



OVERVIEW

The purpose of this briefing is to report on the key observations from the North-West Europe Case Study Workshop, which took place on the 29th of January at the Royal United Services Institute in London. The insights emerging from this EvoCS regional workshop have provided a sense of the complex interconnectivity of the debates that have shaped/are shaping the security discourse, as well as the disconnected dimensions that could be considered under this nebulous and politically charged term. The workshop allowed for corroboration and/or re-calibration of the EvoCS coding analysis, informing the coding with expert opinion from a cross-section of policy makers, academics and practitioners. This approach aimed to overcome the cross-sectional nature of the dataset, revealing something of the provenance of the concept of security and its constituent components from a variety of stakeholder perspectives.

WORKSHOP RESULTS

Timeline Exercise and Discussion

In total, the 24 delegates posted 255 'influences' on the timeline, covering 116 separate 'influences', each of which was deemed to have determined or shaped the region's security discourse since the 1990s, with a particular focus upon 'influences' occurring during the last 10 years. In addition participants identified 26 trends/security developments viewed as underpinning thinking in the policy arena. The key 'influences' considered to have shaped security perceptions were seen as significant defining moments in the ways that security has been understood and accounted for in political decision making.¹ These included influences such as the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Kosovo War, various major terrorist attacks including 9/11, Madrid, London, and the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris.

The key trends noted on the timeline referred to underlying socio-political trajectories and movements which could be seen to have ongoing influences on the nature of securitization. These included the rise of organised crime, the expansion of the European Union, ethnic diversification, and the influence of social media and the internet. The discussion about the influences and trends led to the following key points:

- **Slow burning unfolding influences** (i.e. trends and developments) can be as significant as high profile events, in shaping the general security dialogue.
- **Globalisation of security:** Events that occur outside of Europe can have direct impacts upon the security situation in Europe.
- **The phenomena of 'widening security':** Non-security events have become securitised, because in doing so it can make it possible to quickly mobilise resources.
- **Security considered as a negative construct:** It is extremely difficult to identify ideas about security that relate to positive events than negative events. Negative events are punctuated with collaborative policy endeavours and cooperative policy shifts.
- **Security is a 'reactive' process** (events disrupting trends): Security appears to be about knee-jerk reactions, but ideally should be about being able to accommodate events within consistent policy frameworks.
- **'Hard security'** was deemed to be the most prominent dimension of security and thus can end up being prioritised over other dimensions.

¹ To see the full web-based timeline, please follow this link: <http://www.dipity.com/evocsnw/EVOCSNW/>

Discussion about the dimensions of security

The results of this discussion demonstrated the increasing complexity of inter-sectoral issues. With a large number of actors involved in security related issues, it is difficult to identify specific security dimensions. The political, governance, economic, physical, social, environmental and other dimensions of security are interconnected and form a complex system of inter- and intra - dependent networks that mutually support each other.

It was also pointed out that some of the dimensions - mainly those falling under Physical safety - more often than not become the focus of what was deemed 'hard' security due to their proximity and high impact. Thus the most prominent security dimensions were: Security of the State; Financial security; and Energy security. It was suggested that this leads to some other dimensions of security being neglected; these dimensions include: Identity and culture which were not viewed as a direct threat to security; Climate change due to the apparently discrete long-term impacts; Infrastructure as being taken for granted by the general population; and Cyber security due to the general lack of understanding about technological developments.

Reflections on the provisional EvoCS findings

The presentation of the provisional EvoCS results for NW Europe led to the discussion that highlighted similarities and differences between the findings of the document analysis and those generated during the workshop. It was acknowledged that due to the time and financial resource constraints, the project has some limitations. For instance, the perception of the laymen is not taken into account; issue of framing the questions (i.e. security vs. insecurity); coding results mainly demonstrates the snapshot of security rather than its dynamics; spatial framing of security.

The discussion on the future of security did not provide predictions and forecasts (as this was viewed by the participants as unhelpful/superficial), but rather revolved around the suggestion that we need to learn from past mistakes. The most prominent suggestions included:

- '**Turning the telescope around**': it is important to understand whether what/who we see as a threat also sees us as a threat;
- Security has moved into a **Post-Snowden era** thus creating new challenges: accountability, costs and so on should also be taken into account. Civil security is important, and much more intelligence sharing should be done, between agencies and also take civil society into account.
- Security is moving towards **remote warfare**, i.e. not boots on the ground, move towards using drones etc.
- It is very difficult to think what the next crisis will be, but the government discourse will identify a threat to security and spend money on preventing (or at least minimising the impacts of) these **new threats**.
- The issue of different **timescales** was highlighted particularly in relation to the roles of political decision makers.
- Issues such as **climate change** will become more prominent in security discourse due to the likely impacts on global and regional inequalities and subsequent knock-on consequences.

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