



The Fractured Peace: Human Security, Social Cohesion, and Educational Division in the Post-Conflict Western Balkans

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Abstract

The post-Cold War era heralded the rise of the human security paradigm, shifting the focus of international concern from state-centric military threats to the well-being and dignity of individuals. This paper argues that the promise of this paradigm has been only partially fulfilled, particularly in post-conflict regions where the international order's geopolitical shifts have undermined sustainable peace. Using the Western Balkans as a focused case study, this article examines how the enduring legacies of armed conflict and the erosion of a robust human security framework manifest in critical social and educational spheres. Through a qualitative documentary analysis of policy reports, academic literature, and NGO assessments, the paper investigates the interconnected challenges to community, economic, and political security in societies such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. The analysis reveals three key findings: first, unresolved political disputes and ethno-nationalist politics perpetuate a state of 'negative peace,' eroding community security and social trust. Second, persistent socio-economic precarity is intrinsically linked to widespread public health crises, particularly in mental health, hindering human development. Third, educational systems, rather than fostering reconciliation, often serve as institutional mechanisms for reinforcing ethnic divisions, thereby sowing the seeds of future instability. The paper concludes that a superficial, state-centric approach to post-conflict reconstruction, which neglects the deep-seated social and educational dimensions of human security, results in a 'fractured peace'—a society free from war but not from fear or want. It calls for a renewed policy focus on integrated education, community-based mental health services, and transitional justice to build a more resilient and positive peace.

Keywords: human security, post-conflict reconstruction, social cohesion, educational policy, Western Balkans, transitional justice, mental health

1. Introduction

The end of the Cold War ushered in a period of profound transformation in global security discourse. The dissolution of the bipolar world order created an opportunity to move beyond a narrow, state-centric conception of security, defined primarily by territorial integrity and military might. In its place, the concept of 'human security' emerged as a powerful alternative, championed by institutions like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This new paradigm redefined security by placing the individual at its core, asserting that true stability is contingent upon protecting people from chronic threats such as hunger, disease, and repression, as well as safeguarding them from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life (UNDP, 1994). Human security, therefore, encompasses a broad spectrum of dimensions—economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political—that collectively contribute to human dignity and well-being.

This paradigm shift was not merely theoretical; it was intended to guide international interventions in a world increasingly characterized by intrastate conflicts, humanitarian crises, and the challenges of post-conflict state-building. The wars in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s served as a brutal testing ground for these new principles. The international community's response to ethnic cleansing, genocide, and mass displacement was framed, at least rhetorically, within the language of protecting people rather than solely preserving borders. Yet, more than two decades after the cessation of major hostilities, the peace in the Western Balkans remains fragile, and the promise of comprehensive human security elusive. The region exemplifies what Johan Galtung (1969) termed a 'negative peace'—an absence of direct violence but not of the structural violence embedded within social, political, and economic systems.

While the international order has evolved, facing new challenges from resurgent great-power competition, transnational terrorism, and a weakening of multilateral institutions, the unresolved issues in post-conflict societies like those in the Western Balkans offer a critical lens through which to assess the successes and failures of the human security agenda. The high-level geopolitical focus of international actors often overlooks the granular, everyday insecurities that continue to afflict populations. These insecurities are not primarily military; they are social, psychological, and educational. They manifest in segregated communities, traumatized populations, dysfunctional economies, and educational systems that perpetuate division rather than foster reconciliation.

This paper addresses a critical gap in the literature by moving beyond a general geopolitical analysis of the 'new international order' to examine its tangible consequences on the ground. It seeks to answer the following research question: *How do the enduring legacies of armed conflict and the shortcomings of the post-Cold War human security framework manifest in the social and educational spheres of post-conflict societies in the Western Balkans?* By focusing on the interconnectedness of

social cohesion, mental health, and educational policy, this study argues that the failure to adequately address these core components of human security has resulted in a 'fractured peace' that undermines long-term stability and human development. The analysis demonstrates that without a foundational investment in the social and educational fabric of society, top-down state-building and peace agreements remain hollow constructs, vulnerable to the very ethno-nationalist tensions they were designed to overcome.

The paper proceeds in five parts. First, it provides a conceptual framework, outlining the core tenets of the human security paradigm and integrating it with literature from sociology, psychology, and education on post-conflict societal dynamics. Second, it details the methodology, a qualitative documentary analysis. Third, it presents the analysis, examining the erosion of community security, the crisis in socio-economic and mental well-being, and the role of education as a driver of division in the Western Balkans. Fourth, a discussion synthesizes these findings, linking them back to the broader theoretical debate on human security. Finally, the conclusion offers policy recommendations aimed at fostering a more sustainable and positive peace in the region and other post-conflict contexts.

2. Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

To analyze the state of human security in the post-conflict Western Balkans, this study draws upon an interdisciplinary conceptual framework. It begins with the foundational principles of human security, then integrates sociological and psychological theories of post-conflict trauma and social cohesion, and finally incorporates educational studies on the role of schooling in peacebuilding and division. This multi-faceted approach is necessary to capture the complex interplay between international security paradigms and their local, lived realities.

2.1 The Human Security Paradigm: From State to Individual

For centuries, the dominant paradigm in international relations was realism, which viewed the state as the primary actor and security as the protection of national interests and territorial integrity from external aggression (Morgenthau, 1948). The Cold War, with its nuclear standoff, represented the apex of this state-centric model. However, the end of this bipolar rivalry revealed a landscape of new threats that did not fit neatly into the traditional framework: civil wars, ethnic conflicts, genocide, pandemics, and environmental degradation. These challenges demonstrated that states could be perpetrators of insecurity against their own citizens, and that the greatest threats to people's lives often came from within, not from across borders.

In response, the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report articulated a comprehensive vision of human security, famously defining it through two primary aspects: "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want." "Freedom from fear" focuses on protecting individuals from direct violence, whether from the state, other organized groups, or individuals. This includes threats of war, genocide, torture, and

violent crime. "Freedom from want" addresses developmental and economic threats, emphasizing the right of all people to a basic standard of living, including access to food, healthcare, and economic opportunity (UNDP, 1994). While some scholars and policymakers have prioritized "freedom from fear" as a more focused and achievable goal (Axworthy, 2001), others argue that the two are indivisible, as poverty and deprivation are often root causes of violent conflict (Commission on Human Security, 2003). For the purpose of this paper, human security is understood as an integrated concept where physical safety and socio-economic well-being are mutually reinforcing prerequisites for a dignified life.

The UNDP identified seven core dimensions of human security:

1. **Economic Security:** An assured basic income, typically from productive and remunerative work.
2. **Food Security:** Physical and economic access to basic food.
3. **Health Security:** Protection from diseases and unhealthy lifestyles.
4. **Environmental Security:** Protection from the short- and long-term ravages of nature, man-made threats in nature, and deterioration of the natural environment.
5. **Personal Security:** Protection from physical violence, whether from the state or external states, from violent individuals and sub-state actors, from domestic abuse, or from predatory adults.
6. **Community Security:** Protection from the loss of traditional relationships and values and from sectarian and ethnic violence.
7. **Political Security:** Ensuring that people live in a society that honors their basic human rights.

This multidimensional framework moves beyond simply stopping war; it provides a normative and analytical tool for building a sustainable, 'positive peace'—a state characterized by social justice, equality, and the capacity for non-violent conflict resolution (Galtung, 1969).

2.2 The Social Fabric Under Strain: Trauma, Resilience, and Social Cohesion

While the human security framework provides the 'what,' sociological and psychological literature on post-conflict societies explains the 'how' and 'why' of its breakdown. Violent conflict does not just destroy infrastructure; it shatters the social fabric—the intricate web of relationships, norms, and trust that holds communities together. The concept of 'social capital,' defined as the "networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (Putnam, 1995), is severely degraded during conflict, especially in civil wars where neighbors turn against neighbors. In the Western Balkans, ethno-nationalist mobilization

systematically destroyed inter-ethnic trust, creating deep-seated divisions that persist long after the fighting has stopped (Denitch, 1994).

Furthermore, widespread exposure to violence, loss, and displacement leaves deep psychological scars on individuals and entire communities. The field of social psychology highlights the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety in post-conflict populations (De Jong et al., 2003). Crucially, this trauma is not merely an individual clinical issue; it has profound social consequences. As Volkan (2001) argues, societies can suffer from 'chosen traumas'—shared memories of catastrophic events that become central to a group's identity and are transmitted across generations. This intergenerational transmission of trauma can fuel cycles of victimhood and revenge, making reconciliation extremely difficult and undermining community and political security. When a significant portion of a population is struggling with untreated trauma, their capacity to participate in economic, political, and social life is diminished, directly impacting the nation's human development potential.

Conversely, the concept of 'resilience' has gained prominence, referring to the capacity of individuals and communities to cope with, adapt to, and recover from adversity (Masten, 2001). However, resilience is not an innate trait but is fostered by protective factors, including strong social support networks, access to resources (like education and healthcare), and a sense of collective efficacy. In post-conflict settings, where these very factors are often destroyed, rebuilding resilience becomes a central task of reconstruction. A human security approach, therefore, must prioritize mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) not as a niche health issue, but as a cornerstone of peacebuilding and societal recovery (Tol et al., 2011).

2.3 Education as a Double-Edged Sword: Perpetuating Conflict or Building Peace?

Education is often hailed as a key instrument for post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding. It is seen as a means to promote economic development, foster democratic values, and heal societal divisions. The international community invests heavily in rebuilding schools and reforming curricula in the belief that education can cultivate a 'culture of peace'. However, education can also be a powerful tool for perpetuating conflict. Education systems can exacerbate tensions by promoting exclusionary national narratives, reinforcing stereotypes, and physically segregating students along ethnic or religious lines.

The Western Balkans, particularly Bosnia-Herzegovina, provides a stark example of this duality. The phenomenon of "two schools under one roof" sees students from different ethnic groups attending classes in the same building but at different times, following separate curricula, and being taught by teachers from their own ethnic group. This system of educational segregation institutionalizes the very divisions that the peace agreements were meant to overcome. Curricula, particularly in history, literature, and language, often present conflicting and mutually exclusive narratives

of the past, teaching younger generations to view other groups through a lens of suspicion and historical grievance. This directly undermines community and political security by preventing the formation of a shared civic identity and reinforcing the ethno-nationalist ideologies that fueled the war.

A human security-oriented educational policy would, therefore, focus not just on access to education (a key 'freedom from want' goal) but on the content and structure of that education. It would prioritize integrated schooling, curriculum reform aimed at multi-perspectivity, and teacher training that equips educators to handle sensitive topics and promote critical thinking. Without such an approach, education fails in its peacebuilding mission and instead becomes a vector for the intergenerational transmission of conflict.

3. Methodology

To investigate the manifestations of the human security deficit in the post-conflict Western Balkans, this study employs a qualitative documentary analysis methodology. This approach is well-suited for exploring complex social and political phenomena where direct empirical data collection is beyond the scope of the research, but a rich body of existing documentation is available. It involves the systematic collection, review, and interpretation of textual and written materials to gain an in-depth understanding of the research question. This method allows for a comprehensive synthesis of information from diverse sources, providing a nuanced and multi-faceted perspective on the social and educational dynamics of the region.

The research process was structured in three stages. First, a scoping review was conducted to identify the key themes and debates within the literature on human security, post-conflict reconstruction, and the Western Balkans. This initial stage helped refine the research question and establish the conceptual framework outlined in the previous section.

Second, a systematic search for relevant documents was undertaken. The selection of documents was guided by criteria of relevance, credibility, and diversity of perspective. The corpus of analyzed documents can be categorized into three main types:

1. **International and Governmental Reports:** This category includes publications from key international organizations involved in the region's post-conflict governance and development. Sources include progress reports from the European Union (EU), human development reports from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), assessments from the World Bank and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and resolutions from the UN Security Council. These documents provide macro-level data, policy frameworks, and official assessments of the political, economic, and social situation.

2. **Academic Literature:** A comprehensive review of peer-reviewed scholarly articles and books from the fields of political science, sociology, anthropology, education, and psychology was conducted. Databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar were searched using keywords like "Western Balkans," "Bosnia," "Kosovo," "post-conflict," "human security," "social cohesion," "education reform," and "transitional justice." This literature provides theoretical insights, critical analyses, and empirical case studies that contextualize and challenge official narratives.
3. **Civil Society and NGO Publications:** Reports and analyses from reputable non-governmental organizations (both international and local), such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the International Crisis Group, and local peacebuilding organizations, were included. These documents often offer valuable ground-level perspectives, highlighting the lived experiences of affected populations and providing critical commentary on the efficacy of state and international policies.

Third, the collected documents were subjected to a thematic analysis. This involved a process of careful reading and coding to identify recurring patterns, themes, and arguments related to the different dimensions of human security (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The analysis was structured around the key areas identified in the conceptual framework: community and political security, socio-economic and health security (with a focus on mental health), and the role of the education system. By triangulating data from the three categories of sources, the analysis sought to build a robust and credible account of the challenges facing the region, cross-validating findings and noting areas of consensus and contention. This methodological approach enables a deep, context-rich exploration of the research question, grounding the theoretical discussion of human security in the documented realities of the post-conflict Western Balkans.

4. Analysis and Findings: The Dimensions of a Fractured Peace

The documentary analysis reveals a persistent and multifaceted human security deficit in the Western Balkans. While the absence of large-scale armed conflict signifies a 'negative peace,' the underlying conditions for a sustainable, 'positive peace' remain largely unmet. This section presents the findings organized around three critical and interconnected themes: the erosion of community and political security through ethno-nationalist governance, the crisis of socio-economic and mental well-being, and the role of education as a perpetuator of division.

4.1 The Erosion of Community and Political Security: Living in a Perpetual Limbo

The peace agreements that ended the wars in the Western Balkans, most notably the Dayton Accords for Bosnia-Herzegovina (1995) and the post-conflict arrangements for Kosovo (1999 onwards), were primarily designed to stop the violence. They

succeeded in this immediate goal but did so by entrenching the very ethnic divisions that fueled the conflicts. As numerous reports from the International Crisis Group and the OSCE have documented, political life in these societies is dominated by ethno-nationalist parties that derive their legitimacy from mobilizing their respective ethnic constituencies against 'the other' (ICG, 2021). This has created a system of governance where political security is undermined by design. Basic human rights, such as political participation, are often contingent on ethnic affiliation, as seen in the complex power-sharing structures of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which the European Court of Human Rights has repeatedly found to be discriminatory (ECtHR, *Sejdić and Finci v. Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 2009).

This political fragmentation directly corrodes community security. Social trust, both between ethnic groups (horizontal trust) and between citizens and state institutions (vertical trust), is exceptionally low. World Bank and UNDP surveys consistently show that citizens in the region have little faith in their governments, judiciaries, or political parties, viewing them as corrupt and serving narrow ethnic interests (World Bank, 2020). This lack of trust hinders cooperation on common problems like environmental protection, economic development, and public health. Furthermore, the unresolved political status of territories like Kosovo and the constant rhetoric of secessionism in Bosnia-Herzegovina create a pervasive sense of instability. This political limbo prevents communities from moving forward, trapping them in a narrative of past grievances and future threats. The result is a society where individuals feel secure only within their own ethnic enclave, and where inter-ethnic contact is often fraught with suspicion. This social segregation is not just a legacy of the war; it is actively maintained by political elites for whom division is a tool of power.

4.2 The Crisis of Socio-Economic and Mental Well-being

The political instability described above is inextricably linked to a profound deficit in economic and health security. The Western Balkan states are characterized by high unemployment (especially among youth), widespread corruption, significant emigration ('brain drain'), and persistent poverty (IMF, 2022). This economic precarity constitutes a chronic source of stress and insecurity for a large portion of the population, representing a clear failure to deliver "freedom from want." The weak rule of law and politicized economies deter foreign investment and stifle entrepreneurship, leaving many dependent on remittances from abroad or patronage networks linked to dominant political parties.

This socio-economic malaise is compounded by a silent public health crisis: the immense burden of war-related psychological trauma. Research conducted in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo reveals staggering rates of PTSD, depression, and anxiety disorders, often exceeding 20-30% of the adult population in heavily affected areas (Priebe et al., 2010; Morina et al., 2017). Despite the scale of the problem, mental health services are chronically underfunded, stigmatized, and inadequate. This

represents a critical failure in health security. Untreated trauma has devastating consequences, contributing to higher rates of suicide, domestic violence, substance abuse, and reduced economic productivity. It is a fundamental barrier to individual and societal recovery. When a large segment of the population is psychologically wounded, their ability to trust others, engage in civic life, and plan for the future is severely compromised. The failure to address the mental health legacy of the war is not just a health policy failure; it is a fundamental peacebuilding failure that perpetuates cycles of suffering and instability across generations.

4.3 The Educational Battlefield: Institutionalizing Division

Perhaps the most alarming finding from the analysis is the role of education systems in actively undermining long-term peace. Instead of being spaces for reconciliation and the cultivation of a shared civic identity, schools in many parts of the Western Balkans function as front lines in the ongoing ethno-nationalist struggle. The aforementioned system of "two schools under one roof" in Bosnia-Herzegovina is the most blatant example of educational segregation. OSCE reports have detailed how this system not only prevents inter-ethnic contact among young people but also delivers biased and often contradictory curricula. History textbooks, for instance, present mutually exclusive narratives of the 1990s wars, glorifying one's own ethnic group as heroes and victims while demonizing others as aggressors. This educational practice ensures that young people inherit the prejudices and grievances of their parents, making genuine reconciliation nearly impossible.

In Kosovo, while the system is not formally segregated in the same way, the existence of separate Serbian-language and Albanian-language school systems, often with curricula directed from Belgrade and Pristina respectively, creates a similar dynamic of parallel societies (Sommers & Buckland, 2004). This educational divide reinforces linguistic and cultural barriers, limiting opportunities for interaction and understanding between young Serbs and Albanians. The failure of international and local authorities to implement meaningful, integrated education reform represents a profound misunderstanding of the sources of long-term security. By allowing education to be co-opted by nationalist agendas, they are permitting the very ideologies that led to war to be reproduced in each new generation. This turns schools from potential sites of peacebuilding into incubators for future conflict, thereby failing the most fundamental test of a forward-looking human security strategy.

5. Discussion

The findings from the Western Balkans present a sobering critique of the application of the human security paradigm in post-conflict environments. They reveal a significant gap between the normative aspirations of the concept and the realities of its implementation. While international intervention successfully established a 'negative peace' by ending organized violence, the subsequent state-building and reconstruction efforts have largely failed to cultivate a 'positive peace' rooted in social justice, inter-ethnic trust, and genuine human well-being. The analysis suggests that

this failure stems from an overly formalistic and state-centric approach to peacebuilding that prioritizes political stabilization and institutional engineering over the deeper, more complex work of societal healing and transformation.

The persistent erosion of community and political security highlights a central paradox of post-conflict governance in the region. The power-sharing arrangements designed to manage ethnic tensions have, in practice, institutionalized them. By making ethnicity the primary organizing principle of the state, these frameworks have empowered nationalist elites who have little incentive to foster a broader, inclusive civic identity. This aligns with the critiques of liberal peacebuilding, which argue that the top-down imposition of democratic institutions without addressing underlying grievances and power imbalances often leads to a 'hybrid peace' where the forms of democracy exist without the substance (Richmond, 2011). The human security of individuals is thus held hostage to a political system that thrives on division. The international community's reluctance to challenge these entrenched ethno-political structures, often for fear of destabilizing the fragile peace, has allowed structural violence to become normalized.

Furthermore, the deep connection between socio-economic precarity and the mental health crisis demonstrates the indivisibility of "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want." The trauma of the past ("fear") is constantly exacerbated by the hopelessness of the present ("want"). High unemployment and corruption are not just economic problems; they are sources of profound psychological distress that undermine individual and collective resilience. The failure to integrate mental health and psychosocial support into the core of the reconstruction agenda was a critical strategic error. As the literature on trauma suggests, societies cannot effectively rebuild their economic or political futures while a significant portion of the population remains psychologically shackled to the past (Herman, 1997). The 'brain drain' from the region is perhaps the most telling indicator of this interconnected failure: young, educated people are fleeing not just a lack of jobs, but a lack of hope and a future free from the burdens of the past.

Finally, the case of the education system is perhaps the most damning indictment of the short-sightedness of the post-conflict strategy. Education is the primary mechanism through which societies transmit values, identities, and historical narratives to the next generation. By allowing schools to become sites of segregation and nationalist indoctrination, the political settlement in the Western Balkans has effectively programmed the continuation of conflict. This contradicts the fundamental logic of human security, which is inherently future-oriented and preventative. A genuine human security approach would have recognized that curriculum reform and integrated schooling are not 'soft' issues to be dealt with after political stability is achieved, but are rather essential components of that stability. This failure ensures that the 'clash of civilizations' Huntington (1996) warned of is not just an international phenomenon but is being cultivated at the micro-level, in the classrooms of post-conflict societies.

In the context of the 'new international order,' where the attention of major powers is shifting away from sustained engagement in regions like the Balkans, these deep-seated problems pose a significant risk. The fractured peace is vulnerable to both internal and external shocks. Without a resilient social fabric, strong civic institutions, and a generation educated for peace rather than conflict, the region remains susceptible to political manipulation and renewed instability. The lesson from the Western Balkans is clear: human security cannot be achieved through political quick fixes. It requires a long-term, holistic investment in the social, psychological, and educational foundations of peace.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper set out to examine how the enduring legacies of armed conflict and the shortcomings of the international human security framework manifest in the social and educational spheres of the post-conflict Western Balkans. The analysis has demonstrated that despite more than two decades of peace, the region is characterized by a 'fractured peace'—a condition free from war but rife with the structural violence of ethnic division, socio-economic despair, and institutionalized segregation. The core components of human security—political, community, economic, and health—remain profoundly compromised. Ethno-nationalist political structures undermine trust and rights, economic stagnation fuels hopelessness and emigration, and a pervasive mental health crisis goes largely unaddressed. Most critically, the education system, a vital tool for shaping future generations, has been co-opted to perpetuate division rather than foster reconciliation.

The case of the Western Balkans serves as a crucial, if cautionary, lesson for the international community. It reveals that peace agreements and state-building initiatives that prioritize short-term stability over long-term societal transformation are bound to fail. A robust human security agenda cannot be an afterthought; it must be the central organizing principle of any post-conflict intervention. This requires moving beyond a narrow focus on elections and institutions to a deeper engagement with the fabric of society itself: how people relate to one another, how they heal from trauma, and what they teach their children.

The challenges are immense, but they are not insurmountable. Based on the findings of this analysis, the following policy recommendations are proposed for both national stakeholders and international actors committed to building a sustainable peace in the region and beyond:

1. **Prioritize Integrated Education and Curriculum Reform:** International actors, particularly the EU, should make funding and accession processes conditional on the demonstrable dismantling of segregated school systems like "two schools under one roof." A regional commission of historians and educators should be established to develop common guidelines for teaching the history of the conflicts, emphasizing multi-perspectivity and critical thinking over singular, nationalist narratives.

2. **Integrate Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) into all Sectors:** MHPSS should not be confined to the health sector. It must be integrated into education (trauma-informed pedagogy for teachers), the justice system (support for witnesses in war crimes trials), and economic development programs (linking psychosocial support with vocational training). Community-based mental health services should be scaled up to de-stigmatize care and make it more accessible.
3. **Support Grassroots Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Initiatives:** Top-down justice mechanisms like the ICTY, while important, are insufficient for societal healing. Greater funding and political support should be directed towards local, community-level initiatives that bring different ethnic groups together for dialogue, joint memorialization projects, and collaborative community work. These programs help rebuild the social capital destroyed by war.
4. **Reform Political Structures to Promote Civic, not Ethnic, Identity:** While politically challenging, the international community must exert sustained pressure for constitutional and electoral reforms that move away from rigid ethnic quotas and power-sharing. The focus should be on strengthening the rights of all citizens, regardless of ethnicity, and fostering a shared civic identity that can transcend historical divisions.

In conclusion, the journey from a state of war to a state of genuine human security is a generational task that requires patience, resources, and a profound commitment to healing the invisible wounds of conflict. The international order may be shifting, but the fundamental truth of the human security paradigm remains: there can be no lasting peace for states without lasting security for their people. The fractured peace of the Western Balkans is a stark reminder that our collective security depends on building societies where all individuals are not only free from fear, but are also free to hope, to heal, and to build a shared future.

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