

23 FRIDAY, 23 OCTOBER 2020

## **Czernin Security Forum 2020: Threats to Global and European Security**

9.00 – 9.30:

### **Opening Remarks**

Ondřej Ditrych (IIR Prague, Czechia):

The director of the IIR Prague welcomed all the participants and the audience to the annual event and proceeded by introducing this year's topic "Invisible Threats to Global and European Security". Describing the topic as suitable for the current situation with the pandemic crisis, which is an invisible threat itself, he highlighted the issue of visibility. We cannot see Covid-19 and cannot fight it, and only a few had seen it coming. Some argue that we should have expected it and perhaps the global experience of the pandemic will make us see and expect more in the future. To see threats and anticipate them in the future, the values of resilience and strategy will be needed for competent policy making. The issue of vision is an intriguing one, as we should aim at seeing clearly, avoid seeing threats where they're not or when they are magnified by distortion. Can threats be what they are only because we can see them, like in the Thucydides trap? The threats are not there waiting to be seen; it is a matter of perception and formation. And this is what limits the power of political responses. To conclude his introduction he mentioned that both seeing at all and seeing well are essential competences for prudent and measured policies, just as independent expertise is for flexible policy making, which is necessary to tackle the complex threats of today.

### **Keynote Speech**

Rafal Rohozinski (Co-founder and principal of the SecDev Group):

Covid-19 represents an unprecedented challenge to the global system which one day, when the global order will have been transformed, we will be looking back on the same way that we were once looking back upon World War II, according to Mr. Rohozinski. Within a few short months, fundamental features of the world's system, from international air travel to the supply chain sustaining trade, have been dramatically fragmented and re-ordered. While a small number of countries have recovered relatively quickly, most have had to close their borders and disrupt everyday life and are being profoundly disrupted by closures and lockdowns. The economic costs are severe; the World Bank is projecting a decline of over 5.2% of global GDP and international trade is going to contract by above 30% in 2020, according to the WTO. Covid has come at a time of global tensions, Mr. Rohozinski said. The pandemic arrived at a time in which the world had to face climate change, nuclear threats and a cyber war. Although it came as a surprise to most, Covid was not unexpected. Despite the high costs, recovery from it is inevitable. Humankind was never more prepared to deal with this emergency than now. Perhaps the invisible threats are what we are unable to see around us, but maybe they are what we embrace and welcome into our homes and rarely pay any attention to. Perhaps threats are the changes which come faster than our society's ability to adapt to them and challenge our notions of governance, equally creating both new opportunities and dilemmas.

Furthermore, innovation does not come when new ideas are born but when the economy allows existing processes to be replaced by new approaches. This is the case with the technologies used today.

The new wave of innovation will be global but the center of it will be in Asia, as Mr. Rohozinski pointed out. There are at least 3 geostrategic dimensions to consider in terms of the impact of the digital revolution.

First, we have built on a foundation of sand and the technological “tsunami” that is coming is based upon technology which is 52 years old. But fortunately, the internet was built for resilience. Second, Europe and North America have backed themselves into an enormous hole pondering the question of “who” and “what” should govern the cyber space. This has left countries in a position to make up their own rules. Thirdly and lastly, the absence of rules in the governance of the cyber space has created additional instabilities in the international system. This is seen through the absence of an international convention that we could find regarding this or of police forces capable of fighting cyber-crime. With the internet being global as it is, a crime can be committed in one country yet take place in another. Almost 100 countries are currently in possession of cyber weapons and those that are not can rapidly procure codes and repurpose them, as was the case in 2014, when North Korea used cyber-criminal techniques and coding to carry out a significant attack against Japan’s Sony Pictures.

Mr Rohozinski continued by claiming that we probably should be aiming at increasing the overall security and confidence for everyone. One way to do this would be to re-conceptualise security and not view it just as the protection of networks, services and data, but rather as a means of resilience. To ensure the protection of the increasingly complex and interconnected digital societies in which we all need to survive and recover from shocks and crises, investments have to be made in the concept of digital resilience.

To allow all states to anticipate, prepare for and respond to the inevitable crises and disasters, which is the concept of digital resilience, there are three enablers, as Mr. Rohozinski mentioned. The first is having a national approach to cyber security informed by a national strategy which puts in place authorities, information and budgets to ensure a coordinated government response to incidents that impact the national digital systems. Secondly, continuity has to be taken into account to ensure that societal systems continue to work during times of stress. Covid provides us with a very real example of this in practice. More broadly, this means that society and the government need to manage and recover from crises that affect digital systems. Lastly, investments need to be made into a strong data governance and privacy. While the value placed on privacy depends a lot on social and societal norms, a trusted digital ecosystem needs to be established as it is fundamental in resilience. Trust and confidence in the integrity of data are essential, as is trust in authorities and institutions.

The speaker concluded his speech by explaining the importance of digital resilience in the current and future world, where a mutual agreement has been reached by the international society upon the matter of governance of the cyber space. Digital resilience can create mutual confidence that there shall not be any more risks and vulnerabilities stemming from weaknesses in technology in the absence of rules that would be shared amongst societies. As a projection of international force, digital resilience will make everyone feel a little bit more confident and a little bit more secure that their ability to manage and recover from these risks is possible.

9.45 – 11.00:

## **Success and Failure in Detecting Invisible Threats**

The chair of this panel, Mr Ditych, offered greetings to all the guests – namely the speakers and viewers - and made a brief introduction to the topic before yielding the floor to the first speaker. This panel aimed at discussing the probability of threats and their unexpectedness. Are there warnings that people refuse to see? Are there factors that prevent us from seeing imminent threats? What is the role of the policy makers and to what extent have they succeeded or failed in responding appropriately to the unexpected events?

**Tinatin Khidasheli (Chairperson of the Civic IDEA, a democracy platform in Georgia):**

Opening the panel, the first esteemed speaker, Ms. Khidasheli, formed the structure of the discussion on the points of the panel. Beginning with the issue of time, she explained that today we have a different problem compared to the previous years. The world has moved from China’s rise to power or terrorism to the fading confidence in authorities. There is a passive energy towards facing the challenges and leaderships, as they prove themselves unable to manage the risks that we are all currently exposed to. On top of all the problems that the world is facing at the moment, such as conflict and poverty, there is a

missing leadership. According to Ms. Khidasheli, the world needs the type of leadership that will bring everyone the courage not to give up, but to continue in good work.

She expressed her hope is that the evils of the world that put democracy itself and its values at risk, will cease and all leaders aiming at taking advantage of the ineffectiveness of the world would stop. Ms. Khidasheli proceeded by saying that people are in need of leaders who would try to have a positive impact, put effort into facing threats like the pandemic and offer solidarity. To sum up, she argued that the leadership that has been around all these years is the opposite of what our strangling societies need. To conclude her speech, the speaker answered the question of how we got to this point: “we took many things for granted, like, for example, our democracy and leadership. That is where we went wrong”.

### Gunhild Hoogensen Gjrv (Professor at UiT The Arctic University of Norway):

Picking up the discussion where the previous speaker left off, Ms Hoogensen highlighted that invisible are the threats that are difficult to detect, trace and attribute to a specific enemy. Democratic societies are particularly vulnerable to invisible threats. We are talking about leadership and the important role of the leadership, but the relationship between the leadership and the people of the society in question is a very important one. All the things happening in the world have an effect on the trust of the people in the given leadership, and thus the leadership's ability to represent the society becomes weakened. There is also a heightened polarisation of views. If people are not aware of the ways their society is vulnerable, then those vulnerabilities will be targeted and exacerbated. And that is the role that civilians play – to point to such vulnerabilities. The most important invisible threats of today are most likely misinformation, disinformation and fake news. This also leads to a weakened representation of the society by the leadership and trust issues among the civilians as well. In this particular issue, the role of social media is significant because while we use them, custom made information comes up according to our preferences and that adds to the polarisation of the views. The ways the people themselves are influenced are mostly the ways the capacity of the leadership is influenced as well.

### Sarah Bressan (Research Associate at Global Public Policy Institute, Berlin):

Shedding light on the topic of the panel from a researcher's point of view, Ms. Bressan presented her work. She shared with the audience the methods she uses to conduct her research, which aims at finding possible threats and making policies in advance in anticipation of these threats. Though clarifying that the future cannot be truly predicted, she explained that there are models that can explain events like conflicts and that can measure the probability of them occurring. Everyone has an image of the future. The way our brain works and anticipates events is a sign of evolution. There is a range of cognitive and social bias that influences our thinking about the future. The research taking place in the Global Public Policy Institute of Berlin, aims at finding out what the mechanisms of people's thoughts are in this respect in order to make the thinking about the future more explicit. The information is there but it's not structured, and the way we anticipate future events is also unstructured. So, what needs to be done is to combine information we already have with missing data. That is what the research is about. Furthermore, she continued, one factor that significantly affects our way of thinking is recent events and that is why scenario-making processes are used throughout the research. A few years ago, no one would have thought of a pandemic occurring, but after 2020 it will be a very plausible scenario to consider. However, everybody knew something like this would happen at some point, but nobody knew when and how. The aim in this regard is to use the foresight methods we have to generate a strategy. Ms. Bressan concluded that we may not be able to predict the future, but we can think of a wide range of probable events and based on the prioritised scenarios, from the most probable to the least probable, we can put the data together to find a strategy for and anticipate each one of them. “Risks keep coming, which is normal, and what people do is react at the right time and with the right instruments”.

### iga Turk (Professor at the University of Ljubljana):

Taking the stand as the final speaker of the panel, Mr Turk explained why it is impossible to detect the undetectable or expect the unexpected and that it is a “fatal conceit” to pretend or assume that one can do so. The bright side is that in our societies we are used to the unexpected and thanks to engineering, biology

and our own society's mechanisms, we find ways to manage and deal with it each time. His perception of the topic can be summarised in the following points:

- The engineering approach: robustness, resilience and ductility.
- Biology and society are similar.
- The unexpected is the enemy but their fragility is the ally.
- Order is predictable, chaos is unexpected and invisible threats are disorder, which involves the things that we do not understand.

There is a solution to this problem based on J.B. Peterson, which is that culture protects us from chaos. Culture entails all the institutions, morals and habits of our society, which are emergent and tested by social evolution. These values respond to threats through the sanctity of every life, and the empathy for other people. Talking about the resilience of the community/society, it is understandable that we are referring to what exists between the individual and everybody. We cannot care for only one person, nor can we care for everybody.

In conclusion, all the speakers of the panel agreed upon the unexpectedness of the future, while defending the importance of the people being prepared with the right mentality and instruments to manage all crises and imminent risks. Placing prominence on the value of resilience, which is to come from the right communication and cooperation of the society itself and its leadership, the speakers stated in the final analysis that the unexpected is part of the order of our lives.

11:15-12:30

## **Whose Security? Divisions in Europe on Threats and Security Responses**

**Chair: Matúš Halás (IIR Prague, Czech Republic):**

The chair, Matúš Halás, opened the discussion by introducing the guests. In this segment, experts commented on the discrepancies and contrasts that have emerged in the last few years among EU members. Notably, challenges and emergencies such as Brexit, disinformation campaigns and the Covid-19 pandemic are the main factors that caused such diversities. In particular, the experts observed and discussed how threats are perceived differently on the state level but also within groups and communities across Europe and among NATO member states. Remarkably, there is an ongoing rhetoric about an East-West divergence in political approaches, especially with respect to foreign and security policy. Is this discourse valid or is it rather baseless? Is there really a clear cut between East and West, or between centre and periphery, or is there no such thing as homogeneous visions within the European Union? The experts who took part to this panel acknowledged the existence of rather heterogeneous groups within Europe and in its immediate neighbourhood, and therefore rejected the fashionable discourse that looks at the European Union as an entity divided into West and East, at least with regard to recognising security threats and defining security policies.

**Daniel Hegedüs (Research Fellow at the German Marshall Fund, USA):**

The first panelist is an expert on Central and Eastern Europe and focuses on the European and foreign policies of the Visegrad Group, namely the cultural and political alliance between the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary. Mr. Hegedüs constructed his speech around two pivotal questions: 1) Is it possible to define an East-West divided vision with regard to the crime and security perception of European member states? 2) Is it possible to identify regional commonalities in the security policy formulations of the Visegrad Group member countries?

First and foremost, Mr. Hegedüs considers the existing argument of a threat and security perception divided between the East and the West rather unjustified and unsubstantiated. He believes indeed that such a partition is "first of all a mental and highly political divide that is mainly created by the discourse itself, which treats Central and Eastern Europe as a homogeneous entity from a political perspective while in fact it is one of the most heterogeneous regions in Europe". In compliance with this assertion, Mr. Hegedüs argued that trends show, on the one hand, that the threat perception within the European Union member states is rather converging, since the countries agree on the importance of cyberattacks, international terrorism and unrestrained mass migration, inter alia. However, on the other hand, with respect to security issues,

including the growing Chinese influence, Russia's aggressiveness, and even the role of NATO as the principal guarantee of security in the region, Central and Eastern European states have rather incompatible and dissimilar opinions. Notably, Mr. Hegedüs maintained: "there is no such thing as an Eastern threat perception".

Mr. Hegedüs' skepticism was also evident when he discussed the portrayal of the Visegrad Group as a homogenous entity sharing identical approaches and perceptions in terms of security and threats. Despite the group's effective defence cooperation and cordial neighbourly relations, the Visegrad countries are largely disjointed on any essential strategic and geopolitical issue in the region. Undoubtedly, what unifies the V4 format is geopolitical necessities, local policy cooperation and ambitions, as well as the countries' common refusal of solidarity towards European asylum policies, rather than mutual security strategies. Nevertheless, the expert concluded: "the Visegrad population is still very far from an effective security cooperation format and the treating of it as a homogenous group of countries at EU level is rather baseless".

### **Susi Dennison (Senior Policy Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations):**

During her speech, Ms. Dennison presented a project titled "Lessons for Europe from Covid-19", a public opinion poll carried out by the European Council of Foreign Relations aimed at finding out how the pandemic had affected the way European citizens think about the European Union. Ms. Dennison focused on three main findings:

The perception of a failing role of Europe during the Covid-19 crisis: data warn about a spread sense of frustration among European citizens with regard to the role of Europe during the pandemic. There is indeed a perceptible disillusion and disappointment with the way institutions handled the crisis. Notably, the interviewed citizens remarked that there was a sense of state isolation in the confrontation with the sanitary emergency. Ms. Dennison indeed stressed that: "when we asked who the most useful ally in the coronavirus crisis was, the largest answer in every EU state that we covered was no one; my country had to deal with this by itself". However, Dennison highlighted that the roles of China and the United States had in fact deteriorated after the first wave of the coronavirus as well.

The need for an improved European sovereignty and an advanced "progressive protectionism": this second finding revolves around the issue of a possible European structural change after the pandemic, since the virus indeed highlighted the deficiencies of the European systems. Notably, the citizens emphasised the need for more EU cooperation: "63% across all of Europe answered that the coronavirus showed the need for more international cooperation, not less", claimed Ms. Dennison. Furthermore, the interviewed people supported the idea of ensuring unity in response to global threats and crises, as well as pointing to the need for more control of European external borders. The citizens also stressed the need for a European economic independence, since long supply chains have proved to be a vulnerability.

A broader definition of security and alarming issues: the interviewed citizens believe that the European Union needs to be prepared for future threats and crises. Particularly, there is a new perception of European security, where climate change, economic challenges and digital sovereignty play a big role.

### **Valery Perry (Researcher at the Democratization Policy Council (DPC)):**

Ms. Perry pivoted her speech around the political expectations and social perspectives of the Balkan region. She argued that the Balkans can be the next frontier of the European Union and the Transatlantic Organization. However, the region is grappling with a series of domestic and regional risks, which are undoubtedly becoming exacerbated with the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, but still have their roots in partitions and events that have occurred in the last few decades. Notably, Ms. Perry mentioned a combination of historical negationism, ostracism, a growing neighbourly rivalry and the militarisation of the area, as well as the spread of corruption and nationalism as the leading trends in the region.

Furthermore, Valery Perry explained that the region is currently witnessing a widespread loss of confidence in the support of the international community and other liberal actors as a consequence of the enhanced partnerships between the West and illiberal and even authoritarian actors who do not support progressive reforms or European integration. Therefore, she claimed that all these tendencies are "culminating in terms of eroding faith and trust in democracy as a system and the rule of law in many places; (they are) exacerbating some of the income inequality that much of the world has been experiencing and from which we never really recovered since the 2008 financial crisis."

Additionally, Valery Perry highlighted how progress in the Balkans is extraordinarily tied to the European Union's approach and initiatives in the region. Namely, in the post-Cold War environment, the European Union was used to promoting structural incentives and subsidies aimed at installing values-based democratisation policies as well as a comprehensive security environment. However, she noticed that in this day and age, there is a return to narrow transnationalism in the field of international relations and this is particularly evident in European policies in the Balkans because the EU has "progressively lowered the bar in terms of short-term technical wins rather than support for more long term commitment to values".

### **Vesna Pusić (Co-founder of the Civil Liberal Alliance in Croatia):**

Vesna Pusić discussed polarisation in societies and the rise of populism. The former Croatian First Deputy Prime Minister explained how in the nineties, the Balkan region was a pioneer with regard to the spread of populist groups exploiting the nationalist discourse and rhetoric in order to support a more oppressive political thinking. In that era, she claimed, liberals of the Balkan region marvelled at the Western democracies and human rights-based systems.

Nevertheless, according to Pusić, the world has experienced a series of circumstances and dynamics, such as the 2008 financial crisis, which have dramatically transformed the European Union as an entity. More specifically, the European Union of economic prosperity, high standards and good politics based on a comprehensive and respectful-of-human-rights approach seems to have ceased to exist. In this context, populism has flourished: populist parties have indeed taken advantage of the economic and political stagnation in order to expand existing divisions and ruptures and exploit them for their own electoral interests. Particularly, Ms. Pusić explained that "[t]he populists have managed to persuade a lot of people - and in some countries the majorities - that multi-party elections equal democracy. That winning in multi-party elections means or gives you the right to do whatever you want".

Notably, the ascent of populism is one of the biggest threats that Europe is currently facing. First and foremost, the rise of populist parties may jeopardise the existence of the European Union as a whole, and simply make vain the enormous efforts that member states have put into the creation and the sustenance of the EU. Secondly, the existence of populist governments in the European Union is the reason why, for instance, Europe is an absent actor in the negotiations for peace in Syria, and it is even the reason why the European Union procrastinated in taking a position towards the government of Lukashenko in Belarus.

### **Questions and answers**

In the last part of the discussion, Matúš Halás asked the experts to answer some questions. Halás asked the experts what country they consider to be the role model for other countries nowadays, since the United States seems to have lost its position of a trailblazer. In addition to that, the research fellow at the Institute of International Relations asked the guests to express their opinion on the existing solidarity among the European countries.

The first expert to answer, Dennison, argued that currently no country is the role model. The European Union is currently at a defining moment during which it needs to extend its authority with regard to technology, sovereignty and strategic economy, inter alia. Notably, the European Union has lost its privileged relation to the United States, which ceased to be the role model. At the same time, China is definitely not the role model, especially because of the European rejection of the Chinese aggressive attitude towards the United States.

Mr. Hegedüs agreed on the absence of a role model as well. Particularly, he pointed to the past economic crisis and the lack of a stable systemic order as the reason for the nonexistence of a specific role model. Mr. Hegedüs argued that the fundamental values that inspired the foundation of the European Union, have been disrupted by the past crisis and resulted in a lack of cohesion among member states. Consequently, European countries exploit and capitalise on the benefits of European integration on the one hand but neglect their duties when it comes to cooperation on the other.

Likewise, Valery Perry also agreed on the absence of a role model. However, she does not necessarily consider this absence to be negative; contrarily she claimed that the definition of a state as a role model can be extremely dangerous. With regard to solidarity, Ms. Perry argued for the need to create a ground for cohesion and mutual support, especially among different groups and populations, rather than among mere countries. For instance, environmental actions are attempting to enhance transnational solidarity. Ms. Perry then concluded with the point that new generations will provide interesting ideas and new patterns aimed at the increment and amelioration of European solidarity.

13:15-14:00

## Expert Workshop: Trust in National and International Institutions

The aim of this panel was to present and discuss a policy paper published by Asya Metodieva devoted to border restrictions in Europe and the new border regimes we are currently experiencing due to the on-going pandemic.

### Asya Metodieva (IIR Prague, Czechia):

Border controls have been introduced in many countries in Europe in response to the pandemic. Later on, as the borders slowly reopened, European states switched to a combination of border restrictions, compulsory quarantine and testing. But the unsynchronised process led to confusion and a lack of effectiveness.

The question tackled in the paper is thus: Considering the on-going outbreaks as well as the future ones, are border restrictions an effective way to tackle pandemics?

We have little experience in dealing with such situations and it is a challenge for politicians to come up with solutions. From previous experiences such as Ebola or local outbreaks of Covid-19 in China in January and February of this year, we know border control to be quite inefficient in slowing down a virus' spread. On the other hand, by preventing people from travelling, these measures get in the way of medical support from other countries being properly distributed.

International regulations are clear on what should be done at the entry points of a country:

- Detection of travellers who might be ill
- Interviews with travellers
- Reporting ill travellers
- Quarantine
- Initial case management

However, some European states did not have the necessary capacity to follow these steps, which is why politicians decided to impose travel restrictions and border closures in the spring of 2020.

The fundamental problem is that border restrictions oppose the need for greater international cooperation. The pandemic does not have borders. Besides, it gets in the way of EU citizens' freedom of movement.

We ended up developing policies based on national individualism rather than international cooperation. Politicians framed the pandemic as a national security threat. Logically, with the philosophy of protecting their country, closing borders is the first resort. Given the disparities between the health care systems of different countries, policy makers favoured solutions protecting their own hospitals as a way to tell their populations that the state will protect their health care system so it can provide for its citizens.

The issue here is the lack of coordination. Some countries took the decision to reopen their borders during the summer, but these decisions were not based on a thorough threat assessment but driven by political and economic interests. This puts certain EU citizens at a disadvantage compare to others who were privileged to enjoy their freedom of movement.

Many countries decided to implement the traffic light system recommended by the European Commission. It distinguishes between countries with high- and low-level risks of infection, the aim being not to block everyone but only certain populations based on the number of cases in each country.

EU states keep having this individualist approach despite the recommendation of the Commission to synchronise their responses. One of the questions we need to ask is thus, how can we replace these measures, which are seen as a short-term response?

In any case, there is no 0-risk measure. When it comes to quarantine, for instance, states don't have the capacity to fully enforce it and it thus relies partly on the good will of the population. The testing on arrival policy has also been criticised, since even after getting tested, individuals can get infected abroad and bring the virus back to their home country.

Looking at the regional level, even within the Visegrad Group, the responses were very diverse:

The Czech Republic was one of the first countries to implement the traffic light system. But by loosening the social distancing rules and the compulsory mask wearing, its health authorities failed to prevent the crisis the country is facing today.

Austria did implement a creative solution of testing on arrival targeting certain high-risk regions instead of whole countries. Slovakia also engaged in a policy of testing the entire population and implementing detailed quarantine rules for anybody coming in from high or low risk countries.

Hungary announced its decision to suddenly reinforce its strict border restrictions without any warning to anyone.

In conclusion, the main recommendation of this paper is that closing borders is the least preferable option due to the deeply negative consequences for freedom of movement of goods and services. The state's role in this regard can be discussed as well as the EU's. But we have to focus on other measures that would allow us to avoid having to implement border restrictions.

### **Cameran Ashraf (Assistant Professor at Central European University):**

States are territorial entities. Because of an historical context, they have a claim of exclusive sovereignty over some part of the earth. Scholars, think tanks and journalists have made of the territorial element a de facto source of legitimate power and authority. Thus, unless you have a chunk of territory that everybody else agrees is yours, you have no vote in the United Nations.

In her paper, Ms Metodieva argues that Central European states have taken steps to reinforce this territorial individualism. This means that territorial states cultivate this sense of uniqueness and difference through a specific tradition and history, having their own visions of how the world should operate.

« The logic of sovereignty also provides space for stricter or looser restrictions justified by political and economic interests rather than adequate threat assessment. »

These policies are based on touristic, economic and diplomatic considerations. Ms Metodieva's paper encourages us to move beyond this outdated vision of national exceptionalism, which displays a real lack of imagination and creativity at the state level. She advocates a vision aiming to substitute state sovereignty for a more regional coordinated and synchronised response.

Ms Metodieva calls us to move beyond what John Agnew calls the « territorial trap »: this idea of a fundamental duality or polarity between the domestic and the foreign. The state seen as a container of society.

« Policy interventions and policy making, academic research and journalism can all benefit from a reflexion on the ways our geographical vision of the world is contributing to pandemic responses, which has thus far exacerbated the diseases rather than actively contributing meaningfully to solutions. »

It is precisely because the pandemic knows no borders that we have to think beyond and above them, even though they have dominated the public discourse and policy. We have to appeal to the creativity and wisdom of various ethno-national groups involved in the pandemic rather than remaining in the old fashioned, border limited vision.

### **Response from Asya Metodieva:**

In my view, territory should not be the starting point of decision making.

Looking at the quarantine measures, although we do not check people at each entry point, there are mechanisms to restrict, navigate and control the movement of people for the sake of protecting public health. Thus, we have to reconceptualise the idea of borders; they are not necessarily the physical spots of entering a country but they can also appear in different bureaucratic rules that we implement. Although the state has a primary sovereignty over its territory, this monopoly over the territory might be a limitation for the politicians.



### **Question from Cameran Ashraf:**

Could you elaborate on some of your recommendations and how you see them being implemented regionally? What structure could be erected around them? What would it take for it to happen on the ground?

### **Response from Asya Metodieva:**

First, we need a detailed assessment of the public health capabilities in the given country: the government's actions and their history in the past months, and the behaviour of the citizens. This will give us the full picture of one country or a group of countries, helping us to analyse whether they can synchronise their measures and work towards the idea of letting people move freely.

The European Commission has issued recommendations for a more standardised testing procedure (which test to use, whether it has to be done 72h before entry, at which entry point, etc.). Regarding quarantine there is a need for synchronisation and communication between states.

The Central European countries are trying their best to stay open and create rules within the V4 or the Central European region. But there are still great variations which might lead to confusion in the threat assessment or the implementation of the adopted policy.

### **Question from Cameran Ashraf:**

What is the role of the state and borders in times of pandemic?

Are you aware of any practice in the EU or around the world which really stood out and could serve as a model?

### **Response from Asya Metodieva:**

State sovereignty is still very present; it is a central element, as states insist on demonstrating their capacity to protect their populations from the pandemic. On the other hand, sovereignty can also be used for the sake of cooperation with other countries. The European Union is based on solidarity, and sovereignty should not be a limiting factor in addressing the pandemic; it should be a bridging concept, creating a link with other states on a regional or even EU level. Thus, sovereignty should not be a concept endorsed by nationalist and populist rhetoric to build the anti-globalisation narrative. Sovereignty should be considered in the sense of a group.

### **Question from the audience:**

Do you believe certain countries closed their borders for other reasons than Covid-19?

### **Response from Asya Metodieva:**

In my view, some countries made this decision without a public health assessment but based on economic and political priorities. Governments did not develop comprehensive threat assessments well enough during the past months. Instead, we saw decisions presented as preventive measures. For example, Hungary: in the beginning of September the country had a very limited number of cases but it implemented very strict border restrictions after the summer reopening period. The political rhetoric was also in line with the idea that Hungary is safe and the rest of the world is not. No one is welcome as we perceive you as a threat. We could also see countries reopening towards other countries because of tourism. And it is an understandable reason since tourism is important for the economy.

### **Question from the audience:**

Does the WHO want international cooperation? Were they satisfied with the individualist responses and were their recommendations taken seriously?

### **Response from Asya Metodieva:**

Although the WHO's advice didn't make the news headlines, their recommendations, from the beginning, stated that borders should not be closed, and they tried to push towards international cooperation. I am not saying the decision of European states to close their borders was a mistake; it was an emergency response; there was a moment of panic. But now, we have tools and time to reflect on these policies and decide whether we will need them in the current and future outbreaks.

### Question from the audience:

Can we consider border closures rather as a political test of the EU's attempt to change the citizens' mindsets?

### Response from Asya Metodieva:

This points again to the political rhetoric and the choices of policy makers on how to frame the threat. The question is whether the target audience of their messages was local populations or the EU.

### Question from Cameran Ashraf:

The pandemic seems to accelerate problems which were already in motion before then. Among them there is a serious reconsideration of borders and sovereignty. We saw it through the strong reactions of nationalists and populists trying to re-establish the importance of national identities. What do you see as the long-term effect of this on borders and sovereignty?

### Response from Asya Metodieva:

In a reference to the research of a previous panelist, a poll of the citizens of nine European countries was conducted, and they were asked whether they believed border restrictions should be tougher in the mid- and long term to protect people from Covid-19 or other threats. At first glance it seems like there is a significant support in favour of reintroducing serious border controls.

This can be easily implemented by a politician with a more nationalist rhetoric. However, it is an effect of panic. Another part of the research shows that a vast majority of citizens remain supporters of the freedom of movement across the EU. This means we are not ready to abandon our values to sacrifice what we built across the EU. But fear forces us to reconsider the concepts of borders and security.

I cannot predict what the conversation will be 10 years from now, but I am hopeful that people are not ready to abandon the values we have built in Europe for the sake of creating new artificial walls because invisible threats are not easy to stop by physical borders.

14:15-15:30

## **The Post-Pandemic World Order and Security Dilemmas: Freedom vs Security**

During this panel the discussion focused on the analysis of the current global coronavirus crisis the world is facing and the challenges it has posed to the modern international system. How this crisis is being handled and the decisions that leaders and societies are taking to fight it will probably shape global politics for many years to come. Governments have justified restrictions on civil liberties and movements by the necessity to provide public safety. Are we going to witness under-the-skin surveillance? How do crises empower authoritarian tendencies and polarisation? Does a state of emergency affect democracy? Which political regime is most capable of dealing with invisible threats? These have been the questions that were assessed during this session, which analysed how the pandemic is currently shaping state policies and challenging historical concepts of statehood and how this is going to shape future societies and the international system as a whole.

### Cristopher Coker (Director of LSE Ideas, London):

"All crises are disruptive. So, the question for today is: What form of disruption does this pandemic take?" During this speech Mr. Coker has strongly underlined that the global crisis created by the outbreak of the coronavirus is only accelerating a process that was already going on before then: the creation of a more surveillant state. Indeed, according to him governments are exploiting the pandemic in order to promote their own tactics, as, for instance, in the case of Hungary. In light of this, the pandemic is seen as an opportunity for introducing new legislation and keeping some of it permanently, while justifying it with a state of emergency.

Moreover, according to Mr. Coker, given that societies will have to coexist with the pandemic for an undefined period, the level of surveillance the state is going to exercise will be increasing and surveillance policies will become more intrusive. An example of that is the use of CCBD cameras during the pandemic in states such as the United Kingdom to monitor people's movements. For him, the use of cameras is part of a phenomenon called "knowledge broking" that aims to track people from a particular group – which has

already been used to identify criminals and has also been used to track groups during the pandemic. Indeed, people are being tracked due to their gender, age or ethnicity. In this way we categorise people according to their level of vulnerability. Mr. Coker refers to this phenomenon performed by states as “biological profiling of people” and argues that through this approach the state is depicting certain groups of citizens as a risk for the population. Consequentially, this represents a threat for the whole society since the approach is based on presumptions and encourages a categorical suspicion – suspecting people based on a category they are part of.

In his conclusion, Mr. Coker argued that given the developments in the domain of surveillance since the 80s, states’ surveillance patterns are clear: when a new crisis will come, states will be moving even further in surveilling the lives of people.

### **Mateja Peter (Director of the Centre for Global Law and Governance, University of St. Andrews):**

“The ability of the state to hold the monopoly on everything at this point is declining and the statehood itself is actually under challenge. This is not something that is new but that the pandemic has highlighted.”

In her intervention Ms. Peter has addressed the question of how invisible threats have implications for global governance, with a focus on the external dimension of the pandemic. The main point of her intervention is that in the contemporary era the biggest challenges are not state-to-state threats but the ones that involve non-state actors and raise global concerns in the system. And, as she pointed out, unlike in the past, states are now unable to dictate the terms to non-state actors in the system. Indeed, with the increase in the level and types of non-state actors interacting in the international system, the ability of the state to hold a monopoly on anything is declining and the whole concept of statehood itself is actually more under challenge than ever. However, this is not something new for the international community; rather it is something that the pandemic has only highlighted. Understanding both the internal and external implications for the global governance is essential for realising that the state is having an identity crisis. According to Ms. Peter, the statehood crisis is especially manifesting in 2 ways:

The return of categories, vocabularies and policies connected with the concept of states: there has been a return of categories, vocabularies and policies connected to states such as the idea of putting the state first and state centrality. Indeed, under the pandemic, states are performing their statehood more aggressively to show their own citizens that they are protecting them while the reality is that the structure behind this is more complex. They are over-performing their statehood through gaining additional power due to the pandemic-related measures, which involve centralising the state’s power, controlling the judiciary and becoming more surveillant. This in turn influences how states cooperate.

Externally, with the pandemic scenario, external policies of liberal institutions are just bolstering the idea of statehood, as, for instance, in the EU-Western Balkan situation, where stability has been valued over the rule of law.

Reluctance to adapt the existing normative framework to a new emerging environment: indeed, today’s challenges to the international system are different from the ones states were facing when most of the rules were created and now these rules have to be re-adapted to the contemporary scenario and challenges, as, for instance, in the case of the space – where non-state actors play an important role. This is why there is a need to understand that actors in the international community and system are not only states anymore, as there are also private sectors and other non-state actors.

Essentially, what Ms. Peter is arguing is that while states are over-performing their statehood to underline that the world is still state-centric, there is a need to understand that in the contemporary scenario there has been a shift from a state-to-state system to a system that includes not only states, but also new actors and institutions which are more difficult to control.

### **Cameran Ashraf (Assistant Professor at the School of Public Policy, Central European University):**

“Covid-19 has actually re-shaped the geography of conflict and security online. The re-shift of the geography has presented non-state actors as a juicier target”

What Mr. Ashraf focused on in his presentation is the spatiality of power, and he stated that the coronavirus pandemic has brought attention to concepts of time and space. On the one hand, the coronavirus, being a

biological organism, rather operates in natural time, and a lot of the frustration around it is caused by the fact that as human beings, we feel frustration with operating in natural time. On the other hand, the pandemic has a strong relation with the concept of territorial space: it has accelerated the perception of the shift between power and space.

Here the speaker reconstructed the relation between Covid-19 and the spatialities of power through the relation of the multiple forms of time and spatiality that have emerged during the pandemic.

Next, the speaker has identified Covid-19 as an actor in the cyber space because of the significant increase of cyber-attacks associated with Covid-19. Mr. Ashraf highlighted how Covid-19 presents a security challenge to space and power online through phishing emails; the increase of insecure remote connections due to home-working modalities; the use of company devices for personal use, which increases the possibility of downloading malware that could affect the company; and corona-related job precariousness, which results in an increase of insider threats in companies. In this way, the coronavirus has reshaped the geography of conflict online, making the home one of the main targets of cyber-attacks driven by both state and non-state actors.

Another geography of power treated by the news is the one related to the division of the internet between the US and China, and the rise of digital authoritarianism through the digital state.

However, according to the speaker this is a transition that will lead to other ways through which space and power relations can be re-defined and detached from the previous ones linked to territoriality.

As an example, he proposed a model of a spatiality of power that would decouple power from territories and revise geographies of power based of 4 conceptions: an ensemble of worlds, a field of forces, a hierarchical network and world society. The model has its own reflection in the online domain.

Concluding, he shared some thoughts, stating that the 2020 crisis has allowed us to consider different modes of thinking about and envisioning power and space, and reconsidering the Westphalian conceptions, and that thinking about power in cyberspace requires reconsidering power's historical linkage to territory and allows for new frontiers in policy and scholarship.

## Debate and final remarks

After the presentations, some questions were posed by the Chair of the discussion. Ms. Peter was questioned about the implications of the identity crisis of statehood and the decline of the centrality of the role of the state for global governance. She stated that while it might be thought that the implications will emerge later, they are already visible: the world is indeed more conflictual than cooperative as of now. And, in her view, the role of the surveillant state is not something that will disappear but rather the level of surveillance states will apply is going to increase when a new crisis comes up.

In turn, Mr. Coker was asked if he thought that supervised freedom would distinguish one society from another in relation to democracy. He answered by stating that this is the first time that the world approaches a pandemic with suppression, and that countries that have succeeded in managing the pandemic – such as Taiwan and, to a certain extent, Japan – have used very high-level technologies and systems to track people and contagions. However, in relation to democracy, he said that the success of the use of these disposals is also given by the nature of the populations: while the West is democratic, these countries come from stories of autocracies and dictatorships, so the reactions of their populations to the use of such disposals is different.

Finally, Mr. Ashraf was asked to elaborate on the implications for human rights. While relating this topic to discourses of technologies and human rights, he responded that three main essential freedoms are at the core of the debate: freedom of expression, religion, and association. However, he then stated that he thinks that new technologies call for a re-thinking of human rights, and possibly even the creation of new ones.

## **The Next Borderless Malicious Strategies. Are We Ready?**

This panel was hosted by PhDr. Emil Aslan, the Research Director of the IIR, with the participation of Dr. Nicolas Stockhammer, a Security Policy Analyst and Counterterrorism Researcher at the University of Vienna and the Humboldt-Universität of Berlin, Dr. Christina Schori-Liang, the Head of Terrorism and Organised Crime Cluster in the Geneva Centre of Security Policy, and Dr. Jessica White, a Research Fellow in RUSI's Terrorism and Conflict group. The principal theme was the changes that Covid-19 has brought to the invisible threats regarding state and non-state actors within borders.

### **Nicolas Stockhammer (Researcher on security and terrorism, University of Vienna):**

The first part of the panel was the presentation by Dr. Nicolas Stockhammer, who presented his work "Transnational Terrorism and Covid-19", in which he made a parallel between the situational awareness before and after Covid-19. Over the course of the last years a decrease in the number of Salafi-Jihadist attacks in Europe coexisted with the erosion of the ISIS Caliphate in Syria and Iraq, the weakening of ISIS and al-Qaida's rising insignificance in Europe. The propaganda activity has also declined substantially, which affected the terrorist groups' success in terms of recruitment, according to Dr. Stockhammer's study.

Terrorist organisations attempted to use the pandemic for profit. There was a boost in the returning of FTFs and local cells, and the closing of borders has impacted the trans-borders mobility. A growth in Jihadist propaganda that contains threats to spread the virus was also registered. This has influenced the UN decision to reinforce the CBRN1 planning in order to be better prepared in the shadow of crises such as Covid-19.

Stockhammer then introduced Boaz Ganor's argument that Covid-19 and terrorism are similar: "Covid-19 and terrorism cause and foster indiscriminate fear". In this comparison terrorism equals infection, inspiration and a contagious spread at the same time. In both phenomena public trust is undermined and the social order destabilised. Stockhammer then tackled the "democratic dilemma" of security versus liberty to express how the basic rights are being questioned. The economy has been severely damaged; for years to come we will still struggle to fix it. The necessity of an international cooperation to confront both threats is crucial for achieving success in both areas. To conclude the discussion of the Boaz Ganor comparison Dr. Stockhammer argued that the nature of terrorism will always remain the same but its character will most likely change, and that the main difference between terrorism and Covid-19 is that TNT is a man-made effect while the virus is probably not. Therefore it is important to study each phenomenon according to its own vulnerabilities and nature.

In the last part of the presentation Dr. Stockhammer stated that Covid-19 has accelerated the hybridisation of terrorism. In the near future the conflict-terror nexus will still be very present; nevertheless the social grievances and cohesion erosion generated by the ongoing crisis, together with the political polarisation, will result in an increase of political violence. In the end, Dr. Stockhammer stated that he recognises the internet as the biggest winner of the pandemic, and also as the catalyst of the online radicalisation.

### **Christina Schori-Liang (Head of Terrorism and PVE, Geneva Centre for Security Policy):**

The second part of the panel was a presentation by Dr. Christina Schori-Liang that elucidated "how Covid-19 generated more disinformation and what the causes of this disinformation are". She said that this is a generation defining moment in which poor governmental responses to the health crisis have provoked a wave of acts of political violence, criminal activities, and criminal governance tactics, and a lack of trust in state institutions, traditional media, scientific bodies and democracy.

The pandemic has strengthened authoritarian regimes, argued Schori-Liang. Furthermore, autocratic leaders have found in the pandemic a reason and a justification for their delaying elections, obtaining unlimited power and increasing the restraining of the public. Autocratic government power needs disinformation and misleading data, and autocratic leaders ensured it by censoring or, in extreme cases,

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<sup>1</sup> [https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR\\_pubs/DR\\_a/pdf/web/ARN17082\\_FM%203-11%20FINAL%20WEB.pdf](https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/ARN17082_FM%203-11%20FINAL%20WEB.pdf) Accessed 29/10/2020.

even physically assaulting media workers, enhancing their soft power and promoting the idea that their way of governance was the most capable of containing the threat. Hackers and non-state actors have also benefitted from the situation by fomenting fear and mistrust of the political powers' ability to handle the situation.

The professor also maintained that some criminal organisations have successfully legitimised their presence in local communities since they offered them more efficient help than the governmental ones, in some cases even by issuing health restrictions when the state failed to do so, which was the case especially in Eastern Africa.

She then revealed some data on how right-wing extremists and white supremacists are profiting from the global disruption, the use of conspiracy theory propaganda as well as calls to weaponise Covid-19 that have been advertised as the "spark of the apocalypse". Their line of argumentation also supports a very delicate idea, namely isolation from outsiders, which could lead to attacks against different ethnic groups such as Jews, Asians and Italians.

To conclude Dr. Schori-Liang advocated for the importance of recovering the digital domain. One way to do it is through education. Creating digital literacy programmes in schools, and teaching internet users how to catch manipulation attempts in order to weaken extremists could be a way to start. Deradicalisation projects using social media data to identify and socialise with radicalised individuals should be developed while there is also a need for counter-disinformation initiatives to debunk forms of manipulation in online interactions.

### **Jessica White (Research Fellow in RUSI's Terrorism and Conflict group):**

The last presentation of the panel addressed the theme "How extreme right-wing actors are shifting the angle in Europe" and was delivered by Dr. Jessica White. In Europe the concepts of nationalism, exclusion or even persecution of people from a different ethnicity or nationality, nationalistic influences and fighting for a cause are the backbone of several countries. The Covid-19 crisis brought to the surface old, previously dormant beliefs in the superiority of some nations and/or ethnic groups.

The lockdowns and the pandemic itself have offered a breathing space for conspiracy theorists to exploit fear and provide misleading information in order to justify the rise of violence towards Asians and Jews, argued Dr. White. Meanwhile, groups are becoming organised online in order to plan manifestations against public services and, in extreme cases, even spread the virus.

The exposure to extremist and conspiracy discourses was facilitated by the fact that once almost all interactions were moved online, the mainstream online social space was invaded by extremist groups. Private chats in social media applications are still the primary source of discussion for such activities, but the range dimensions for claims and manifestations have now crossed the digital border that used to separate those groups from the traditional public. Those groups lack an organised mastermind behind them and they also lack a physical space but they are predominant in the online space, which is exploited in the current situation but also exposes their data exchange and makes them leave a digital track behind them, as explained by Dr. White.

To conclude she claimed that many political parties exploited the current situation by bending it to their own political agenda in order to justify violations of rights, and back up the claims made by conspiracy theorists. Rebuilding a "superior race world" requires scouting chaos and creating something that might seem a bit extreme but extremist groups are taking advantage of the situation. It is impossible to predict how far this extremism will influence the crisis. She said it would be unwise to not take this under consideration.

### **Questions & Answers**

Is some people's belief that the coronavirus crisis might signal the advent of the Second Coming really caused by disinformation? Some see the coronavirus as a divine punishment.

#### **Response from Jessica White:**

I think people are taking advantage of this apocalyptical reality rather than believing that it is the end of the world, at least from the right-wing point of view. This is a typical response to all pandemics. People tend to think that it is some sort of punishment.

#### **Response from Nicolas Stockhammer:**

In the sphere of Islamism the idea of Covid-19 as a divine punishment was quite dominant in the early stages of the pandemic. But once the Muslim populations of the afflicted countries started to fall ill with the disease this discourse took a step backwards; they started to see it as a natural thing and not as a divine event.

#### Question from Emil Aslan:

There are now more threats to use biological weapons. Would you say that the pandemic has changed the way that Jihadist propaganda works, Nicolas?

#### Response from Nicolas Stockhammer:

Yes, I tried to allude to this before. This was seen as a unique chance to reach the US as it is vulnerable and has exposed its weakness. The government is focused on fixing the Covid-19 damage, which gives the extremists a chance to worsen the situation and provoke moderates to join the extremists.

#### Question from Emil Aslan:

They moved from claiming divine punishment to threatening to use biological weapons. Could we claim that?

#### Response from Nicolas Stockhammer:

In May 2020 there were some such pronouncements on the typical channels but the counter-terrorism experts point out that one important issue with terrorism is that it can only take place where there is a motivation capability. The terrorists have a lot of motivation; however, they are not yet capable of producing biological weapon for mass use.

#### Question from Emil Aslan:

Would you agree that actually fake news was not very impactful in this pandemic? There was a period when serious media were saying "It is just a flu".

#### Response from Christina Schori-Liang:

I believe that some countries that shared borders with countries that had a serious problem, such as Switzerland, which had the chance to oversee the situation with Italy, had a quicker reaction to the problem of managing of the situation. Other countries were slower because their neighbours were not badly affected. Indeed some official channels said that but there were also attempts to avoid scaring citizens even if most countries knew how bad it was going to become.

#### Response from Emil Aslan:

At the beginning no one had all the information. We learned what we know about the virus during the evolving of the pandemic.

#### Response from Jessica White:

Whether it is fake news or not, this falls on people's willingness to get tested and wear a mask or get a vaccine. In that prospect it does play a role.

#### Question from Emil Aslan:

Which methods and practices can be added to the inventory of terrorist and extremist groups to help them terrorise people in the post-Covid-19 world? What lessons have they learned?

#### Response from Nicolas Stockhammer:

I think one of the major lessons they have learned is the growing role of the internet in several spheres:

- Online radicalisation
- Online recruitment
- Planning logistics for attacks

- How to spread the whole story and win in a terrorist attack

Using the internet as a catalyst for the attacks and to focus on the right audience – for example, the France attack where the teacher was beheaded and within seconds the message was spread all over the world - this most likely will influence imitators, unfortunately. The entire attack was planned and organised online, as the attacker later made clear in a tweet.