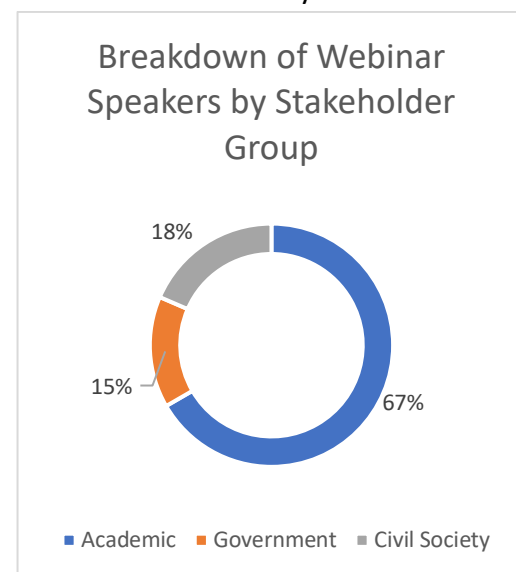# Global Security Roadmap

Introduction

In today's interconnected world, security issues have grown increasingly complex. These developments require a rethinking of how we study and practice global security. This roadmap provides guidance to government officials, civil society actors, academics, and private companies on how to best analyse and think about global security.

Global security consists of political, economic, and social dimensions. Understanding global security requires identifying how these dimensions interact with each other dynamically.

The Global Security Programme at Oxford University's Pembroke College and Blavatnik School of Government co-hosted a webinar series with 27 world renowned expert speakers from academia, civil society, and government to discuss and reflect on how to productively think about and analyse global security.

We supplemented the findings from our webinar series with an extensive review of the global security literature. This roadmap synthesises the key insights from both the webinar series and our literature review to derive key recommendations that can inform better security policy and programming design. This can help improve the lives of individuals living under conditions of insecurity.

Breakdown of Webinar Speakers by Stakeholder Group

18%
15%
67%

■ Academic ■ Government ■ Civil Society

Global security and its three dimensions

- Global security can be considered a continuously evolving concept that encapsulates all "camps" of security studies under one umbrella term. Global security emerges from the dynamic interactions of political, economic, and social dimensions.
- We understand the political dimension to refer to the geostrategic power balance

between different states. The economic dimension refers to the transnational supply chains and economic flows between different societies and regions. The social dimension refers to people's lived experiences of (in-)stability on the ground.

- Different types of actors matter to global security including but not limited to governments, civil society organisations (NGOs, academia, etc.), private companies, and individuals on the one hand, and violent politically or economically motivated actors on the other. The boundaries between these actors are not clear cut.

- Those analysing global security need to consider global security from the top-down as well as from the ground-up. This means that the lived experiences of people on the ground as well as larger scale implications of security policies need to be considered.

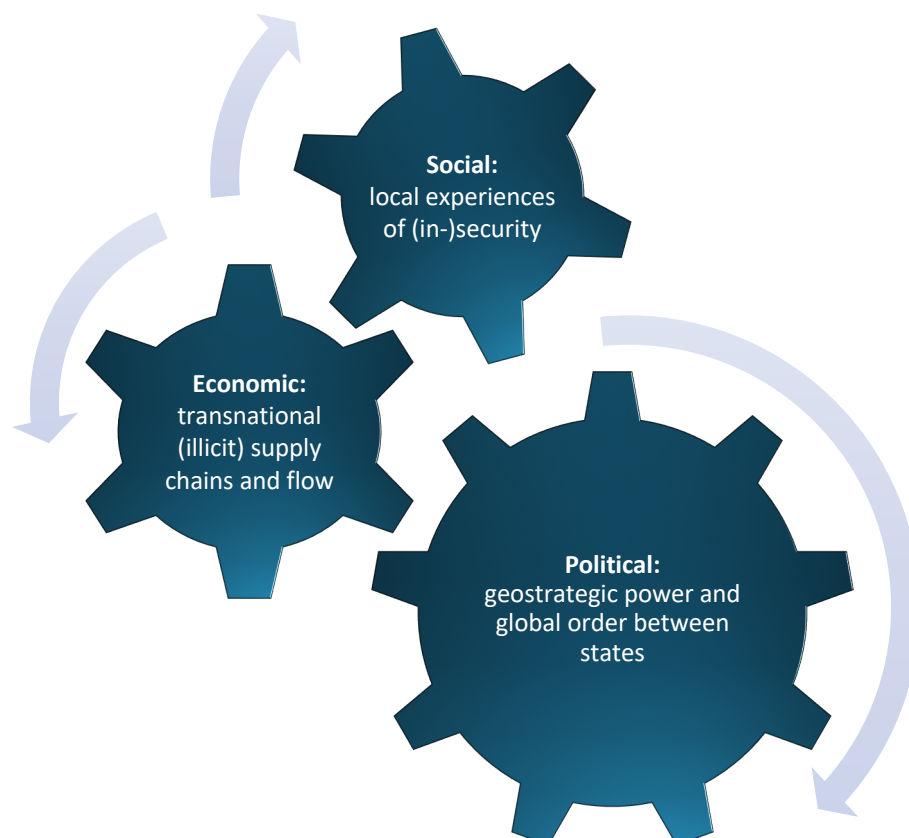- The words used to describe global (in)security can reinforce the power interests of selected actors. Governments, academics, civil society actors, as well as private companies need to consider the rhetoric of global security in describing and designing their responses to global (in)security.

- Currently, there is a worrying resurgence of a narrow interpretation of security, focussed on the nation state, that may fail to address today's interconnected security challenges.

How to analyse global security

- To run assessments that illuminate a security challenge from diverse perspectives, different methodologies, types of data, and representation of findings are key.

- This requires training in, and the use of, both quantitative and qualitative methods.

- In conducting their assessments, governments, civil society actors,

Figure 1: The dynamic interactions between the three dimensions of global security

Social: local experiences of (in-)security

Economic: transnational (illicit) supply chains and flow

Political: geostrategic power and global order between states

academics, and private companies should constantly question and critique their methodological and theoretical assumptions.

- Representations of data and findings need to be understandable for people from various backgrounds. For example, artists and humanities experts can contribute with data visualisations and text writing.

Guidance for practitioners:
Make use of different innovative methodologies when conducting global security assessments. Data and findings of these assessments need to be represented comprehensively for wide audiences.

Spaces and scales of global security

- While the term global security makes reference to *global* security issues, it is essential to consider security at all types of scales. This includes the local, regional, and global scales.
- The local, regional, and global interests of governments, civil society actors, private companies, and individuals can often be in tension with each other. For example, our global need for climate change solutions may drive demand for rare earth minerals and contribute to harmful mining practices at the local level.
- In pursuing their interests, governments, civil society actors, private companies, and individuals use formal (e.g. state structures) and informal (e.g. family, religious, tribal, ethnic etc.) means to contribute to security or insecurity.
- Top-down efforts of achieving global security are less likely to be successful if they do not enjoy regional support or are not backed up by regional authorities. For

example, when states impose multinational responses to security issues, these responses may still fail despite enjoying multinational support, if they do not account for regional and local stakeholders.

- Advancements in digital technologies have opened up a new space for diverse actors to act without constraint. Digital technologies can thus contribute to insecurity. On the other hand, these technologies may also provide opportunities for greater local stakeholder engagement and contribute to mutual understanding and security.
- Enhancing security requires understanding how and why governments, criminals, or economic actors can act without constraint in different spaces. This includes, for example, understanding (i) when social media amplifies hate between groups, and when it can foster understanding; (ii) when regions with limited state presence can organise to provide security, or allow malicious actors to contribute to insecurity; and (iii) how regions with strong state presence allow states to act without constraint and accountability.
- At any level, it is important to avoid one size fits all policies for global security.

Guidance for practitioners:
Practitioners need to consider the interests of governments, civil society organisations, private companies, and individuals located at different spaces and across different scales of security. To resolve tensions between different actors located at different scales, it is important to engage a variety of actors located at the local, regional, and global level. It is important to empower and stay attuned to the perspectives of marginalised actors by providing them with

Global security and its political dimension

- The political dimension accounts for the balance in geostrategic power between states as well as other political actors.
- Historical legacies affect the ways in which competition for such power plays out. For example, some states claim historical precedents to justify their geostrategic ambitions.
- While states are the most visible actors in the political dimension, non-state actors including individuals are also powerful actors.
- Insecurity at an individual level can aggravate political divisions and contribute to global insecurity.
- Agreement by different state actors on what constitutes a global threat is important to achieve global security.
- Security should be guided and influenced by a common understanding of norms and values.

Guidance for practitioners:
Consider how geostrategic competition plays out, its varying historical contexts, and how individual grievances aggregate to form geopolitical divisions. Adhere to normative guidelines that enjoy widespread legitimacy but be equally mindful of potentially differing values in local contexts.

Global security and its economic dimension

- Transnational economic flows can impact security in ways that are often not acknowledged by analysts. For example, highly uneven flows of goods and services can exacerbate poverty and deny people access to food and medicine.
- States also mobilise economic tools to disrupt other countries' abilities to lead wars or compete in the geopolitical dimension. This has become more prevalent given diverse actors' reliance on advanced technologies and on transnational economic flows to unlock these technologies.
- Corruption and illicit flows can erode security as powerful elites enrich themselves. This can erode trust in governments and siphon off money that could be otherwise used for social development.
- Inequalities based on group identity can erode security at a local level by aggravating grievances. Groups who have suffered from inequality may then resort to violence.
- The licit and illicit dimensions of the global political economy intersect, and it is difficult to consider them in opposition or isolation. For example, criminal organisations may rely on legal businesses to launder money. This can hurt the economic prospects of societies and prevent them from developing.
- The complex make-up of both licit and illicit cross-border flows means that disruptions and policies have impacts beyond these immediate flows. For example, trade embargoes are more complex to enforce when international shipping consists of ships from one country, carrying the goods of another, and arriving in a third to be used in yet another product to be exported abroad.

Global security and its social dimension

- People's lived experiences of (in-)stability matter for local, regional, and global security. However, the way in which individuals perceive global security and insecurity is often ignored or side-lined in discussions.
- Fear among individuals may spark aggression and exclusionary policies.
- At times, multiple threats are blended into one big threat.
- Short-term thinking of individuals can negatively affect global security in the long run.
- States are not always the powerful actors that they present themselves to be. Hence, they are not always able to solve security challenges by themselves.
- Empowerment of local communities is necessary to include their perspectives in, and achieve, global security. Without input from local communities, security policies are likely to backfire as they often do not enjoy local legitimacy.

Global security and the dynamic interactions of its dimensions

- The interactions between social, political, and economic dimensions can enhance or erode global security. For example, states may gain geostrategic power by leveraging economic means and dominating transnational flows. Similarly, they may then neglect the lived experiences of individuals who will channel their resentment into organised violence against these states.
- While global security should be analysed along and across various dimensions, an "over-securitisation" of issues may in the long run lead to more insecurity because it produces an atmosphere of fear and justifies unsustainable spending of both economic and environmental resources.
- Adequate global governance structures need to be put in place to coordinate how to address security challenges holistically and coordinate across different actors. For example, conferences, and panels organised by the United Nations can serve to give marginalised groups a voice and work out how to best address security challenges.
- Global security means different things to people in different contexts and can therefore raise inherent tensions. To resolve these tensions, it is important to include a wide range of actors and perspectives in discussions at different levels.
- Civil society organisations can influence power structures by building alternative organising forms and institutions which can address security.

- Building empathy and understanding across different communities is an important tool to overcome tensions in global security.

Guidance for practitioners:
Seek out a wide range of perspectives on the security issue at hand. Build empathetic understanding across different societies. Tensions invariably arise, but they can be minimised by embracing a plurality of perspectives.

Conclusion

Enhancing global security requires interdisciplinary and multidimensional lenses. This means that analysts should consider the perspectives of governments, civil society organisations, private companies, and individuals situated in different localities and at different levels. The political, economic, and social interests as well as interlinkages between these actors and spaces need to be considered. Analysts should also consider how these communities and localities connect through different transnational flows.

To be effective in designing policies, methodological diversity is crucial. Analysts should be familiar with different ways of analysing, understanding, and representing data and findings.

Anyone enhancing or researching global security needs to constantly question and update their assumptions on global security. At the same time, a commitment to normative standards such as human rights serves as a crucial guiding principle.

Global security challenges continue to dominate the lives of numerous individuals and profoundly impact future generations. Meeting these challenges through engagement with a diverse group of stakeholders, including academic experts, civil society organisations, governments and private companies is necessary to guarantee global security.

Global Security Programme
https://globalsecurity.web.ox.ac.uk

The Global Security Programme (GSP), based at Pembroke College, conducts cutting-edge research on global security in the contemporary world. Taking a genuinely interdisciplinary approach to global security research, GSP focuses on security dynamics in the context of armed conflict, cross-border violence, and the global illicit economy, transitions from war to peace, and responses to insecurity. We emphasise the connections between localised insecurities and global shifts in power and order. While grounded in Political Science and International Relations, our work also draws on insights from other social science disciplines and is in dialogue with the humanities, the arts and STEM. Our research combines various methods ranging from ethnographic approaches and visualisation techniques to quantitative methods such as GIS analysis. We place emphasis on both developing rigorous theorisations of security as well as carrying out applied research. To enhance the positive impact of our work, we have long-standing partnerships with various UN bodies as well as universities in conflict zones and advise governments and international organisations.

Minerva Global Security Programme

Our research at the Blavatnik School of Government, and part of the Global Security Programme based at Pembroke College, Oxford, seeks to illuminate the dynamic interactions of the political, economic, and social dimensions of global security: global order, transnational supply chains and local experiences of instability. Networked illicit flows of weapons, drugs, money, and trafficked people span contested cross-border spaces embedded in unstable regions. They can turn local security risks into a globally relevant phenomenon. We study how this mechanism works, and how it helps proliferate cross-border violence, strengthen armed actors and shift the global balance of power. We expect that, together, these intersecting dynamics undermine global security, influencing order in the contemporary world.