Towards Sustainable Solutions in International Security Management—An Introduction

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Abstract In this introduction to the book, we consider key questions, such as; What is safety and security management? And what kinds of complex, grand challenges do organisations and stakeholders face in the security field? In the second part of the chapter, we shed light on three principles that characterise our approach throughout this book, namely the adoption of positive, solution-oriented and multi/inter-disciplinary approaches to security management. In addition, we provide an overview of the book’s structure and identify key cross-cutting themes related to globalisation, digitalisation and stakeholder relationships. As such, this chapter integrates the diverse perspectives in this book to consider how multiple stakeholders can work together to co-create positive safety.

Keywords Security grand challenges · Integrative · Multidisciplinary · Multi-level · Solution-oriented · Positive safety

Safety and security challenges increasingly transcend disciplines, sectors as well as organisational and jurisdictional boundaries. Climate change, cyber-crime, the extensive exchange of people and goods and the deep interdependency of critical

1The ‘refugee crisis’ refers to the record numbers of refugees subjected to forced migration in recent years (UNHCR). See https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html. Retrieved December 3rd, 2019.
infrastructures are just a few examples of security challenges that explicitly demand collaboration across sectors, regions and levels of society to develop sustainable and practical solutions. The need for integrative, multidisciplinary and multi-level solutions has been further underlined by recent events, including the refugee crisis\(^1\) and the Covid-19 pandemic, which have demonstrated the importance of working together to respond to complex and multifaceted security challenges. In this context, this book aims to provide holistic, timely and evidence-based insights by and for stakeholders across the international safety and security field.

We begin this introductory chapter by examining the nature of international security and safety management and the complex challenges and opportunities that stakeholders face when operating in this field. In the second part of the chapter we shed light on three underlying characteristics that transcend the contributions in this book, before describing the structure of the book (in five sections) and the common and emerging trends that crosscut these sections.

1 What is Safety and Security Management?

First, what is safety and security management? Security management does not only concern physical safety and security (e.g. feeling safe from physical threats such as fire or natural disasters). It also concerns social safety and security, such as feelings of cohesion and the absence of polarisation within one’s city or community. In addition, it touches on both objective aspects of safety/security (i.e. actual/tangible security and safety-related incidents) and subjective aspects (i.e. people’s individual feelings about how safe they are).

The terms ‘safety’ and ‘security’ are closely intertwined, although they are associated with different meanings in different sectors and disciplines (e.g. Piètre-Cambacédès and Bouissou 2013). Specifically, ‘security’ is often used in reference to intentional, external threats such as technological or human-made threats, including organised crime and terrorism, and threats that target national sovereignty, such as external interferences or threats to critical infrastructures. Conversely, ‘safety’ management usually refers to unintentional human actions that could harm the general public such as traffic or supply-chain safety, or that could affect social cohesion and the legitimacy and stability of democratic institutions. A number of chapters in this book grapple with the question of how safety and security are related. These chapters highlight different perspectives on how and whether these concepts can and should be distinguished (for example, see chapters by Van der Berg et al.; Hollnagel; and Muller). Other authors make a clear choice to use one of the two terms.

Interestingly, there are also cultural and language variations in how the words, ‘safety’ and ‘security’ are used, which are evident in some of our chapters, as authors come from different regions. Indeed, in some languages (e.g. German and Portuguese) different words for safety and security do not exist. In this introduction, we use the terms ‘safety’ and ‘security’ interchangeably, as a clear distinction is generally unnecessary for the purposes of our arguments. In doing so, we also invite
some level of flexibility in the use of these terms to facilitate cross-domain thinking and collaboration.

What about our focus on management? Most research in the field of safety and security is rooted in engineering, criminology, sociology, technology, informatics, health and political sciences. While this book is clearly multidisciplinary in nature, it also places an emphasis on the management aspects of security, including questions such as; How can security processes and institutions be better organised? How can security leaders be developed and educated? And how can international organisations capitalise on diverse networks and expertise to respond to safety and security challenges? Leaders of security agencies run highly complex and demanding organisations with large international networks and impact. As such, we aim to complement and advance traditional approaches to safety and security by explicitly incorporating a management perspective in this book. In doing so, we include the management of both private and public organisations in our remit, as we believe that both are essential for safety and security outcomes. In addition, we consider the broader context in which security management takes places, including societal and cultural factors that contribute to the safety and security landscape.

2 Complex, Grand Challenges in the Safety and Security Field

Many of the current threats in the international security field are complex and multifaceted in nature. Moreover, our ability to respond to, and prevent major security threats is often dependent on integrative and collaborative solutions, as no single nation, agency, organisation or government has the capacity to tackle the extant threats alone. As such, many of the challenges faced in international security management can be defined as ‘grand’ challenges or ‘wicked’ problems. Grand challenges are defined as “highly significant, yet potentially solvable problems” which, “are typically complex with unknown solutions and intertwined technical and social elements” and which, “may require working across disciplinary boundaries to solve” (Eisenhardt et al. 2016, p. 1113). Similarly, problems are described as ‘wicked’ when they have ill-defined parameters and solutions and when they involve complex and dynamic problem-solving processes and diverse stakeholders and parties (Roberts 2000; see also the chapter by Rodrigues and Sousa, in this book, for a more detailed description).

In their Global Risk Report of 2020, the World Economic Forum listed environmental risks like extreme weather events as highly likely and impactful global risks. Fears about technology and artificial intelligence are also prevalent, with the risk posed by cyber-attacks on critical infrastructures cited as a particular concern. Health systems are increasingly unfit to withstand challenges like pandemics and mental health crises, which pose additional global challenges. Such highly impactful ‘wicked’ problems will have far-reaching consequences in the coming years, with
the potential to cause critical infrastructure breakdowns, large-scale forced migration and far-reaching social instability.

Reflecting these and other key priorities in the security field, we address a number of grand security challenges in this book, including climate change (chapter by Fekete and Zsóka), forced migration (chapter by Langenbusch), and radicalisation and terrorism (chapters by Benolli et al.; Maurer and Herz). Moreover, as well as examining current grand challenges, our authors also consider emerging and envisaged trends, such as the unique challenges of the new generation workforce (chapter by Nezami et al.) and safety management in smart cities (chapters by Haan and Butot; Van Zoonen).

3 Crosscutting Characteristics and Themes

3.1 Three Key Principles That Characterise Our Approach

Throughout this book, the chapters aim to embody three primary characteristics, namely: (1) a positive framing; (2) a solution-oriented approach; (3) a multi/interdisciplinary character. But why are these characteristics considered so important as unifying principles?

Most discussions in the field of international safety and security management are dominated by narratives about threats and risk (e.g. Fay and Patterson 2018; Fierke 2015). We are not blind to these negative aspects of safety and security in this book. Indeed, many of our authors consider safety and security from this traditional threat/risk perspective. Yet, we also aim to challenge this dominant view by considering positive safety approaches and by shedding light on the opportunities that we may have to develop safer societies. More particularly, it is suggested that a focus on positive safety and ways in which people can foster optimal safety environments may be more constructive in realising those outcomes than an approach that only considers (the avoidance of) threats and risk. Authors thus address questions like; What is positive safety? (chapter by Suojanen and Thin); How can police organisations change their practices in order to contribute to the development of positive safety? (chapter by Maciel and Gesteira); What are the different (positive as well as negative) stories that individuals tell when describing their safety experiences? (chapter by Brands et al.); How can our words contribute to positive/empowering stories in the face of security challenges? (chapter by Fallon), and what can we learn by examining positive safety outcomes instead of only focusing on disasters and failures? (chapter by Zuiderwijk).

It is important to note that safety and security threats and risk are highly contextualised and have fundamentally different meanings in different global regions. Indeed, the devastating impact of natural disasters, collapsing governments and armed conflicts is not equally carried by nations across the globe. While some regions suffer tremendously under poor health, education and food conditions, for other
regions the situation looks fundamentally different. Some researchers even suggest that, far from being the norm, situations of insecurity, danger and risk are relatively rare in many modern societies. These contributors point out that, particularly in the Western world, positive, safe and secure environments are often regarded as states of normalcy and are taken-for-granted by most people, in most situations. Consistent with this view, research suggests that in many regions, life has never been safer than it is today (Cohen and Zenko 2019; Pinker 2018). Yet, at the same time, individuals’ subjective feelings of stress, worry and fear rarely match this reality (Gardner 2008; Glassner 1999). By offering constructive and positive approaches to safety, this book aims to shift that balance, highlighting the processes and methods we can use to enhance positive safety experiences within our societies.

The chapters also aim to be solution-oriented, providing practical recommendations and concrete guidance about the steps that can be taken to improve security outcomes. Critics have pointed out that academics and practitioners often have misaligned perspectives and interests, operating in separate worlds that rarely overlap or intersect (Fincham and Clark 2009; Gulati 2007). Academics are accused of being blindly concerned with abstract questions and rigorous empirical designs that have no practical relevance outside their narrow disciplinary boundaries. At the same time, practitioners in management positions are said to be reliant on intuition, quick fixes and the latest fads, and largely reticent to consider scientific or academic evidence in their decision-making processes (Rynes and Bartunek 2017).

The evidence-based practice movement, which spans evidence-based medicine, evidence-based policing and evidence-based management, offers a solution to this problem, advocating for the use of scientific literature, practitioners’ professional expertise, organisational internal data and stakeholder values and concerns to make better informed decisions (Barends and Rousseau 2018; Rynes and Bartunek 2017). It also highlights the importance of engagement among scientists and practitioners to co-create solutions and to develop rigorous and relevant educational tools that can support the development of future leaders (Briner and Walshe 2014). Consistent with this approach, this book combines the expertise of researchers and academics, with first-hand knowledge from experts and stakeholders in the field, to offer the latest research findings, practical applications and recommendations aimed at meeting international security challenges in integrated and sustainable ways. In addition, it incorporates insights into innovative educational tools and programmes that can facilitate learning, development and professionalisation within the field (e.g. see chapters by Karlović et al.; Juknytė-Petreikienė et al.; Wagner and Wehe).

A third characteristic that defines this book is its multi/inter-disciplinary nature. This is evident in both the chapter content, which often addresses multidisciplinary questions, and in the broad and diverse set of authors that have contributed to this book. Current approaches in the area of safety and security typically remain discipline- and domain-specific. Similarly, educational approaches are usually country-specific and in the limited cases when international training is provided, it stays within one domain. Compounding this situation, there are often gaps and disparities in international and organisational governance arrangements, along with discipline-specific agendas and interests. In order to develop sustainable solutions
and to build new alliances it is crucial that different stakeholders listen to each other (Gowing and Langdon 2015).

Providing an alternative perspective, this book aims to take a multidisciplinary approach. As such, authors explicitly reflect on the implications of their work for multiple sectors and disciplines in the safety and security domain and/or consider how their findings may be applied to collaborative work environments. In addition, the book’s contributors themselves represent a broad and inclusive collaborative network. Contributors come from different professional and stakeholder groups including the police, academia, banking, journalism and the arts. They also represent different scientific backgrounds and disciplines, such as management, public administration, political science, criminology, law, psychology, sociology and engineering, and different nationalities and countries of residence, including the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Brazil, Hungary and Croatia, to name just a few. These diverse perspectives are helpful in providing rich and multifaceted answers to the complex questions posed within the field of international security management.

4 Book Sections and Cross-Cutting Themes

The book is divided into five sections. The first section elaborates on conceptual perspectives on the international safety and security landscape, while the second section considers how people talk about safety and security (i.e. safety narratives). These initial chapters provide insights into how security management is conceptualised and articulated within the safety/security domain, thus offering strong theoretical foundations for future research and practice in the area. The third section focuses on grand security challenges, including current challenges and emerging challenges that are likely to become increasingly impactful in future years. The fourth section explores how security is organised; first focusing on stakeholder perspectives and then on collaborations and networks. Specifically, this section aims to examine how stakeholders can leverage intra- and inter-organisational networks, capital and resources to build safer and more resilient societies. The final section considers implications for education and learning, shedding light on the innovative educational tools and methodologies that can be used to inspire current and future leaders.

These sections provide helpful guideposts concerning the different questions and foci that are covered in the book. However, at the same time there are many interconnections and recurring themes that crosscut multiple sections (see chapter by Muller, in this book, for a review of current security trends). Chief among these are the issues of globalisation, digitalisation and stakeholder relationships, which we focus on here.

The topic of globalisation appears in many guises and is discussed from various perspectives. In particular, authors highlight the pivotal role that globalisation has played in shaping business security (chapter by Pierre) and in exacerbating major crimes (see chapters by Lapprand; Benolli et al.). At the same time, authors discuss the important role that global networks and international bodies (such as the United
Nations, TRACIT, Frontex etc.) can play in responding to shared threats and in contributing to peace and security around the world (e.g. see chapter by Spitz).

The theme of digitalisation is also omnipresent throughout this book. Technology plays a profound role in shaping the global risk landscape. Data fraud, cyber-attacks and artificial intelligence misuse rank high on the list of security concerns felt by many citizens worldwide. Yet our authors also highlight the important role that technology may play in contributing to safer societies. Chapter topics range from the use of artificial intelligence in crime reporting and decision-making processes within the police (chapters by Vermeeren et al.; Reez) to the education of healthcare workers in cybersecurity (chapter by Pridmore and Oomen) and the use of smart technologies in urban spaces (chapters by Haan and Butot; Van Zoonen). Authors also touch on the benefits and disadvantages of using different types of technology to communicate across geographical boundaries (chapter by Giesbers et al.).

In addition, many of the authors discuss different types of stakeholder relationships including public–private partnerships, academic-practitioner networks and multi-agency initiatives. Collaborations among private and public organisations have been fundamentally redefined in recent years (Van der Wal 2017) and private companies are increasingly expected to take responsibility for security risks (see chapters by Lapprand; Pierre). Such new stakeholder relationships may imply new definitions of security problems, power relations and responsibilities. Different security partners may also be expected to have vastly different expectations, goals and perspectives, which are likely to hamper collaborative outcomes (see for example chapters by Lanzer; Stepanyan). Yet, authors in this book also suggest that we can capitalise on connections between private and public/governmental organisations (chapters by Hirschmann; Thompson; den Boer), community and neighbourhood groups (chapters by Ruts; Frevel and Schulze), scientists, civilians and professionals (chapter by Bravo and Janssen) and international organisations and NGOs (chapter by Horton) to build safer societies.

As such, this book explores new ways of working among citizens, security organisations, academics and policymakers in order to co-create positive safety environments.

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