



Hybrid Threats and Civilian Crisis Prevention: Building Resilience in a Fragmented World

Main messages from the Annual Conference of the Advisory Board to the Federal Government for Civilian Crisis Prevention and Peacebuilding

On **9 October 2025**, the Advisory Board to the Federal Government for Civilian Crisis Prevention and Peacebuilding jointly hosted the annual Berlin Peace Dialogue 2025 at the Federal Ministry of Defence (BMVg). Under the headline *“Hybrid Threats and Civilian Crisis Prevention: Building Resilience in a Fragmented World”*, the conference addressed how Germany and its partners may effectively respond to the growing array of hybrid threats - cyber-attacks, sabotage, and disinformation - that transcend the traditional civil-military divide. Hybrid threats blur the line between peace and conflict.

Against the backdrop of Russia’s war against Ukraine, rising authoritarianism, the erosion of the liberal rules-based international order, and increasing societal polarisation, the event emphasised the urgency of strengthening civilian crisis-prevention capacities alongside defence capabilities. Around 160 participants on-site from politics, academia, civil society and security services explored how integrated security approaches safeguard democratic institutions and prevent conflicts - from Germany and Europe to international peacebuilding arenas.

Key Messages on Hybrid Threats and Civilian Crisis Prevention and Peacebuilding

Resilience and Public Communication

- **A common narrative as a key to resilience.** One, but probably the most important prerequisite for counter hybrid threats successfully is to having a convincing common narrative on what is worthwhile to defend, for example freedom in all its aspects. This is the core of resilience.
- Towards a **resilience-oriented and preventive security culture.** The era of hybrid threats calls for a paradigm shift and a mentality change — from reactive crisis management to proactive and preventive security policy that bridges the civilian–military divide and strengthens society’s collective capacity to act. Communication needs to be outspoken but not create panic.
- **Strengthening trust across platforms and generations, supporting media literacy and prosocial technology, and investing in local institutions are essential to reducing vulnerability and enhance societal resilience.** Civil society and peacebuilders play a crucial role in building resilience through dialogue, storytelling, and inclusive communication that restores empathy and mutual understanding. Countering disinformation requires moving beyond fact-checking to address its root causes and the behavior of generators and spreaders, not only recipients.

Integrated Approaches and the new National Security Council

- **Integrated security is a task for the society and state as a whole.** Germany has faced hybrid attacks for over a decade. Addressing these challenges requires a coherent and coordinated approach that unites domestic, foreign, development, and defence policy, and brings together civil society and government.
- **Coordination and collaboration through a strong and inclusive National Security Council.** The newly established National Security Council offers the opportunity to truly anchor a comprehensive security approach - linking foreign, defence, development, and interior policy to respond effectively to complex crises with both civilian and military instruments. A truly comprehensive security architecture capable of addressing hybrid threats needs to be inclusive and anticipate crises, not just respond to them.
- **Establishing a whole of government situational analysis is overdue.** Until now, there is no shared situational analysis within the Federal Government that prepares and keeps an up-to-date common intelligence picture for the entire government. The National Security Council foresees such a situational analysis. In the face of hybrid threats, it must be more than just sharing information, must be capable of functioning under stress, to be “exercised” frequently – yet to be field-tested.
- **To counter hybrid threats effectively, civilian and military engagement must advance hand-in-hand.** The intensity of cooperation between military and civilian actors must be strengthened and not only maintained. Therefore, investments in civilian crisis prevention must go hand in hand with the responsible building of defence capabilities.
- **Crisis prevention begins at home.** With the rise of hybrid threats targeting democratic societies, the expertise of civilian crisis prevention is increasingly required within Germany itself. Protecting democratic institutions, social cohesion, and public trust demands civic-military integrated efforts and coordination between international and domestic policies.
- **A renewed commitment to the do-no-harm principle is required.** As international conflict settings have become increasingly protracted and particularly dangerous for local actors, ‘do no harm’ and conflict sensitivity are key for current and future - particularly external - support to civilian crisis prevention and peacebuilding efforts abroad. This holds true particularly in hot spots such as the Sahel, Sudan, and the Middle East.
- **Coordination with tech companies** should be central to civil and military engagement around hybrid threats, as these companies host the platforms where disinformation is created and disseminated. Likewise, situational analysis must include rapid access to the expertise and insights held within those companies.

Learning from other contexts and across sectors for countering hybrid threats

- **Strategic advice from civic and military actors is required.** Civil society actors and researchers have decades of knowledge and experience in building trust, countering division, and promoting social cohesion. Their expertise must be part of national security strategies to safeguard democratic culture and societal resilience.
- Important **lessons need to be learned** from Ukraine actors and situations like the Sahel. What joint tools and platforms should be used? How can hybrid threats be contained, verified and combated if they do not pass a certain threshold?

- **Hybrid threats undermine peacebuilding by international actors** and highlight how closely security settings are connected across continents. In regions such as the Sahel, hybrid tactics have become a regular instrument in the arsenal of asymmetric actors, such as non-state armed groups, aiming to destabilize peace processes, and democratic transitions and peacebuilding efforts. Fact-checking alone cannot effectively counter or respond to these large-scale campaigns. The international community must engage more deeply with local contexts and actors, and respect African sovereignty while promoting transparent and inclusive partnerships.
- **Disinformation has become a weapon against democracy.** Actors behind hybrid threats deliberately use climate change, migration, and energy narratives to polarize societies and weaken trust in democratic institutions. Climate-related disinformation must therefore be understood as both an environmental and a security risk to democratic resilience.
- **Climate security is political security.** Climate-related risks are directly linked to stability and governance. Addressing them requires integrated strategies that combine environmental, social, and political dimensions. Climate disinformation, resource competition, and migration pressures must be tackled through coordinated responses that strengthen both ecological and institutional resilience.
- **Local, but also national ownership and trust are key.** Sustainable international peacebuilding requires clarity of purpose from external partners and empowerment of local actors. Localisation is particularly relevant after the US cut off its efforts in this area. Strengthening strategic communication at the local level, governance, and inclusion reduces vulnerabilities to manipulation and builds resilience against hybrid influence.

About the Advisory Board

By bringing together expertise from civil society, academia, and security institutions, the **Advisory Board to the Federal Government for Civilian Crisis Prevention and Peacebuilding** supports the Federal Government in shaping effective crisis prevention and peacebuilding policy.

Appointed for four years, the Board comprises 20 experts from academia, foundations, the military, police, and civil society organisations. Its mandate is laid down in the Federal Government's *Guidelines on Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace* (2017). The Advisory Board fosters continuous exchange between government and civil society and publishes positions on strategic questions of peace and security policy. More information is available at:

<https://beirat-zivile-krisenpraevention.org>

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The above statements summarize key outcomes and insights from the discussions at the **Berlin Peace Dialogue 2025**. They do not necessarily reflect the official positions of the Advisory Board or its individual members.