

“New challenges in urban security”

SDA Lunch debate
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New challenges in urban security

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New challenges in urban security

The majority of the world's population today lives in cities, and they are expanding at an unprecedented pace. Security challenges are growing more complex, from terrorism and organised crime to political and economic unrest, raising questions about the resilience of critical infrastructure, energy security and the effects of climate change. Urban security requires a comprehensive strategy that spans the police and judiciary as well as other administrations at local and global level, and addresses internal and external threats. How can communications between police, military and intelligence communities be improved? What new technologies can improve urban security? Where should governments draw the line between security guarantees and citizens' privacy? Is the EU giving urban security enough attention, or should this remain a local matter?

Speakers and Moderator

Speakers



Pierre-Alain Fonteyne

Chairman of the Synthesis and Coordination Group (SCG) of the Integrated Mission Group for Security (IMGS)

Pierre Reuland

Special Representative to the European Union, International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL)



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Moderator



Giles Merritt

Director
Security & Defence Agenda

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Introduction

The influx of people, many of them young, into the world's major cities poses major new security and policy challenges to communities, police and politicians, experts said on June 1 at a Security & Defence Agenda debate entitled 'New challenges in urban security'. Unemployment, harsh living conditions and alienation are forcing people into a fight for survival and, in the face of police corruption, help breed insecurity.

"This creates a situation where local gangs, and organised crime are really taking control of whole urban areas," said **Pierre Reuland**, Special Representative to the European Union, International Criminal Police Organisation (INTERPOL).

Some participants urged the European Union to help mega-cities like Rio de Janeiro, Dakar and Karachi tackle evolving and endemic crime, and in doing so to draw vital lessons as similar problems begin to take root in Europe's big cities.

In Europe itself, crime and terror attacks can most effectively be addressed with a proactive policing supported by the latest security tools, sometimes even anticipating or deterring problems before they occur. Technology alone is not a panacea. An integrated comprehensive approach is needed, with partnerships between law enforcement officials, other local and regional authorities, the private sector and international organisations.

Participants emphasised that preventive measures

were possibly more important than the deployment of repressive means, and underlined that socio-economic policy must adapt to the challenges of population growth. Ultimately, it is also vital not to create a vicious circle with invasive technologies, checks and searches, which would impinge on privacy and alienate the public.

The problems of mega-cities

The speakers began by outlining the problems facing major cities, which are expanding at an unprecedented pace as people abandon rural areas in search of better jobs and opportunities. Congestion poses great challenges to infrastructure. As if to highlight the threat, one debate speaker was unable to attend the debate after his train was delayed by a bomb scare at the Gare du Nord in Paris, one of the stations in Europe where most homeless people congregate, according to NGOs.

It was noted that 60 percent of residents in sprawling Mexico City say that they have been a victim of crime. Participants said that the social pressures and resultant crime in such places were exacerbated by a lack of confidence in the police, who are regularly viewed as corrupt, and unwilling or unable to act.

"As the global population grows, as the shift from the countryside to the cities accelerates, we have to be thinking in terms of the insecurity in of some of these megalopolises in the developing world," warned **Giles Merritt**, Director of the Security & Defence Agenda.

"As the global population grows, as the shift from the countryside to the cities accelerates, we have to be thinking in terms of the insecurity in of some of these megalopolises in the developing world"

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"The Arab Spring is a living example of how cities become a flash point," he said.

In such a potentially unstable environment, it is relatively easy for criminal groups to find allies and develop networks, including with cronies or gangs abroad. In addition, **David Trulio**, Director of Federal/Civil Programs at Raytheon, said that more urban areas are increasingly likely to be the target of attacks, as some terrorists have started to regard less spectacular attacks as attractive, and even failed strikes as successes for the economic damage they cause.

Pierre-Alain Fonteyne, Chairman of the Synthesis and Coordination Group (SCG) of the Integrated Mission Group for Security (IMGS), said that instability could be an opportunity for the EU to exploit, both in terms of providing help and learning important lessons for cities in Europe.

"We could encourage European Union bodies to help avoid that these mega-cities fall even deeper into crime scenarios in the future, by economic development, by technological means, by other ideas that we have put in practice in our countries that they don't have," he said.

Philip Willekens, Director of Local Integral Security at the Belgian Ministry of the Interior, added that different member states, cities, organisations, networks and NGOs are faced with the same challenges of urban security. "Nevertheless, we don't know each other, we don't exchange best practices, we don't learn enough of each others' experiences and furthermore, there is no common approach. Initiatives like this debate are also very important to build bridges".

"We don't need more policemen, [...] but we need more efficiency in policing"

Whether it be in Europe or abroad, the best solution, experts and analysts concurred, lies in better policing, efficient use of technologies and a judicious mix of improved policy tools to attack problems like radicalisation and insider threats, as well as closer partnerships between stakeholders.

Police and security technologies

Police are historically seen as responders, who have tended to wait in offices for phone calls or alerts before heading to a crime scene. They have usually gathered evidence and information, and then proceeded to question suspects and make arrests. But that old approach is too slow to stop or even deter today's criminals.

"We don't need more policemen, generally speaking, but we need more efficiency in policing. We need a 24 hours intervention capacity, seven days a week presence, and more transparency, accountability and integrity in policing" said Reuland, who has 30 years of experience as a law enforcement official in Luxembourg.

One major tool for improving the efficiency of police and their ability to intervene is through technologies like Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), smart fencing, license plate readers, gunshot detectors, and facial recognition technology which can alert and guide officers, and in some instances, even anticipate a crime.

The drawback is that there are so many options, possibilities and combinations used for surveillance in the urban landscape that the technologies themselves might become a challenge for police to use effectively.

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The local authorities are often overwhelmed by the different possibilities in technology. But from his experiences, Philip Willekens explained that the mayors do not always know how to implement these technologies efficiently and how to embed these security technologies in a broader integral security and prevention policy. A high-tech camera that is installed in the wrong place, with bad images and with no follow-up is a very expensive tool without results. From the Ministry of Interior, we try to support these mayors step by step to implement an integrated prevention policy.

"It can be difficult to make sense of vast amounts of data, and it's relatively easy for individual agencies to add sensors and various other technologies in a piecemeal and non-integrated way, and that may actually serve to complicate things even further," Trulio said. This emphasizes the need for an integrated approach to technology deployments.

To provide strong security in crowded public places or at sports events, it is important to make sense of all the data appropriately available. So information needs to be gathered in a purposeful way and carefully analysed, including through automated risk analysis for authorities to be able to draw the right conclusions.

Beyond that, a lack of coherent regulation on the use of equipment and rules governing things like legal requirements or sensitivity settings underscores the fact that security equipment alone is not the answer.

"Technology doesn't hold the solution to everything," Trulio said. "Law enforcement personnel and engaged

"Technology doesn't hold the solution to everything, law enforcement personnel and engaged citizens are going to be crucial."

citizens are going to be crucial. Technologies have their place, but so do people and processes, including continuously applying lessons learned. We're very mindful

that technology has a role, but it's no panacea."

Indeed new technology and pro-active policing must be coupled with intelligence-sharing and the exchange of best practice with the private sector, city authorities and citizens to help make law enforcement more effective. This means reinforcing partnerships.

Innovative partnerships, reaching out

In their simplest forms, partnerships can involve neighbourhood watch and self-defence programmes. These help build trust and confidence between citizens and the police. In cases where the police lack manpower, private firms could complement officers in certain situations, while infrastructure like train stations and sports stadiums might be better and more cheaply protected by combining public law enforcement tools and private equipment. In addition, Los Angeles, for example, has hundreds of volunteers in its police reserve corps, many of whom perform the same functions as regular, full time police officers. Furthermore, as proven in other government sectors, it is possible to reduce costs, while improving efficiencies by outsourcing police training to highly qualified companies.

Better communication – putting people in contact through networks, both national and international – would ensure that models which work well in one city could be expanded to others, then put into action country-wide or even internationally.

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The question, said **Philip Willekens**, Director of Local Integral Security at the Belgian Ministry of the Interior, is how "to put people around the table, to put these efforts and experiences together and to make it all known to people."

He told the well-attended lunch debate at the Bibliothèque Solvay how the European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN), of which he is Belgium's national representative, is working to connect the national and local policymakers and practitioners of European member states by organising conferences, project visits, a European Crime Prevention Award and by an internet platform to exchange best practices, know-how and experiences.

He also stated that collaboration and partnerships too often stay an empty word. "We need to concretise the cooperation and invest in joint actions on two levels. At the local level, the practitioners and prevention workers that invest daily in prevention have the knowledge and experience and are our motor. A bottom-up approach supported by best practices and experiences throughout Europe. And secondly a common approach at European level with respect of the national and local specificities and needs. Broader cooperation and collaboration between the different partners at European, national and local level is therefore an important step."

Prevention through policy

From the audience, an analyst at the European External Action Service criticised the focus on the use of repressive means to control crime, rather than the preventive

"We need to concretise the cooperation and invest in joint actions and this on two levels. The local level, [...] and secondly a common approach on European level with respect of the national and local specificities and needs."

use of policy to tackle the root of the problem. With the wealth and income gap dramatically increasing, economic and social policy must be improved to keep vulnerable people above the poverty line. Cities also need to be better planned.

The use of repressive equipment "is a signal that we are losing the battle," said the analyst, **Fredrik Ekfeldt**. "I don't think the solution is to have more CCTV cameras, more gated communities that are sending very wrong signals, signals of tension, that we are not willing to live together. What defines a nation is our will to live together."

To realize a safe and liveable neighbourhood, Philip Willekens confirmed that it is important to find a good balance between social cohesion and repression. "Starting from the first link in the security chain, prevention, the goal is to preventively approach not only insecurity but also feelings of insecurity. The search for possible preventive measures and best practices to ensure a comfortable living environment for the citizen, and this not only by working as proactively as possible and preventing victimisation, but also by trying to restore and limit moral and material damages for those who fall victim to a crime.

Trulio underscored the importance of maintaining a healthy economy in achieving social cohesion, saying: "When people have jobs, people have hope" and noted that security measures that thwart both crime and terrorism help foster an environment conducive to economic vitality.

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Security versus Privacy

Ultimately, the overuse of security technology and heavy-handed policing can produce a backlash. Even in the wake of the September 11 attacks, people have tired of searches at airports and in some public buildings, with the tensions pitting those who work for citizens – the security personnel – against the very people they are trying to protect.

Yet sophisticated technologies, such as data encryption and secure anonymisation can actually limit the availability of information to people for whom it is not meant, while maintaining its usefulness for security applications.

Participants noted that whatever the approach used in the future, efforts must be made to inform the public and strike a delicate balance between providing protection and ensuring that civil liberties like the right to privacy are not trampled upon.

"There needs to be some attempt to show what works and what doesn't, and to show that there is some thought given to accountability, that Big Brother cares and has actually thought about it and wants to tell you about it," said SDA Director Giles Merritt.

Conclusion

Throughout the debate, participants generally agreed that Europe can best help itself to maintain urban security by helping others, in this case by assisting mega-cities around the world to prevent the spread, and slow the evolution, of crime. That is, to provide train-

ing, policy ideas and technologies, rather than to send foreign governments the means to act more repressively. The lessons that European law enforcement officials can draw might help put them one step ahead of the gangs and networks here.

"Organised crime is global, and is developing much easier in mega-cities of countries under development because recruitment of young criminals is easier and police is often corruptible. So by supporting capacity building activities in these mega-cities in third countries, the EU is finally preventing organised crime activities inside EU", Reuland said.

Meanwhile, policing methods need to become more pro-active, to make better use of present resources rather than recruit more officers. Police need to communicate better and improve their image among a public which feels increasingly insecure in big cities. Citizens, but also local governments and private organisations, need to be drawn into closer cooperation, both among themselves but also with law enforcement officials. On top of that, city and security planning should be improved.

Finally, security technologies must be employed in a more practical and harmonious way, with clear regulations controlling their use. The data they provide should be carefully collected, protected and analysed. As the nature of threats evolve, security systems need to remain flexible and scalable so that new equipment can be added to the chain without requiring a complete overhaul of the network.

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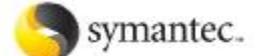
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