

Predicting the future? The politics of data-driven future modelling in security governance

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New technologies, especially generative AI, are transforming security governance and international politics. Data-driven systems promise to enhance the assessment of security risks and anticipate future challenges, including terrorist attacks, climate disasters, pandemics, armed conflicts, and mass migration. For instance, algorithms analyze behavioral patterns, such as financial transactions or travel routes, to predict potential involvement in terrorist activities. In migration management, similar predictive models are employed to forecast events that could trigger large-scale displacements or to generate forward-looking risk assessments.

Critical security studies and critical data studies have extensively reflected on these developments: from issues of black-boxing, to speculative security measures and forms of dehumanization. There has been little attention, however, to really unpack and study “the future” as a form of knowledge. Particularly with the rise of generative AI, there is a risk that we assume or imagine, rather than interrogate, what or when the future is. What do we actually mean when we speak of “security futures”, and can we even assume that there is a future that follows in a linear way from the past and present? In this workshop, we therefore aim to think collectively and interdisciplinary about ways of knowing and predicting the future. In line with the theme of the conference, we are particularly interested in research that attends to non-linear accounts of the future, disrupted futures, or non-human futures.

The **goal of this workshop** is to question and interrogate the imagination of the future in security research. The use of future security scenarios becomes increasingly important in settings of migration control, counter terrorism, climate policies, and warfare. In many security practices, the notion of the future remains unquestioned: it is a time that follows logically from the past and present. Also in our academic research, there is little reflection on how we conceptualize “security futures”. We propose that it is time to get to know the future, in order to gain a better, critical understanding of how predictive models in security governance, broadly understood, work.

Contributions can focus but are not limited to the **following questions**:

- How do prognostic models shape our understanding of the future in calculating security risks, and what are the political consequences?
- Who or what is excluded from predictions and imaginations of the future?
- In what ways do predictive technologies contribute to the framing of legitimate knowledge about security, and how does this affect policy-making and frontline enactment?
- How can we critique linear temporalities? Or, what if the anticipated future never comes?
- How can we imagine the future from multiple standpoints, including non-human perspectives?

We invite contributions from across the social sciences and humanities focusing on prognostic models' growing role in policy-making and enactment across diverse security fields, ranging from border governance and counter-terrorism to cyber security, armed conflict and outer space.