, and societal consensus on shared values. When these elements are present, social cohesion itself functions as a form of deterrence.

The Finnish approach suggests that resilience is not merely a technical capability but a social and political achievement. It requires sustained investment in the relationships and institutions that allow societies to act coherently under pressure.

Implications for Human Security

The resilience discussion yielded several insights. First, Human Security threats often operate through cascading effects across interconnected domains. Responses must be correspondingly integrated through a multidimensional lens.

Second, political polarization can prevent societies from recognizing and responding to Human Security threats. When security issues become instruments of domestic political competition, the shared understanding necessary for resilience becomes impossible. Building resilience requires courage and political will.

Third, adversaries exploit Human Security vulnerabilities through soft power, economic leverage, and information operations—means that fall below traditional security thresholds but accumulate strategic effect over time.

Fourth, building resilience requires investment in social cohesion, institutional trust, and clear communication. These are not substitutes for military capability but complements to it.

Maj. Gen. Eugen Mavriș, Commander-Rector of Romania's military university, recommended education as the foundation for building resilience. "Personal responsibility is encouraged by education. Education helps critical thinking." Resilience cannot be mandated from above; it must be cultivated through sustained engagement between governments and societies. Human Security provides a framework for understanding what is at stake, and what must be protected.

CEASEFIRE AND PEACE AGREEMENTS

Eighty percent of ceasefire and peace agreements fail. This statistic, cited repeatedly during the conference, framed a critical question: What distinguishes agreements that hold from those that collapse?

Ms. Rebecca Mikova of the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF) led sessions on Human Security in ceasefire and peace agreements. These discussions were grounded in a recently published DCAF research, *Human Security Provisions in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements: Case Studies from Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.*[9]

The study analyzed 54 ceasefire and peace agreements across eight conflicts in the post-Soviet space: the Tajik Civil War, the Chechen Wars, the conflicts in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, the Prigorodny conflict, Transnistria, and the Russia-Ukraine war.

Each agreement was coded for the presence or absence of Human Security elements, then analyzed against parameters including type of agreement, parties involved, scope, and effect on conflict intensity. The research used a Human Security index built on the UN framework, and each facet was analyzed in terms of applicability to both direct security needs and broader structural insecurity:

- Economic security
- Food security
- Health security
- Environmental security
- Personal security
- Community security
- Political security

Peace agreements included Human Security elements 81 percent of the time, compared to only 47 percent of *ceasefire agreements,* which generally focus more narrowly on halting hostilities. Agreements with full geographical scope incorporated Human Security provisions 70 percent of the time, while those with limited geographical scope did so only 13 percent of the time.

The findings suggested that including Human Security provisions correlates with de-escalation and agreement durability. Agreements that addressed structural causes of insecurity, not merely the immediate violence, were more likely to contribute to sustained decreases in conflict intensity.

When economic and food security provisions appeared, they typically focused on

Human Security Provisions in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements: Case Studies from Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia

An open-access report from the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance

short-term humanitarian relief rather than long-term recovery. Health security followed a similar pattern, with provisions emphasizing emergency medical assistance rather than systemic healthcare improvements. Environmental security was the least integrated dimension across all agreements studied.

This pattern reflects a tendency to prioritize immediate stabilization over sustainable peace. However, while ignoring structural Human Security dimensions may stop fighting temporarily, it can leave underlying grievances unresolved, creating conditions for future conflict.

The Urgency Dilemma

Discussions surfaced a persistent tension: the urgency of stopping violence often conflicts with the time required to negotiate comprehensive agreements. "There seems a lot of pressure to do a ceasefire quickly," one participant observed, "and that doesn't really allow for the diffusion of tension."

The Dayton Agreement ending the Bosnian War was cited as an example: it incorporated significant Human Security provisions in its civilian annexes, including property restitution for displaced persons, but rushed negotiations left implementation mechanisms underdeveloped. Decades later, Bosnia and Herzegovina remains a "stabilitocracy." Although outright violence there has ended, genuine reconciliation and democratic consolidation remain elusive.

As one participant observed, "If you don't have a peace deal that includes all of these elements, then the glass will remain half empty—like we have in Bosnia-Herzegovina today and still years after the war in Kosovo." Without comprehensive provisions for reconciliation and peacebuilding, agreements create stability without resolution. Nationalist politicians can exploit the resulting frustrations, and hybrid threats find fertile ground.

Enforcement and the Tactical Level

Participants debated the relationship between agreement provisions and ground-level implementation. Strategic agreements mean little if tactical discipline fails.

An Azerbaijani participant offered a sobering perspective from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: "The last ceasefire in 2020 lasted 40 minutes." Every soldier on the ground can panic and fire; command and control at the tactical level determines whether agreements hold.

This observation pointed to the importance of training, rules of engagement, and Human Security education extending beyond officers to NCOs and enlisted personnel. From a military education standpoint, participants noted that the only information most soldiers receive relevant to ceasefires concerns rules of engagement and the law of armed conflict. Human Security literacy, such as understanding civilian vulnerabilities beyond battlefield

concerns, rarely features in basic training or career progression.

Hybrid Threats and Agreement Gaps

A significant gap is that most ceasefire and peace agreements do not address hybrid threats. Cyber attacks, information operations, and economic coercion continue even when kinetic hostilities pause.

From an international law perspective, many hybrid activities do not meet the threshold of armed conflict, creating ambiguity about whether they violate agreement terms. Yet their cumulative effect can undermine the conditions for peace as effectively as renewed fighting. Participants suggested that future agreements must grapple with this reality, establishing provisions that address the full spectrum of hostile actions, in addition to those involving conventional military force.

Successful Characteristics

Power-sharing arrangements among groups and autonomy for communities often appear in successful agreements. The Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland, the Philippine peace process, and elements of the Tajik settlement all incorporated mechanisms for distributing political authority among formerly warring parties. Agreements that impose solutions without providing all parties a stake in the outcome create grievances that eventually resurface.

Reconciliation processes emerged as equally critical. Agreements that end violence without addressing dehumanization, trauma, and historical grievances leave societies vulnerable to renewed conflict. "If you don't have a reconciliation process, then you can't really reach peace," one participant argued. "Is peace really just 'we'll withdraw our weapons and won't attack you'? Or is it more?"

Implications for Human Security

The discussion yielded several implications for integrating Human Security into peace processes. First, agreements that address only immediate security concerns while ignoring structural causes of insecurity are more likely to fail. Integrating Human Security provisions correlates with durability.

Second, the pressure for rapid ceasefires creates tension with the deliberation required for comprehensive agreements. Negotiators must balance urgency against the risk of agreements that stop fighting without creating conditions for lasting peace.

Third, implementation depends on tactical-level understanding and discipline. Human Security education must reach those whose decisions determine whether agreements hold.

Fourth, hybrid threats represent a growing gap in agreement frameworks. Future peace processes must account for the full spectrum of hostile actions, not merely kinetic operations.

Finally, Human Security can serve as both a diagnostic tool, identifying the drivers of conflict that agreements must address, and a pressure point for more comprehensive settlements. As one participant framed it: "We've identified Human Security as a vector of aggressive operations, so it also has to be a vector of peace."

HUMAN SECURITY IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

The conference's final panel brought together senior military leaders to examine Human Security threats specific to the Baltic Sea region.

Chaired by RADM Piotr Stocki of Poland, the panel featured perspectives from Poland, Bulgaria, Finland, and drew connections between the Baltic and Black Sea security environments.

The panelists agreed that the Baltic region's security environment has fundamentally changed since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. What had been a relatively stable, if tense, maritime space is now contested terrain where hybrid threats operate continuously and the risk of escalation remains elevated.

LTG Tomasz Piotrowski of Poland framed the challenge bluntly: "Human Security is attacked long before tanks and rockets cross borders." He outlined numerous threats facing the Baltic states, including cyber attacks targeting hospitals and government databases, disinformation campaigns amplified through social media, economic coercion, weaponized migration from Russia and Belarus, and psychological operations designed to polarize societies. All operate below the threshold of armed conflict, yet their cumulative effect degrades the security and cohesion of targeted populations.

Asked what Ukrainian counterparts consider the most significant Russian threat, Piotrowski's answer surprised some participants: "Populism." Information operations that fuel domestic political division, he explained, represent a more insidious danger than conventional military pressure. "Representatives from many countries have discussed polarization in societies and the dangers of populism. It is the most demanding threat from that perspective."

Connecting the Baltic and Black Seas Flotilla Admiral Boyan Mednikarov of Bulgaria emphasized that security processes in the Baltic and Black Sea regions are interconnected within the broader context of the Russia-Ukraine war. Threats that manifest in one theater have implications for the other.

He identified three specific concerns. First, the mine threat: since the war's outbreak, over 100 mines have been reported by maritime patrols in the Black Sea, and the Bulgarian Navy has destroyed more than a dozen explosive objects including mines, missiles, and

drones. These hazards reduce navigational options and constrain economic activity throughout the region.

Second, the destruction of critical infrastructure. Mednikarov cited the June 2023 destruction of the Kakhovka Dam—one of the largest in Europe—as an example of catastrophic environmental and humanitarian impact. More than 380 villages and towns were damaged, over 4,000 buildings destroyed, and massive pollution spread through the river system to the Black Sea coast, affecting Bulgaria and Romania. Similar attacks on industrial or energy infrastructure could occur in the Baltic.

Third, the "shadow fleet" of aging tankers operating outside international maritime regulations to transport Russian oil and evade sanctions. These vessels pose environmental and safety risks; one damaged Chinese-owned vessel attacked by Ukrainian drones remained anchored near the Bulgarian coast for extended periods. The proliferation of such vessels in both seas represents a persistent Human Security concern.

Critical Infrastructure Vulnerability

VADM (Ret.) Stanisław Zarychta of Poland outlined the intersection of traditional and non-traditional threats confronting Baltic states. Transportation networks, energy systems, undersea cables, digital databases are targets. As societies become more digitalized, the attack surface expands. Cyber attacks on hospitals, democratic processes, and essential services directly impact Human Security even without kinetic effects.

He identified six principal threat categories: hybrid threats from Russia, digital system vulnerabilities, cognitive warfare, energy infrastructure targeting, economic challenges, and environmental issues. Addressing them requires enhanced civil-military cooperation, coordinated communication to counter disinformation, and strengthened psychological resilience across society.

CAPT Jon von Weissenberg of Finland brought the perspective of a nation already operating on a hybrid warfare footing. "We have a perspective that we're already in a hybrid war with Russia," he stated. Finland's comprehensive security model distributes responsibility across government, the private sector, and citizens, with the expectation that citizens bear responsibility for the republic's defense, not merely the other way around.

CAPT Von Weissenberg identified three interconnected threats: weaponized migration, disinformation, cyber attacks. These hybrid operations target the resilience and trust that Finnish society depends upon.

Critical infrastructure attacks, including the cutting of the Finland-Estonia undersea cable, exploit interdependencies that modern societies cannot avoid. And efforts to erode social cohesion aim at the foundation of democratic governance itself. "If they succeed, we lose the capability to function effectively politically."

In this framing, social cohesion becomes a form of deterrence, and its erosion represents a strategic defeat even without military action.

Lessons from Ukraine

The panel drew several lessons from Ukraine's

experience:

Distributed resilience works. Decentralized systems, local stockpiles, and backup communications proved more survivable than centralized alternatives. Baltic states should strengthen capabilities at the municipal and community level.

Civil society is a strategic asset. NGOs, volunteer organizations, and community initiatives have proven essential to Ukraine's resilience. These should be cultivated and integrated into defense planning, not treated as afterthoughts.

Communication is decisive. Ukraine's ability to communicate clearly and credibly—at scale and speed—has been among its most important capabilities. "Trusted information is the key tool for everything," von Weissenberg noted. Baltic states must develop similar capacity for strategic communication while countering adversary narratives.

Leadership matters. The early days of the invasion demonstrated that decisive leadership shapes outcomes. LTG Piotrowski recalled assessments that predicted Russian victory within 72–96 hours. President Zelensky's decision to remain in Kyiv and his message ("Don't send airlift, send ammunition") transformed the situation. Leadership at all levels, from national command to tactical units, must be prepared for similar moments.

Recommendations

RADM Stocki summarized the panel's conclusions. The threats are clear: hybrid operations including migration, disinformation, cyber attacks, energy coercion, and polarization; maritime hazards including drifting mines and environmental risks from shadow fleets; GPS jamming affecting civilian ships and aircraft; and the ever-present risk of escalation.

The solutions require integration across domains and actors. Human Security considerations must become integral to military planning, not an afterthought. Shelter and protection systems for civilian populations need development. Information dissemination systems must reach citizens with timely, accurate guidance during crises. Civil-military cooperation requires institutionalization through regular exercises and established relationships.

Regional cooperation emerged as essential. "Be together. Join our assets and efforts to effectively react," RADM Stocki urged. The "NBPG10" (the Nordic-Baltic states plus Poland and Germany) represents a natural grouping for enhanced coordination. Space-based surveillance, shared maritime domain awareness, and coordinated responses to infrastructure attacks all benefit from multinational approaches.

Finally, the panel emphasized that Human Security in the Baltic context is inseparable from societal resilience. Protecting populations means more than defending borders; it means maintaining the trust, cohesion, and institutional capacity that allow societies to function under pressure. As LTG Piotrowski concluded: "We should 'Finland-ize' our approach to resilience, self-defense, and internal security." The Finnish model is comprehensive, distributed, and grounded in citizen responsibility, and it offers a template for the region.

5

Perspectives on Human Security: Results from a survey of event participants

PARTICIPANTS SHARED THEIR VIEWS on Human Security and its relevance to the military and security sectors via a survey. This section summarizes the survey's methodology and results.

Participants and Procedures

Thirty-seven ($N = 37$) individuals, representing 22 nations and NATO, responded. A majority ($n = 19$, 51%) were affiliated with government or military training and education institutions. The remainder were from government or military leadership ($n = 6$), NGOs ($n = 4$), government or military research centers ($n = 3$), and civilian universities ($n = 2$). Three people indicated "other" affiliations.

The professional experience of the participants was evenly distributed across early-career, mid-career, and senior levels. That is, a third of respondents reported 5 or fewer years of experience ($n = 13$), a third reported 5-to-15 years ($n = 12$), and a third reported 16 or more years of experience ($n = 12$).

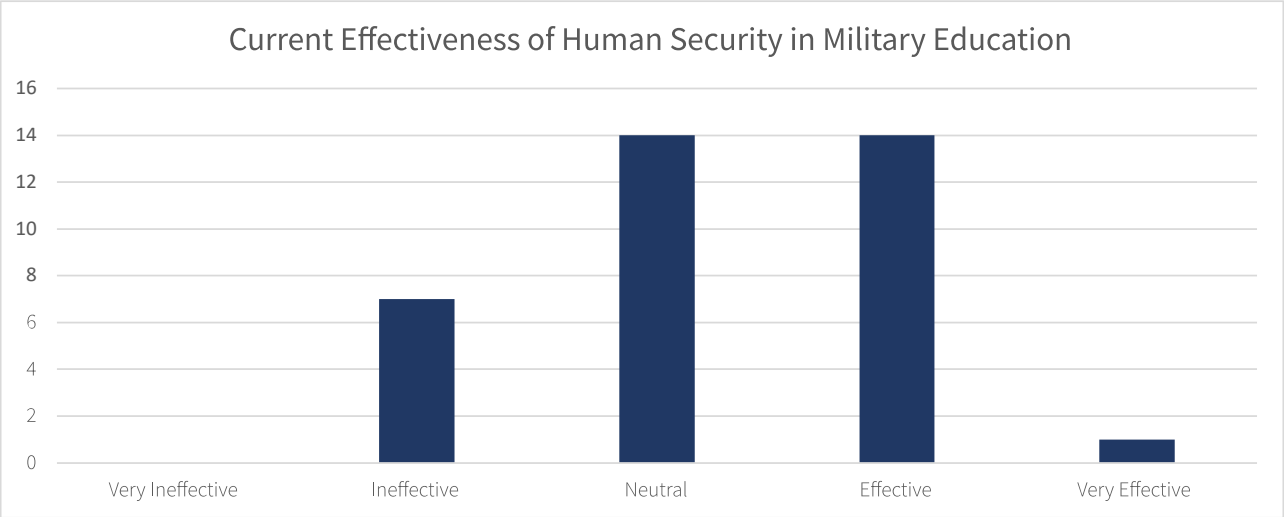
Responses were collected using a survey developed by the PfP Consortium Secretariat specifically for this post-conference report. Conference attendees were invited to complete the survey online, first near the end of the event and again via a link provided in a post-conference follow-up email.

1. Effectiveness of Human Security in Military Education

The first question asked participants to rate how effectively they believe allied and partner military education institutions integrate Human Security concepts.

Out of 36 completed responses, most indicated that PME institutions currently perform at an Effective or Neutral (39% each) level. A notable portion (19%) rated the status quo as Ineffective, and only one respondent considered it Very Effective. No one selected Very Ineffective. (See the graph on the next page.)

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine the relationship between experience level and Likert-scale effectiveness ratings. The relationship was not statistically significant; in other words, significant variation was *not* observed between highly experienced, mid-career, or early-career respondents.



Results of question-1: Perceptions of the current effectiveness of Human Security education in PME institutions; tallied number of responses out of 36 respondents.

These results indicate a lack of consensus on the effectiveness of Human Security education in military institutions. While a plurality views it as effective or feels neutral, a significant minority perceives it as ineffective, suggesting a clear area for potential improvement.

Twenty-four respondents provided free-text comments elaborating on their ratings. These were analyzed with the aid of a Large Language Model (Claude.AI) to identify patterns. This found five primary themes, presented below in order of prevalence.

- **Fragmentation and Inconsistency:** The most prevalent theme concerned the uneven, fragmented nature of Human Security integration across institutions and nations. Respondents consistently noted that while elements of Human Security exist within military education, implementation varies significantly by country, institution, and even individual instructor. As one respondent observed, "Allied and partner military institutions do integrate Human Security concepts, but in an uneven manner." Another noted that Human Security topics are "scattered in different curricula and syllabi and its significance is not properly addressed, thus lost during teaching." This fragmentation appears to stem from the absence of a unified doctrinal framework, with one participant emphasizing that "a guiding document, a doctrine, within NATO is the first step."
- **Conceptual Ambiguity:** Several respondents expressed concern that Human Security remains poorly defined or is conflated with adjacent concepts. Multiple participants noted that Human Security is frequently associated with or subsumed under CIMIC or gender-focused courses rather than treated as a distinct, comprehensive framework. One respondent suggested that "the term 'Human Security' has to be more refined and replaced with more specific term or name," while another observed that Human Security "is usually considered in a way too under-complex manner."

- **A Mindset, Not Checklist:** A notable subset of respondents emphasized that Human Security represents an approach or philosophy rather than a discrete skill set amenable to traditional instruction. One participant wrote: "Because it is highly related to humanistic values, it cannot be the subject of a checklist. It is an approach, a state of mind which can be reminded but not taught like mathematics." Another echoed this sentiment, noting that Human Security is "indirectly, within our every decision in military/war fighting scenarios," but that institutions "may lack experience, lack of putting actual thought into it." These comments suggest tension between the desire to institutionalize Human Security and recognition that its effective application depends on internalized values and judgment.

- **Structural and Resource Constraints:** Respondents identified institutional barriers to more effective integration, including competing priorities, limited resources, and the challenge of translating academic knowledge into operational practice. One participant highlighted the difficulty at the intergovernmental level, noting that "the diversity of national directives (and their weight at the table) makes it more difficult to give Human Security concepts the spotlight it deserves." Another pointed to "the challenge of close exchange between studies and implementation," suggesting a gap between educational content and operational application.

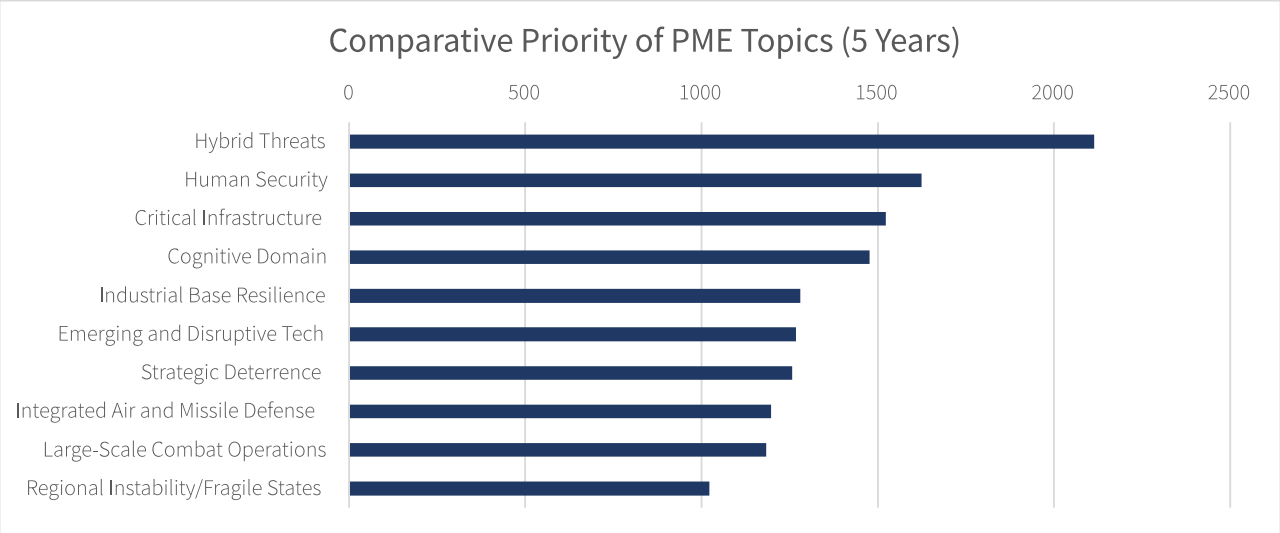
- **Emerging Recognition:** Despite the concerns noted above, several respondents acknowledged meaningful progress, including "a growing understanding, at least at the national levels, of the importance of Human Security and resilience in building national defense." Others noted that Human Security has "gained prominence among training activities" and that "awareness of the concept" exists even where "integration is ongoing." Several respondents expressed appreciation for emerging frameworks linking Human Security to resilience and conventional security concepts, suggesting that recent efforts, such as NATO's baseline resilience requirements, are providing a useful foundation for further integration.

The qualitative responses reveal that the community recognizes the importance of Human Security but struggles with its operationalization. Fragmented implementation, conceptual ambiguity, and resource constraints are notable barriers, and the philosophical nature of Human Security presents pedagogical challenges.

Nevertheless, respondents perceive forward momentum, particularly where Human Security concepts are linked to resilience frameworks and supported by national and NATO guidance. These findings suggest that standardized doctrine, dedicated resources, and cross-institutional collaboration may be necessary to move from scattered awareness to systematic integration.

2. Priority of Future Security Challenges

Next, participants ranked ten security challenges by their importance for allied and partner forces over the next five years, particularly regarding military education. Thirty-seven



Results of question-2: Rank-choice perceptions of the relative prioritization of 10 security topics for the next five-years, in terms of PME prioritization. Weighted scores, based on rank of each item.

respondents ranked the items from 1 (Most Important) to 10 (Least Important).

To determine the final priority order, items were scored using an exponential weighting scheme (ratio ≈ 0.75), which assigns progressively greater influence to higher-priority ranks while retaining meaningful contributions from mid- and lower-ranked items. This reflects the assumption that differences in importance diminish gradually across ranks rather than uniformly.

A chi-square test of independence was conducted to examine the relationship between experience level and the prioritization of "Human Security." The relationship was not statistically significant; in other words, although individual ranking varied, no clear trends were observed between the highly experienced, mid-career, or early-career respondents.

As shown in the figure above, overall, **Human Security ranked as the second highest priority, just behind "Hybrid Threats." This shows that respondents feel that Human Security is a critical PME topic—even more important to incorporate into military education than critical infrastructure, the cognitive domain, industrial base resilience, and more.**

3. Most Critical Human Security Challenges

Next, participants indicated the most critical areas of Human Security for allies and partners to address. Respondents could select up to three "most important" aspects of Human Security from a predefined list of items, including a free-response ("other") option:

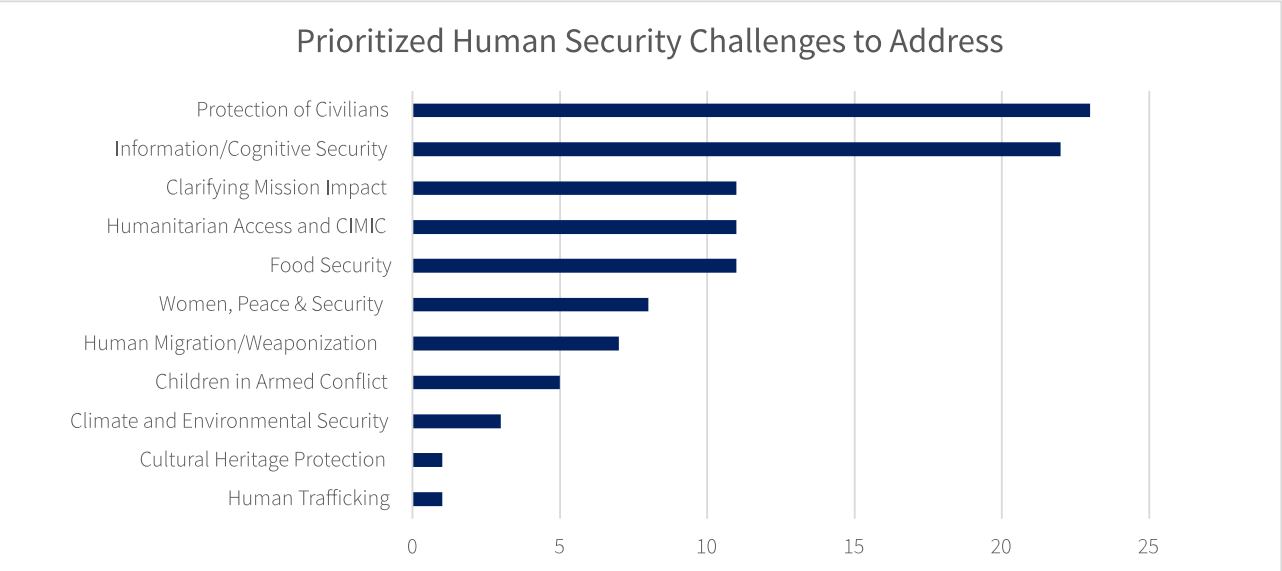
- Protection of civilians
- Women, Peace, and Security
- Human trafficking
- Children in armed conflict
- Food security
- Climate and environmental security
- Cultural heritage protection
- Information/cognitive security
- Humanitarian access and CIMIC
- Human migration and its weaponization
- Lack of understanding of the operational (mission) impact of human security

Thirty-seven participants responded, and these responses were summed. No one used the "other" option, so it is excluded from this analysis.

The two Human Security areas most frequently selected as "most critical" were Protection of Civilians, chosen by 23 respondents (62%), and Information/Cognitive Security, chosen by 22 respondents (59%). Three other challenges were also frequently selected: Food Security, Humanitarian Access and Civil-Military Coordination, and the Lack of Understanding of the Operational Impact of Human Security. Each of these was chosen by 11 respondents (30%). The complete distribution of responses is shown in the figure below.

Twenty-seven respondents also provided free-text recommendations for addressing these challenges. Their responses were coded thematically with the aid of Claude.AI, yielding four areas of recommended action.

- **Establish Doctrinal Foundations:** The most frequent recommendation was to develop formal NATO doctrine for Human Security. Respondents called for standardized definitions, terminology, and concepts to address current ambiguity. As one participant said: "Find the right name for the concept. Write the doctrine. Education and training." Another emphasized learning from operational experience: "Develop specific own force doctrine (taking lessons and AAR from others, including other conflicts), to create a holistic approach." These responses position doctrine as the essential prerequisite for all subsequent integration efforts.
- **Integrate into Education and Training:** Respondents recommended embedding Human Security across PME, training, and exercises. Several emphasized tailoring content by echelon, with one noting that tactical-level personnel need practical focus on "WPS-CRSV [Women, Peace



Results of question-3: Selection of the "most critical" Human Security challenges that allies and partners need to address. Respondents could select up to three areas, including an "other" option that was not used.

and Security and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence] and food security" rather than abstract concepts. Others called for realistic, scenario-based exercises drawing on "lessons learned from recent and ongoing conflicts" and involving "civilian agencies, political decision makers, etc." The emphasis on practical application over theoretical instruction reinforces earlier findings about Human Security as mindset.

- **International Cooperation:** Several respondents called for increased cross-institutional collaboration. Recommendations included personnel exchanges, joint research projects, international conferences, and development of aligned training programs. One respondent envisioned gathering "policy makers, practitioners, and educators" to "issue actionable conclusions for policy makers and doctrine writers." Another called for "deeper cooperation between NATO, EU and PfP countries to fight against hybrid threat and increase their resilience."

- **Simplify and Reframe:** A recurring theme concerned how Human Security is communicated. Respondents urged simplicity: "The way to get [Human Security] mainstreamed is to make it simple for all to understand!" Others recommended operational military framing: "Emphasize the rationale that Human Security is hard security through (internal) communications, appropriate training with a high degree of importance." These comments suggest that effective integration requires substantive development as well as strategic positioning that connects Human Security to established military priorities.

The recommendations form a coherent implementation sequence: establish doctrine, integrate into education and training, reinforce through international cooperation, and communicate strategically. The consistent emphasis on simplicity and practical relevance suggests that advocates should prioritize clarity and operational connection over theoretical comprehensiveness.

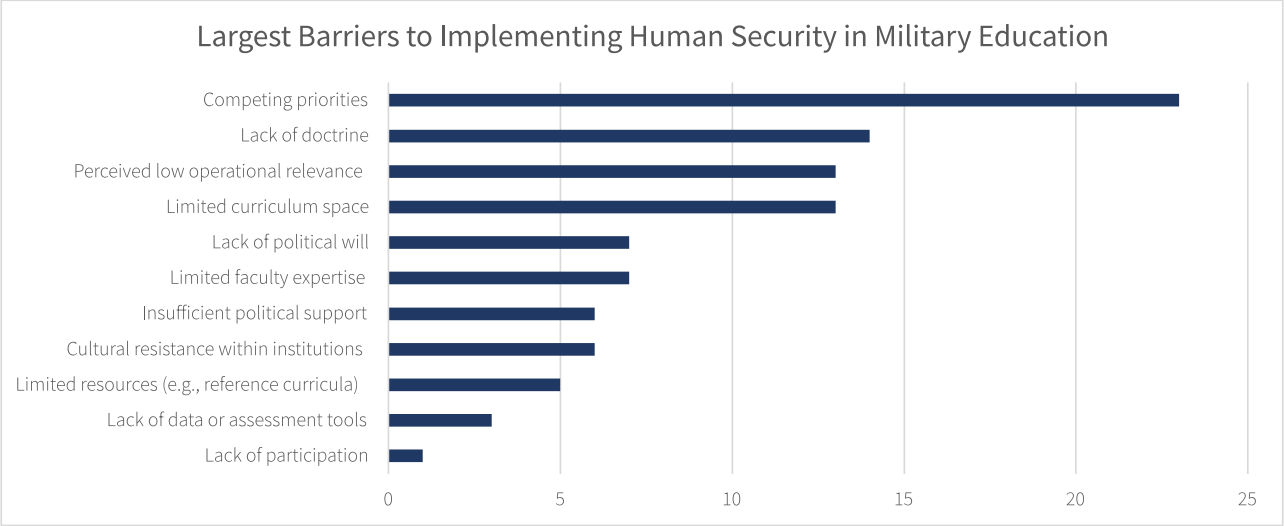
4. Barriers to Human Security in PME

Participants were asked to select the "biggest barriers to integrating Human Security concepts into military education and security studies." They could select up to three options from a predefined list of items, including a free-response ("other") option:

- Limited curriculum space
- Limited faculty expertise
- Lack of doctrine
- Competing priorities
- Insufficient political support
- Limited resources (e.g., curricula)
- Perceived low operational relevance
- Lack of political will
- Cultural resistance within institutions
- Lack of data or assessment tools

Thirty-six participants responded, and these responses were summed. Only one person selected "other" and explained: "We have lack of participation in this kind of conferences. When we were invited to this, due to our Erasmus+ program, it was an absolute relief. It's so important for us, young cadets, future officers, to be aware of these topics, to have the opportunity to network about this matters."

By far, the most selected "barrier to Human Security in PME" was Competing Priorities,



Results of question-4: What are the biggest barriers to integrating Human Security concepts into military education and security studies? Respondents could select up to three items from a list or write-in "other."

selected by 23 respondents (63% of participants). Next, responded selected three challenges, each roughly equivalent in frequency: Lack of Doctrine (14 responses, 29%), Limited Curriculum Space (13 responses, 35%), and Perceived Low Operational Relevant (13 responses, 35%).

The other obstacles were each selected at least once. That is, respondents also noted a Limited Faculty Experience (19%), Lack of Political Will (19%), Cultural Resilience within Institutions (17%), Insufficient Political Support (17%), and all other barriers were selected at least once. (See the figure below.)

5. Most Valuable Insights

Thirty respondents shared their "most valuable insights from the conference" about Human Security to a free-response question. Responses were analyzed thematically using Claude.AI. Three themes emerged.

- **Conceptual Complexity and the Need for Clarity:** The most prevalent theme concerned the breadth and ambiguity of Human Security as a concept. Respondents consistently noted its multi-layered, multi-domain nature, as well as the challenges this poses for military application. One participant observed that "the conference raised more questions about the framing of Human Security than answers," while another noted "the broadness of the concept and the urgent need to reframe it in a way that's relevant for the military." Several respondents emphasized the need for clearer boundaries, with one saying there is "still need of more conceptual clarity with respect to the meaning of Human Security and its relationship with close concepts like protection of civilians."
- **Human Security as a Strategic Need:** The framing of Human Security as operational advantage, rather than humanitarian constraint was a significant conference takeaway. One participant captured this succinctly: "Protecting people is not an

'add-on' to military operation, it is a strategic necessity." Another noted the insight that "[Human Security] is not a line of operation, it is a factor that belongs to every activity." Respondents also highlighted the connection between Human Security and resilience, with one observing that "[Human Security] is more than ever a concern in the current context of hybrid warfare" and another noting that "Human Security is very broad subject and very important to resilience of a country."

- **Shared Understanding Across Nations:** Respondents valued discovering common ground among diverse participants. One noted "there is a common understanding across different nations on the importance of human security," while another appreciated that "all the participants shared this vision." At the same time, respondents found value in exploring differences: "The diversity of the opinions" and "the different interpretations of the topic" were cited as productive rather than problematic. This theme suggests the conference succeeded in building intellectual interoperability, surfacing both consensus and constructive divergence.

Discussion

The survey results, considered alongside the conference discussions, reveal that the community recognizes Human Security as strategically important but struggles to translate that recognition into systematic practice.

The most striking finding is the gap between perceived importance and actual integration. Respondents ranked Human Security as the second-highest priority for military education over the next five years, but only 42 percent rated current Human Security integration in PME as effective, and qualitative responses described its implementation as "scattered," "fragmented," and "uneven." This disconnect suggests that the challenge is not persuading defense educators that Human Security matters. The challenge is operationalizing a concept that remains poorly defined, inconsistently resourced, and institutionally homeless.

Across multiple survey questions, the absence of standardized doctrine emerged as a root cause of fragmented implementation. Without agreed definitions, frameworks, and guidance, individual institutions and instructors interpret Human Security according to their own understanding or subsume it under adjacent concepts. A frequent recommendation was to establish doctrinal foundations before pursuing other reforms, because developing curricula without conceptual clarity is likely to lead to more fragmentation.

Human Security doctrine needs to emphasize its operational relevance. Otherwise, there is a risk that Human Security will be perpetually deferred in favor of PME topics perceived as more immediately urgent or more critical for war fighting. This finding reinforces the conference theme that Human Security must be framed as operational advantage rather than humanitarian add-on.

Respondents who viewed the integration of Human Security as effective often cited connections to resilience frameworks and conventional security concepts. Those who viewed it as ineffective often noted that

Human Security is treated as peripheral ("nice to have") rather than essential to mission success.

Finally, because effective implementation of Human Security depends on judgment, values, and contextual understanding, PME institutions face a pedagogical challenge. Cultivating a mindset requires certain educational experience, such as case-based learning, ethical reasoning, exposure to diverse perspectives, and reflection on operational experience. The survey results suggest that PME institutions have not yet resolved how to reliably teach something that is "indirectly, within our every decision" yet resists reduction to checklists and learning objectives.

Recommended Next Steps

The international PME community is ready to move from scattered awareness to systematic integration of Human Security. What remains is the sustained effort to build the doctrinal foundations, educational infrastructure, and institutional commitment that such integration requires.

Based on the survey findings and conference discussions, the following actions would advance Human Security integration in allied and partner military education:

1. **Develop NATO Human Security doctrine.** Establish standardized definitions, frameworks, and guidance that clarify Human Security's relationship to existing concepts (e.g., CIMIC, WPS) and its role across the spectrum of military operations. Doctrine provides the foundation on which coherent education and training can be built.
2. **Integrate Human Security across PME curricula rather than isolating it in specialized courses.** Human Security should appear in leadership development, operational planning, ethics instruction, and exercises, not as a standalone module easily marginalized by competing priorities. Tailor content by echelon: strategic concepts for senior leaders, practical application for tactical personnel.
3. **Develop scenario-based exercises that include Human Security challenges.** Realistic training scenarios, such as built from lessons from Ukraine or recent peace operations, allow personnel to explore Human Security under operational conditions. Include civilian agencies and interagency partners where possible.
4. **Establish mechanisms for cross-institutional collaboration.** Personnel exchanges, joint research projects, shared curricula, and regular international conferences can accelerate learning and promote interoperability. The PfP Consortium's Human Security in Operations Working Group provides an existing platform for such collaboration, but more is needed.
5. **Reframe Human Security as operational necessity in institutional communications.** Strategic messaging matters. Emphasize that protecting populations, understanding human terrain, and addressing structural drivers of instability contribute directly to mission success—not as constraints on military action but as enablers of sustainable outcomes.

6

Appendix: Agenda for the two-day conference

Tuesday, 9 December 2025	
19:00–21:30	Welcome reception, hosted by the NATO International Staff
Wednesday, 10 December 2025	
09:00–09:15	Administrative welcome from the PfPC Executive Director, **Dr. Sae Schatz (USA)**
09:15–09:30	Welcome from the PfPC Senior Advisory Council Chair, **BG (Ret.) Rolf Wagner (DEU)**
09:30–09:45	Welcome from the Polish Naval Academy host, **RADM Tomasz Szubrycht, PhD (POL)**
09:45–10:30	Opening Keynote, "Human Security and its importance in military operations" from **Dr. Jacek Siewiera (POL)**, former State Secretary / National Security Council, moderated by **Dr. hab. Katarzyna Wardin (POL)**, Associate Professor, Polish Naval Academy
10:30–11:00	Coffee Break and Networking
11:00–12:15	"Perspectives on Human Security," a panel introducing concepts, definition, and national and NATO approaches to Human Security: • **Dr. Sarah Jane Meharg (CAN)**, Deputy Director for Research, Canadian Armed Forces Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security • **Dr. Colin Magee (CAN)**, Senior Evaluator, Concepts and Doctrine, Canadian Armed Forces Dallaire Centre of Excellence for Peace and Security • **Wg Cdr James Lambert (GBR)**, lead for Human Security with the UK's Cyber and Specialist Operations Command • **Dr. Greta Keremidchieva (BGR)**, Professor, Rakovski National Defense College • **Ms. Virpi ("Wippe") Levomaa (FIN)**, Department Head for NATO's Integrated Security Discipline and the Military Contribution to Human Security Cluster Lead at the Finnish Defence Forces International Centre
12:15–13:15	Lunch

13:15–13:20	Administrative remarks from the PfPC Secretariat
13:20–14:10	Lightning Talks, moderated by **Dr. Sae Schatz (USA)**, PfPC Executive Director • "PfPC Overview," **Dr. Sae Schatz (USA)** • "Human Security for War Fighters," **Dr. Colin Magee (CAN)** • "Weaponising Gender and Identity: When Human Security Becomes the Battlespace," **Ms. Claudia Wallner (GBR)**, Research Fellow, Terrorism and Conflict Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) • "Building Resilience Against Human Security Threats," **Dr. Elena Mandalenakis (GRC)**, study group co-chair and expert for Regional Stability in the South Caucasus • "Human Security Provisions in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements," **Ms. Rebecca Mikova (CHE)**, Project Officer, Europe and Central Asia, DCAF • "Women, Peace, and Security in Professional Military Education," **Dr. Iryna Lysychkina (UKR)**, Chair, Department of Philology, Translation, and Strategic Communication, Ukraine National Academy of the National Guard and **Ms. Nathalie Gendre (CHE)**, Head, Gender and Security, DCAF • "Women, Children, and Vulnerable Groups in Conflict Zones" – **Dr. Alexandru Munteanu Lucinescu Casella (ROU)**, Senior Researcher, Institute for Political Studies of Defence and Military History
14:10–14:15	Introduction to the breakout sessions
14:15–14:40	Coffee Break and Networking
14:40–16:10	Small group discussions, held concurrently: • "How are Women, Children, and Vulnerable Groups Considered in Conflict Zones?" **Dr. Carmen Rîjnoveanu (ROU)**, Director, Institute for Political Studies of Defense and Military History and **Dr. Jan Hoffenaar (NLD)**, Head, Military History Section, Research & Publications, Netherlands Institute of Military History • "What are the Human Systems Threats Related to National Resilience? South Caucasus Handbook and Case Studies in Building Resilience Against Human Systems Threats," **Dr. Elena Mandalenakis (GRC**) and **Mr. Christoph Bilban (AUT)**, Researcher, Institute for Peace Support and Conflict Management, Austrian National Defence Academy • "What are the Key Human Security Provisions in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements?" **Ms. Rebecca Mikova (CHE)** • "What is role of Human Security in a War Fighting Context?" **Dr. Colin Magee (CAN)** and **Dr. Sarah Meharg (CAN)**
16:10–16:25	Athena Award for the best paper published in 2025 in *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* of the PfP Consortium; presented by **Dr. Sae Schatz (USA)** and **Dr. hab. Piotr Gawliczek (POL)**, Associate Professor, DEEP ADL Portal, University of Warmia and Mazury
16:25–16:30	Closing of the Day
18:30–21:00	Official Dinner at the Riviera Naval Club, hosted by the Polish Naval Academy

Thursday, 11 December	
09:00–09:05	Day-2 welcome
09:05–10:25	Small group discussion back briefs, an un-conference style session where representatives from each breakout group provided a summary of what the group discussed: • Introduction: What was your topic about? • How is it done today and are there challenges? • Who cares? Why does this matter? • What is ideal scenario for success vs. what is realistic? • What is 1 practical step can we take? What steps can PME institutions take?
10:25–10:30	Administrative Remarks
10:30–11:15	Marketplace of publications and other products • PfPC Advanced Distributed Learning working group • PfPC Conflict Studies working group • PfPC Education Development working group, including reference curricula • PfPC Human Security Operations working group • PfPC Regional Stability in the South Caucasus and South East Europe publications • Euro-Atlantic Resilience Centre • DCAF publications, including *Teaching Gender in the Military* • DEEP eAcademy
11:15–12:15	"Challenges and Threats to Human Security in the Baltic Sea Region," a panel with senior representatives from the region who discussed practical, real-world case studies of Human Security: • **RADM (Ret.) Piotr Stocki (POL)**, Session Chair, Head of Rector's Office, Polish Naval Academy • **LTG (Ret.) Tomasz Piotrowski (POL)**, Former Operational Commander of the Polish Armed Forces • **Flotilla ADM (Ret.) Boyan Mednikarov (BGR)**, Former Rector of the Nikola Vaptsarov Naval Academy • **CAPT Jon von Weissenberg (FIN)**, Defence Attaché to Warsaw, Finland Ministry of Defense • **VADM (Ret.) Stanisław Zarychta, PhD (POL)**, Former Commander of the Maritime Operations Center
12:15–12:30	Closing Remarks from **BG (Ret.) Rolf Wagner (DEU)**
12:30–13:15	Lunch

End Notes

Conference photos adjacent to page 1 courtesy of Krysztof Miłosz, Polish Naval Academy.

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