Human Security and the 2022 NATO Strategic Concept
Knowledge, Insights, and Lessons Learned

Post-Event Report
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Preface

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is set to adopt its new Strategic Concept on 29–30 June 2022 at the Summit in Madrid. Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has undertaken a consultation phase to explore and inform key issue areas within the new Strategic Concept. In support of these activities, RAND Europe’s Centre for Human Security, in collaboration with the NATO Policy Planning Unit and the NATO Human Security Unit, and with the generous support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, organised a seminar exploring the concept of Human Security and its applications at NATO now, and in the future.

The intent of the seminar, titled ‘Human Security and the 2022 NATO Strategic Concept: Knowledge, Insights and Lessons Learned’, was to provoke discussions and gather expert insights concerning NATO’s approach to Human Security and its five underpinning areas (the protection of civilians; children and armed conflict; countering trafficking in human beings; preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence; and protecting cultural property) and explore how the future security environment will impact its conceptualisation and applications out to 2030 and beyond.

This document presents a summary of the panel and syndicate discussions:

• Executive summary
• Seminar agenda
• Overview of key points from individual sessions
• Annex: List of participants.

The views expressed here by the seminar participants do not necessarily reflect those of NATO or RAND, nor any of the RAND personnel involved in organising and facilitating the event or preparing this short report on proceedings. Part of the global RAND Corporation, RAND Europe is a not-for-profit research institute whose mission is to help improve policy and decision making through objective research and analysis.

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Executive Summary

NATO's Policy Planning Unit and Human Security Unit, with support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and RAND Europe, gathered participants across academia, civil society organisations and practitioners to discuss NATO's conceptualisation of Human Security to inform the development of the next Strategic Concept that will be adopted at the forthcoming NATO Summit.

As the Alliance prepared to develop the latest iteration of its second most important document after its founding Treaty, there was a need to explore how human security can be embedded into the Alliance's everyday activities and its compatibility and complementarity with the Alliance's three core tasks.

Participants exchanged and shared their views on this complex concept; the following paragraphs outline the key themes and insights from the discussion, and constitute the main recommendations made by participants throughout the day.

The Strategic Concept should aim to integrate Human Security as its core focus. Participants widely agreed that the new Strategic Concept presents an opportunity for Allies to consider Human Security at the centre of its activities. As the Strategic Concept will be the basis for other NATO documents, specific references to Human Security would enable its integration at the strategic and operational levels, including within Allied nations.

NATO should integrate Human Security into its organisational objectives to address both a moral and strategic imperative. NATO is a values-based alliance committed to democracy, the rule of law, individual liberties, and human rights. The Alliance has been faced with recent challenges from increased power competition on the international stage, increased opposition from autocratic regimes and renewed violence and conflicts. Participants stressed the importance of establishing NATO as a ‘standard setter’. Human Security links up the Alliance’s three core tasks, namely collective defence, cooperative security and crisis management, and its integration into NATO’s Strategic Concept would support its objectives.

The conceptualisation of Human Security within NATO needs to reflect the changing character of war. The security environment and the nature of conflict have profoundly changed since the last iteration of the Strategic Concept in 2010. NATO’s understanding of Human Security should reflect on these changes, including the rise of non-state actors, hybrid warfare and the rise of disinformation.

NATO should build on lessons learned from past operations to inform the development of new partnerships when embedding considerations of Human Security. When mainstreaming Human Security into its everyday activities and operations and establishing relationships with humanitarian and development actors on the ground, the Alliance should leverage lessons learned from its operations in Afghanistan. Participants noted the opportunities such relationships are likely to offer to support the Alliance’s military activities and objectives in future operations.

The Protection of Civilians (PoC) needs to be integrated in NATO activities in a holistic manner. Participants agreed that PoC needs to be better integrated into the Alliance’s activities and operations. Some participants noted that the five underpinning areas of NATO’s conceptualisation of human security are intertwined and should be understood as a whole rather than separate blocks. However, there seems to be consensus among participants that PoC should be prioritised as other areas such as Cultural Property Protection or Human Trafficking will depend on a shared understanding of what PoC means and entails.

The report that follows is broken up into three sections and an additional annex. Section 1 provides the seminar agenda, outlining the sessions, speakers and facilitators involved in the execution of the seminar. Section 2 provides an overview of the discussions and outcomes of the plenary and breakout sessions held during the workshop. Section 3 provides an analysis of recommendations and ways forward identified during the final working session, including identifying priority areas for inclusion in the Strategic Concept. The attached Annex provides the list of attendees who participated in the seminar.
Section 1: Seminar Agenda

Date: 22 April 2022
Location: NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium and virtually

09:00 – 09:30 Arrival

09:30 – 09:40 Welcome Remarks
Ruth Harris, Director, Defence and Security Research Group, RAND Europe
Øystein Bø, NATO Permanent Representative for Norway

09.40 – 09.50 Introductory Remarks: NATO's Strategic Concept and Human Security
Benedetta Berti, Policy Planning Unit, NATO

09.50 – 10.50 Plenary Session: Conceptualising Human Security and its Applications for NATO
Introductory Remarks: Peter Hauge Berg, Human Security Unit, NATO
Moderator: Kaleigh Heard, RAND Europe

10.50 – 11.10 Coffee break

11.10 – 12.10 Breakout Session Discussions
Breakout Session #1: Human Security at NATO: Protection of Civilians, including Children and Armed Conflicts (CAAC) and Conflict-related Sexual Violence (CRSV)
Moderator: Kaleigh Heard, RAND Europe
Speakers:
Cathrine Andersen, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Gilles Hansoul, Senior Humanitarian Affairs Advisor, ICRC

Breakout Session #2: Human Security at NATO: Human Trafficking & Cultural Property Protection
Moderator: Ben Caves, RAND Europe

12.10 – 13.15 Lunch break

13.15 – 14.30 Plenary Session: The Future of Human Security at NATO
Introductory Remarks: Benedict Wilkinson, Defence & Security, RAND Europe
Moderator: Kaleigh Heard, RAND Europe

14.30 – 14.45 Break (leg stretch)

14.45 – 15.45 Plenary Session: Recommendations & Ways Forward at NATO
Moderator: Kaleigh Heard, RAND Europe

15.45 – 16.00 Closing Remarks
Peter Hauge Berg, Human Security Unit, NATO HQ
Robert Dresen, Policy Planning Unit, NATO HQ
Kaleigh Heard, RAND Europe
Section 2: Overview of Session Outcomes

This section provides an overview of all plenary and breakout discussions held during the seminar and provides insights into the thinking, approaches, recommendations, and lessons learned explored by participants throughout the day. In particular, participants discussed the conceptualisation of Human Security at NATO and beyond, and the future of Human Security at NATO and in the wider security environment in considerable depth. The outcomes of these sessions informed the analysis included in the final working session of the day focused on Recommendations and Ways Forward, which is documented in Section 3 of this report.

Welcome Remarks

The first session of the seminar included introductory and welcome remarks from RAND Europe, the Norwegian Delegation to NATO and the NATO Policy Planning Unit. Speakers provided their perspectives on the current state of NATO’s approach to Human Security, priorities for the seminar, and defined the scope, key questions, and areas of analysis for subsequent discussions.

Ruth Harris, Research Group Director, Defence & Security, RAND Europe

Ruth Harris opened the event, providing welcome remarks to the participants and distinguished speakers. She highlighted the cross-cutting opportunities and challenges emerging from conceptualising Human Security as an umbrella issue, and the extent to which this is considered mostly in the context of out-of-area operations. In addition, she noted other areas of key strategic interest that currently fall outside NATO’s conceptual scope, such as climate change and food security. Harris also underlined the need to remain within NATO’s organisational mission and weigh the institutional relevance against the risk of attempting to provide services outside of NATO’s mandate.

Øystein Bø, NATO Permanent Representative for Norway

On behalf of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Øystein Bø also delivered welcoming remarks to the participants, reaffirming Norway’s
commitment to Human Security, and emphasising its importance to NATO’s core tasks alongside societal resilience and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. Additionally, he highlighted the importance of crisis management and the protection of civilians in the context of the illegal Russian invasion of Ukraine and the abuses that have been documented in recent weeks. He noted that, from the perspective of both Norway and other NATO Allies, the expectation is that the next Strategic Concept will communicate a clear role for Human Security and compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

Benedetta Berti, Policy Planning Unit, NATO

Benedetta Berti provided participants with an overview of relevant context and key areas of focus for the new Strategic Concept is being developed. The development of the new Strategic Concept has been underway for the past year through internal consultations. She noted that the Strategic Concept is the Alliance’s second most important document after the North Atlantic Treaty and establishes the priorities and tools the Alliance can leverage. It represents a unique opportunity for Allies to forge a shared view of the world as well as a shared strategic vision. Since the last Strategic Concept was developed in 2010, starting with a mention of a ‘world of peace’ and low risk of conflict. Since then, peace and cooperation have been second guessed as well as the rules and norms most actors are playing by.

Berti emphasised that the new Strategic Concept needs to reflect on what the world is today and not what we want it to be. There is a conflict and open war in Europe, norms are eroding, and Russia and China seek to promote alternative version of these norms. The Alliance’s approach to the Concept, writ large, and Human Security specifically should reflect this shift: help understand how to address competitors and challengers in the area of humanitarian law; help understand how to address instability and fragility in the Alliance’s Western and Southern flanks, their impact on security and counterterrorism. There should also be considerations with regard to the integration of protection of civilians and related topics on counterterrorism and their potential impact in the development of terrorist and extremist movements. The strategic environment is currently characterised by growing strategic competition and authoritarian pushback on the rule of law, individual freedoms and human rights.

As Berti noted, the Strategic Concepts present the Alliance with an opportunity to shape the guiding principles, values and commitment of a rule-based international order.

To do so, the Concept should fulfil two objectives:
1. Ensure that Human Security considerations are not just an add-on to the concept, rather integrated throughout NATO’s activities
2. Ensure considerations regarding the protection of civilians are mainstreamed in all tasks and missions.

Berti welcomed the timeliness of this seminar and the deep expertise of participants. She noted the outcomes of the seminar will provide useful context, insights, and ways forward for consideration during negotiations between Allies ahead of the June 2022 NATO Summit in Madrid, and for future Human Security work at NATO more broadly.

Plenary Session: Conceptualising Human Security and its Applications for NATO

Overview

The plenary session, ‘Conceptualising Human Security and its Applications for NATO’ focused discussions on the conceptualisation, definition and scope of NATO’s Human Security framework and lessons learned in the field of Human Security over the past decade. Discussions explored themes such as the definition of Human Security, its conceptual limits and scope, with specific attention paid to engaging with participants’ views on how the wider conceptualisation of Human Security in the international community applies within NATO’s context, approach, and core tasks. The discussion also considered how to best reflect the concept of Human Security in NATO’s 2022 Strategic Concept. The subsequent section captures the insights and lessons articulated by participants in this session.
Introductory Remarks: Peter Hauge Berg, Head of Human Security, NATO

The first plenary session began with introductory remarks from Peter Hauge Berg, NATO’s Head of the Human Security Unit. He situated the current efforts to conceptualize Human Security both within the framework of the changing operational environment, and also building on a rich body of work from other international organizations such as the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). He clarified that NATO’s view of Human Security remained operation-centric, relating to the risks and threats that affect populations within areas where NATO operates. He noted that the Protection of Civilians (PoC) policy is by nature an overarching consideration within NATO’s conceptualisation of Human Security, as is adherence to International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL). Mr Berg outlined five areas of key consideration for NATO, including:

1. Maintaining an operational focus
2. Demonstrating organisational flexibility to counter emerging threats
3. Consistency with IHL
4. Keeping Human Security as an umbrella term for out-of-area operations
5. Human Security’s relevance to NATO’s three core tasks.

He noted that while collective defence is the mandate of the organisation, NATO will continue to invest its effort in cooperative security and crisis response.

Discussion

NATO’s essential and enduring purpose is to safeguard the freedom and security of its members by political and military means, and it holds deep common values concerning individual liberty, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. NATO Allies’ commitments to these values made the Alliance’s efforts to support Human Security clear to participants – protecting Human Security sits at the core of the NATO Alliance’s ethos. Yet, they noted that these strategic level connections, which directly and substantively inform NATO’s role in the international community and inform its Human Security commitments, have not been well elucidated in NATO policy or its Human Security approach to date. Participants noted that the Strategic Concept represents an opportunity to address this by placing NATO’s Human Security commitments in better context with reference to NATO’s strategic objectives. Rather than being conceptualised as an add-on, its centrality to NATO values and its three core tasks should be made explicit, and Human Security noted as a strategic priority for the Alliance over the coming years. In doing so, the organisational approach towards Human Security must shift from one where it is conceptualised as a component of out-of-area operation and into one where it is considered integral to NATO’s values and core tasks of collective defence, cooperative security, and crisis management.

Participants noted that this shift will be particularly important in the coming years, due to changes in the future conflict landscape and character of war. Participants noted that one of the key trends of modern conflicts is that a decisive military victory that translates into long-term political outcomes is rarely achieved. In particular, as competition and conflict become increasingly integrated and hybrid in nature, issues that were previously considered to be ‘soft security’ are transforming into ‘hard security’ challenges. Participants noted expectations that contemporary and future conflict will continue to be characterised by asymmetrical dynamics, a fragmented operating environment involving a multitude of state and non-state actors, and an increasingly hostile (dis)information landscape. In this context of protracted conflicts with high degrees of civilian casualties, participants noted that the role of militaries, and indeed, NATO forces, has changed considerably. NATO forces should expect and continue to prepare for roles that include significant Human Security tasks. Stabilisation, rather than victory, may need to be the end goal of military engagement, and Human Security is a vital condition of achieving that end-state.

Given NATO’s values and core tasks, the Alliance is well placed to play a uniquely impactful role in promoting Human Security, particularly in the fragile and conflict-affected settings within which...
it operates. Participants agreed that the Strategic Concept should aim to integrate Human Security as a priority area of focus tied to NATO’s core tasks and commitments, and in response to the realities of the future security environment. To reflect these realities, it was the unanimous view among participants that Human Security must be captured within NATO’s strategic objectives, at the forefront of the Strategic Concept. This should be reflected in the Strategic Concept by conceptualising NATO’s commitment to Human Security in alignment with NATO’s values, core tasks and existing policy commitments. By taking this approach, the Strategic Concept will be well placed to inform other core NATO documents – including policy and planning, training, and doctrine – on the centrality of Human Security at NATO and the requirement to systematically mainstream its Human Security considerations into activities at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels. Participants noted that such an approach would also better enable Allies to incorporate Human Security considerations into their national defence and operational planning structures.

Participants also held a common view that in order to make the centrality of Human Security to NATO’s strategic objectives clear, the Strategic Concept and follow-on documents should explicitly articulate the link between Human Security and operational effectiveness. There is a wide range of literature documenting the impact of human insecurity on conflict, war and political instability. These perspectives are also largely shared by the military personnel who attended the seminar with experience representing NATO on the ground, several of whom cited a rise in anti-Western views following NATO’s out-of-area operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Making these linkages explicit in the Strategic Concept will also help to generate much needed buy-in and commitment from NATO’s military staff. At present, Human Security considerations generally – and the Protection of Civilians (PoC) specifically – have not trickled down to the operational level and individual theatres of operation in a consistent manner. In order to ensure consistent and comprehensive implementation of Human Security commitments at every level of NATO’s organisation structure and operations, it is crucial that the linkage between Human Security and operational effectiveness is explicitly addressed, and specific direction is provided on the centrality of Human Security to NATO objectives in the Strategic Concept.

Importantly, NATO should emphasise Human Security’s requirement for preventative action and the linkages with NATO’s deterrence and defence tasks. NATO’s conceptualisation should distinguish Human Security from the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and realign the narrative away from a strong focus on military intervention to prevention, de-escalation and resilience. This has also been a key component of recent UN discussions on Human Security. Participants noted the parallels found in the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, which has illustrated in real time the equal strategic importance of territorial integrity and Human Security, particularly the protection of civilians. In other words, the invasion poignantly demonstrates that in contemporary conflict, the ends do not justify the means. Establishing Human Security and protecting the populations of NATO Allies are essentially central components of the Alliance’s core tasks.

At the organisational level, such an approach will require higher levels of commitment and transparency about NATO’s Human Security efforts in order to obtain and maintain the legitimacy and credibility of these commitments globally. In practical terms, suggestions were made for NATO to institutionalise requirements for Allies to document and share abuses and IHL violations that they witness, or that are carried out by Allied forces in operations. In cases where such abuses are committed by enemy forces, these should be shared as part of NATO’s strategic communications. Furthermore, the tracking of civilian casualties is of proven operational use to military forces and should be carried out systematically with efforts aimed at both prevention and reparation to affected communities. While these efforts may or may not be led by military actors, depending on the context, NATO does have a role to play alongside civilian actors throughout this process. This was presented as a shift in NATO’s organisational mindset rather than a transformation of the organisation’s role.
In employing proactive thinking, focusing on the importance of preventative and resilience-based approaches, and incorporating lessons learned from its operations, NATO will be better positioned to prevent and address the second and third order impacts arising from conflict, war and instability.

**Breakout sessions**

The following breakout sessions provided an opportunity for expert participants to engage in discussion on the cross-cutting themes that currently fall under NATO’s Human Security umbrella. Participants were divided based on background and expertise into two concurrent breakout sessions and discussions were conducted in a hybrid forum, integrating both in-person and online participation. The content of these discussions is captured below.

**Breakout Session 1: Human Security at NATO: Protection of Civilians (PoC), including Children and Armed Conflicts (CAAC) and Conflict-related Sexual Violence (CRSV)**

This breakout session brought together participants with expertise in POC, CAAC and CRSV to discuss NATO’s approach to these topics through the lens of current NATO policy, applications and lessons learned from recent activities. Discussions focused on identifying areas of strength, lessons learned and opportunities for further consideration under the new Strategic Concept. Participants sought to answer the following questions:

- What are the strengths and gaps of NATO’s current approach to Protection of Civilians (PoC)?
- How do these areas overlap, and how can NATO integrate its approach to them holistically in its operations?

Based on these questions, participants suggested that when integrating Human Security and the Protection of Civilians (PoC) into collective defence, cooperative security, and crisis management, it is vital for NATO to issue a strong political statement supporting this development and in alignment with the Human Security and PoC realities that will typify the future security environment. The role of emerging threats such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), autonomous weapons and the weaponisation of space all present new challenges to Human Security, which NATO must consider in its future approach.

Participants noted that Human Security issues and PoC concerns will continue to shape and be shaped by the future security environment. Thus, a strong political statement regarding the centrality of Human Security to NATO’s future strategic approach would not only send a strong signal to Allies, but also to the wider international community. With this in mind, participants emphasised several key points and areas of intersection that should be featured in such a statement. First, they noted that the linkages between the PoC and resilience should be capitalised upon within the Strategic Concept, in order to reflect the centrality of Human Security issues within existing high-traction priorities. As the Ukraine invasion clearly illustrates the strategic importance of the intersection between Human Security and resilience, this ‘moment of opportunity’ to make clear the ways in which strong Human Security and POC commitments influence resilience outcomes should be prioritised. Further, participants felt that emphasising closer cooperation with actors (such as the European Union) who are leading in multi-national resilience efforts would be fruitful relationships to prioritise for follow-on work.

According to participants, the statement, while predominantly political in nature, should also underline the centrality of Human Security and PoC to the military domain, ensuring that the Strategic Concept’s Human Security and PoC guidance can be effectively translated at the operational and tactical level and appropriately actioned by NATO forces. In practice, this entails mainstreaming PoC (including CAAC and CRSV) as a core competency into all doctrine and training and implementing it into national and NATO exercises. In particular, participants noted that operationalising Human Security and POC requirements within planning structures should be a priority for translating the commitments of the Strategic Concept into the military domain.

Participants felt that emphasising the centrality of Human Security in general and PoC in particular as a core strategic priority in the Strategic Concept
will increase NATO’s credibility both globally and locally in operations. Participants working with NGO and civilian partners on the ground reported negative reputational impacts of NATO’s out-of-area operations. However, NATO’s position within the current political landscape has changed since the PoC Action Plan was adopted in 2017. Thus, the current PoC plan should also be revised against this backdrop to reflect the changes emerging from the NATO 2030 initiative and the forthcoming Strategic Concept.

Participants noted several key steps the Alliance could take to overcoming some of the challenges elucidated, particularly by strengthening Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) capabilities and reciprocal relationships with civilian actors. Participants noted that prioritising a non-hierarchical approach to civil-military relationships centred on the protections of civilians and communities would be welcomed. This process would entail a plethora of political, legal, and fact-finding missions, and deep commitments to long-term relationship-building efforts. Further, a concrete initiative that was mentioned as an arena where NATO could contribute its resources, was establishing a permanent accountability advisory group or mechanism to monitor the PoC in NATO operations.

Another key step towards building relationships and articulating the desired end-state of a Human Security-centric approach mentioned by participants, entailed preserving the humanitarian space in areas of operation. Whereas the implementation of humanitarian action has been adopted in local contexts with increasing success, the perception of humanitarian actors as neutral parties in conflict is deteriorating. Recognising the mandate, neutrality and responsibilities of humanitarian actors in conflict spaces and the ways in which NATO will approach interaction with humanitarian actors should be better elucidated.

Participants were clear in noting that PoC, like Human Security more broadly, should be an integral part of NATO operations rather than an add-on, particularly because PoC is in many ways the nexus that connects NATO’s three core tasks. Crucially, to achieve this, participants felt that civilian leadership and command must not be marginalised, and the skills and capabilities needed to facilitate this change must be developed among Allies. They noted that an initial mapping of what resources and guidance is available among

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NATO allies would be a pertinent first step in this endeavour.

Breakout Session 2: Human Security at NATO: Human Trafficking and Cultural Property Protection (CPP)

This breakout session brought together participants with relevant expertise in Human Trafficking and Cultural Property Protection (CPP) and other issue areas to discuss the current conceptualisation of Human Security at NATO, through a focused discussion on current NATO policy, applications and lessons learned on these topics from recent activities. Discussions focused on identifying areas of strength, lessons learned and opportunities for further consideration under the new Strategic Concept. Participants sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the strengths and gaps of NATO’s current approach to Human Trafficking and Cultural Property Protection (CPP)?
2. How do these areas overlap, and how can NATO integrate its approach to them holistically in its operations?

Participants not only focused on these two topics, but also had wider discussions, echoing insights provided during the first plenary session. They noted that the five areas of Human Security should be integrated and mentioned not only in the Strategic Concept but beyond in all the cascading documents that will enable their application from a military perspective. All five areas of Human Security are intertwined and linked together. For example, Human Trafficking should not be considered in isolation of the larger concept of Human Security, which in turn should not be considered as an isolated part of security.

Though work on Human Trafficking and Cultural Property Protection has been ongoing for some time at NATO, considerations of Human Trafficking and Cultural Property Protection (CPP) have only recently been brought under the Alliance’s Human Security umbrella. At times, participants expressed frustration that highly relevant issues, such as CPP or the fight against Human Trafficking, have often been compared and deprioritised in relation to more traditional PoC tasks, when, in fact, these issues are substantially interlinked. Participants noted that despite the need to integrate these topics into NATO’s everyday activities, progress has remained slow. For example, a 2012 internal review had called for the need to develop a NATO-wide CPP policy, but this has failed to move up the agenda and has yet to be formally developed.

Participants also noted the evolution of CPP. The current conflict in Ukraine and the call for the protection of Russian speakers in eastern parts of Ukraine suggests the inclusion of intellectual property within CPP. Russia has also been using CPP as the basis for their arguments in favour of the Russian intervention in Ukraine. The Alliance needs to determine their level of ambition in terms of CPP. Participants agreed that integration should apply to all five areas and that each should be considered and resourced appropriately. Additionally, participants noted that some areas that fall outside of the current NATO conceptualisation of Human Security, such as the implications of climate and environmental change, and corruption, need to be better integrated in the Human Security approach, or such efforts will not be effective, particularly when Human Security tasks often require efforts to address root causes.

Some participants also noted that the burden to conduct CPP or the fight against Human Trafficking is linked to the determination of the role of the military. Participants also noted the need for the Strategic Concept to highlight that the applications of Human Security are crucial in achieving the Alliance’s core tasks. Some participants also expressed interest in broadening the discussion on Human Security within the Alliance to be more universal and seek opportunities to bring a wider range of actors, including competitors, where appropriate, around the table to address these issues more holistically.

Plenary Session – The Future of Human Security at NATO

Noting that the 21st century has seen rapid changes in the strategic and operating environments within which NATO works, this plenary session focused on ‘The Future of Human Security at NATO’. As the future security environment has seen significant shifts, the Human
Security concept has also grown, changed and adapted, particularly over the last decade both inside and outside NATO. This session focused on gathering the perspectives of participants as to what the future of Human Security may look like in general, at NATO, and in the context of the future security environment, and how this should be reflected in the 2022 NATO Strategic Concept.

Introductory Remarks: Benedict Wilkinson, Defence & Security, RAND Europe

Dr Ben Wilkinson provided the opening remarks to the second plenary session of the day. He discussed several key points for consideration with regard to the Future of Human Security. The concept of Human Security should be brought to the forefront of our collective thinking given its importance in terms of policy and strategy. The future global trends and security environment such as migration, climate change or agricultural security will be affected by the conceptualisation of Human Security. Further conceptualisation of Human Security needs to be conducted to account for the future trends of conflicts, technological development, etc.

He noted that the concept of Human Security can help bridge the gap between military security and humanitarian considerations. Conflicts are a human phenomenon, and the human being should be placed at the centre. Beyond the mere impact of conflict on civilians, security issues are multidimensional and intertwined with broader international security and stability. The conflict in Ukraine is disrupting the global agricultural and food supply chain, with reverberating effects in food-fragile countries in the Middle East and Africa, such as Ethiopia, South Sudan and Lebanon. Migration crises are also likely to have impacts on the socio-economic ecosystem. Human security considers the second and third order effects of conflicts as well as the fast-evolving impacts of conflicts on humans, individuals, and communities alike, and enables the development of mitigation strategies to the implications and consequences of conflicts.

Discussion

Following the introductory remarks, participants reflected on the character of war and what can be defined as human needs. They noted that the future security environment in which the Alliance will act remains uncertain and will likely be more difficult as conflicts and corruption keep rising. Member states need to recognise the urgency of changing their mindset with regard to the concept of Human Security, particularly as it represents a uniting concept linking NATO’s values and its three core tasks.

The future of Human Security for NATO is dependent not only on its underpinning components but also on the recognition within the Alliance of the importance of the concept. The future of Human Security will depend on the goals and priorities (geographically, strategically, etc.) set by the Alliance. However, participants noted that Human Security at NATO is rooted in the context of war and conflict rather than in the broader context. There seems to be a tension between the geographical scope and focus of the Alliance and the level of ambition. It is recognised that the Alliance’s security will be impacted by the wider security environment outside of NATO and this must be better accounted for in NATO’s conceptualisation of Human Security beyond out-of-area operations.

The concept is, and will remain, relevant in future operations. Given the recent context of the Covid-19 pandemic, health considerations have emerged in relations with global security, specifically the need for prevention. Considerations for prevention should also be linked to human rights. Another participant also noted the need to consider that in future conflicts we may see a return to adversaries targeting civilians as a deliberate strategy. The Alliance needs to continue to prepare against this risk and ensure appropriate response mechanisms are in place. A third participant highlighted the need to also consider the impact of corruption in conflicts as well as the link with misinformation. Anti-corruption considerations should also be included when developing counter-terrorism policies and interventions.

The development of the new Strategic Concept presents an opportunity to Allies to link NATO values, including the upholding of international rules-based system, and support for human rights and its three core tasks through the mainstreaming of Human Security commitments.
The final session of the day, ‘Recommendations and Ways Forward at NATO’, took the form of a working session, with the facilitator leading participants through the identification, prioritisation, and collation of a long list of recommendations that informed this report. The RAND Europe Centre for Human Security has analysed and presented these insights and recommendations below.

**NATO is a values-based Alliance; the Alliance’s commitment to Human Security sits at the core of these values. These linkages should be made explicit in the Strategic Concept.**

NATO is, at its core, a political-military Alliance with the essential and enduring purpose of safeguarding the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means. Since its inception, NATO has represented an Alliance deeply committed to its core values, including individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. These deeply held values intersect directly with Human Security. As NATO Allies place significant value on upholding the rules-based international system and protecting human rights, core to NATO’s commitment to these principles is a deep commitment to the promotion of Human Security at home and abroad. While our adversaries may not observe these same standards, NATO has long been a leader in developing and implementing new values-based approaches in both its political and military objectives. Thus, ensuring NATO’s commitment to its overarching values and their linkages to NATO’s present and future commitment to Human Security are captured throughout the Strategic Concept will re-emphasise the Alliance’s commitment to international values-based leadership at a crucial time when this is being threatened by our adversaries. To this end, participants suggest ensuring a reference to NATO’s values, and particularly human rights, is made at the outset of the Strategic Concept, so that a section concerning Human Security can be tied directly to NATO’s overarching values and values-based leadership in the international system.

There are, of course, perspectives that need to be accounted for in approaching Human Security as an element of NATO’s values-based approach. As NATO is viewed by some as an imperialistic and interventionist project, its grounding in a Western conceptualisation of universal human rights may not be a perspective held by all parts of the world. While there is no clear action on this point elucidated by participants, this should be kept in mind if making the linkage between NATO’s values and the Alliance’s commitment to Human Security.

**Human Security is the connecting element between NATO’s values and its three core tasks.**

While NATO currently lacks a formal definition of Human Security, over the years (and particularly during the 21st century) Human Security has become a core part of NATO’s operations abroad. The concept of Human Security argues that protecting individuals and communities’ freedoms from want, fear and indignity are vital requirements for addressing the multidimensional causes and consequences of complex challenges and conflicts. In effect, it argues that traditional conceptualisations of national and international security, and Human Security, are in fact two sides of the same coin. This outlook is particularly true for NATO. In the context of Article 5, there is not much difference between Human Security and state/international security. The Strategic Concept should clarify this relationship – state/international security cannot be considered in opposition to

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**Section 3: Analysis of Working Session: Identification of Recommendations & Ways Forward at NATO**
Human Security, particularly in the future security environment where we will see these issues become even more intertwined.

In fact, Human Security represents the connecting element between NATO’s values and its three core tasks of collective defence and deterrence, crisis management and cooperative security. It is uniquely relevant now but will become even more central to each of these missions as the future security environment sees threats and domains become increasingly integrated and hybrid in nature. As a result, it is important that the Strategic Concept makes this linkage clear, elucidating that Human Security is a core task of the Alliance, representative of its values, and central to the success of collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security efforts, inclusively. NATO is capable of providing and delivering Human Security, and in doing so, it will help to fulfil its core missions.

**Committing to protecting Human Security is essential for achieving operational effectiveness and mission success.**

In order for Human Security to be usefully integrated into the Strategic Concept, the Military Staff and Operational Commands must be on board and the practical benefits of embedding Human Security into operations must be made clear at the strategic level. Participants suggested the use of recurring themes in the Strategic Concept to make the centrality of Human Security clear in the context of NATO’s overall strategic priorities. Including references to a shift in the aims of contemporary and future conflict may be helpful, including focusing on efforts to de-escalate and stabilise versus win or defeat the enemy, and the strengthening of defensive posture and deterrence versus offensive operations. Making clear how Human Security can play an important role in different types of operations NATO forces may engage in, such as hybrid competition and conflict, urban warfare, etc. will provide useful conceptualisation and direction.

In particular, participants suggested making clear the centrality of Human Security to achieving operational effectiveness and strategic success – Human Security is not an add-on but an essential element of NATO’s strategic priorities and a core determinant of operational effectiveness. Further, if space allows, providing indicative examples of this may be helpful, including the counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan, particularly successes in mitigating civilian casualties versus the counterattacks from the Taliban and ISKP that led to civilian casualties. Direct instructions for Commanders to focus on Human Security and second- and third-order effects must be prioritised at the strategic level in order to create the impetus and requirement for buy-in at the operational and tactical levels. As one participant who has held NATO command responsibilities put it, ‘I want myself and my teams to be directly tasked to prioritise Human Security requirements’.

**Proactivity and preventative action should be reflected in the Strategic Concept’s Human Security commitments**

Participants were fully in agreement when noting that NATO must make clear that Human Security issues need to be considered proactively and with preventative action in mind. While not all Human Security tasks are the responsibility of military forces, militaries do play a key role, particularly where physical protection is concerned. Thus, a useful way to introduce Human Security into the Strategic Concept would be by linking it to existing commitments to resilience. Doing so would allow the Human Security concept to capitalise on the substantial buy-in and support the nations have demonstrated on resilience issues, while prioritising the proactive and preventative approaches that are inherent in Human Security issues. Such an approach would also have significant benefits for future work on NATO’s conceptualisation of Human Security and provide space not only for reinterpreting Human Security beyond the original NATO scope, but better planning of NATO’s Human Security efforts. This narrative also capitalises on and links Human Security back to NATO’s fundamental tasks. The Strategic Concept could capitalise on the timely examples of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and the collapse of the Afghan government as evidence of the linkages between Human Security, societal and economic resilience, deterrence, and collective defence.

**NATO’s conceptualisation of Human Security should be expanded, but protection of civilians needs to be prioritised for inclusion in the Strategic Concept in particular**
At the core of the recommendations from participants was the recognition that NATO’s current conceptualisation of Human Security is lacking, particularly in the context of the future character of warfare. As future conflict is likely to become more integrated and hybrid in nature, the once natural focus of NATO’s Human Security approach on out-of-area operations is likely to become increasingly strained. Additionally, while significant progress has been made in some thematic areas, key themes such as Human Trafficking need to be better elucidated, diffuse issues such as food and resource security need to be better addressed, environmental and climate issues need to be captured, and the role corruption plays in shaping the strategic and operating environment needs to be more fully integrated into NATO’s Human Security approach. One participant further suggested capturing this in terms of the importance of ‘terrain’ similar to the United States’ conceptualisation, with the protection of the human terrain as a vital element.

Establishing Human Security at NATO as both an analytical concept and a core NATO task is vital to ensure that NATO efforts in this domain can usefully contribute to operational effectiveness. This need to reconceptualise NATO’s Human Security approach more holistically should be reflected in the Strategic Concept in order to capture the further analytical work that needs to be undertaken, and that NATO forces hold direct responsibility to deliver elements of Human Security within their operations. This centrality of Human Security to NATO’s military tasks should be made clear in the Concept, and specific direction provided in follow-on documents. It should also elucidate that not all Human Security tasks are the responsibility of NATO forces to deliver, but those that are, are in fact fundamental priorities to achieve NATO’s objectives. A more holistic conceptualisation of NATO’s Human Security approach and the division of responsibility between the political and military elements of the Alliance will help to better inform operational planning, alongside Human Security tasks that NATO forces are best placed to deliver.

Although a commitment to exploring a more holistic approach to Human Security should be included in the Strategic Concept, participants were adamant that there is a fundamental piece of the Human Security puzzle that must be reflected. They noted that if the discussion of human security in the Strategic Concept will be too short to address all elements of the Human Security framework, the Protection of Civilians should take priority. Elucidating the linkage between NATO’s overarching value-based commitments to human rights and the rule of law, their linkage with NATO forces obligations under IHL, is important in elucidating the ‘why’ behind NATO’s Human Security commitments and the interlinkages with guiding ‘how’ NATO approaches its three core tasks. Protection of civilians should be emphasised as one of the central mechanisms through which this translates to operational effectiveness and strategic success across the three core tasks.

The strategic guidance for Human Security that is included in the Strategic Concept must be something that NATO forces can operationalise and implement

Participants also noted the need to understand the level of ambition and ultimately recognise that the military elements of NATO will be responsible for executing the outputs of the Strategic Concept. The Concept should include appropriate guidance within it that can be implemented by their military counterparts and at lower levels. Thus, the Concept needs to be explicit about the underlying political and military relevance of Human Security and how it envisages this being translated by military forces. Accordingly, the Concept itself needs to include clear obligations for Human Security for Commanders and clear direction for planners that Human Security is a central priority for their operation and that they must understand and mitigate first-, second- and third-order effects that impact the human environment. Further, in order to ensure compliance and accountability with these priorities during planning and execution phases, those who are tasked with ensuring Human Security issues are appropriately embedded at the operational and tactical levels need direct references to NATO forces’ Human Security obligations in the Concept. As suggested previously, establishing a permanent accountability advisory group or mechanism to monitor these obligations during the planning and execution of NATO operations would be welcomed as a useful way forward.
Future Research, Analysis, and Collaboration

Following the seminar, RAND Europe provided an indicative overview of recommendations to the NATO Policy Planning Unit and Human Security Unit based on the seminar proceedings for consideration during the drafting of the 2022 Strategic Concept. This report represents a formal conceptualisation of those recommendations and makes further suggestions for follow-on work once the Strategic Concept has been adopted.

Following the release of the Strategic Concept, RAND Europe and seminar participants encourage the following actions be undertaken to push NATO’s Human Security work forward:

- Agree to a definition of Human Security and enshrine all Cross Cutting Topics in NATO policy.
- Establish an independent, external standing Human Security Advisory Group made up of experts from civil society and academia to provide input and advice on NATO’s evolving approach to Human Security.
- Map and leverage Ally and Partner national policy and good practice on Human Security.
- Undertake research and analysis concerning the future of human security to inform the proper development and resourcing of NATO’s Human Security capabilities.

RAND Europe’s Centre for Human Security welcomes further collaboration with both NATO and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on these important issues, in particular on conceptualising human security at NATO, the establishment of a Human Security Advisory Group, undertaking research and analysis on the future of human security and current policy and good practice. Potential avenues for future collaboration, including a proposed agenda of research, analysis and events will be presented and discussed in the coming months.
# Annex 1: List of Participants

## Speakers

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