

Workshop Convenor: Dr. Hedvig Ördén, Lund University and the Swedish Institute of International Affairs (UI).

**Existential Threats, Foreign Interference and Cognitive Resilience in Times of War: The case of the European Union**

For almost a decade, the European Union has worked to counter foreign interference through measures aimed to enhance the ability of citizens and institutions to withstand malicious online influence. Existing practices for strengthening cognitive resilience include public diplomacy, fact checking and debunking, content flagging, media literacy, intelligence collection/sharing and public attribution. Such practices are premised on the idea of foreign interference being part of a ‘grey-zone’ conflict conducted below the threshold of war, using nontransparent methods to undermine the cognitive capacities of a population. In this context, a longstanding problematic has furthermore been how to reconcile ends and means when safeguarding liberal democratic values and institutions. Against this background and in the light of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, we ask: How does the outbreak of war in Europe redefine EU cognitive resilience practices?

This workshop seeks to address cognitive resilience practices in an ambiguous European security context where existential dooms-day-like threats of nuclear annihilation and full-scale invasion emerge alongside the long-time preoccupation with grey-zone activities. We hope to engage in interdisciplinary discussions on cognitive resilience practices in times of war and welcome security studies, critical security studies, IR and strategic communication scholars. The overarching aim is (1) to empirically take stock of emerging cognitive resilience practices in times of war, (2) to unpack security with regard to foreign interference in a contemporary European context, (3) to describe and theorize the changing relationship between justifiable ends and means, as well as the legitimacy of security actors, in relation to EU cognitive resilience practices in wartime.

Potential topics include, but are not limited to: On what grounds can we assess the appropriateness of cognitive resilience practices in wartime? Is there a changing relationship between justifiable ends and means? (consider the use of offensive practices, employment of sanctions, the changing character of digital diplomacy, use of new defense technologies and surveillance capabilities, new modalities employed by intelligence actors, differences in addressing disinformation vs. state propaganda, etc.) How can we best conceptualize security and security governance in the current European context, and in relation to foreign interference? (conceptual discussions on ontological security, logics of risk/resilience/security, concepts of total defense, comprehensive security, but also papers drawing on innovative insights from psychology, neuroscience, policing, intelligence analysis). What are the implications of the changing security context for the legitimacy of security actors in Europe? Who should engage in cognitive resilience practices? (The EU vs. NATO, member states vs. EU institutions, military/intelligence agencies vs. researchers or journalists, ‘coalitions of the willing’, regional vs. local, public vs. private actors, etc.)