Partnership for Conflict, Crime and Security Research

STRATEGIC APPROACH

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Context

We live in a fast changing and increasingly inter-dependent world. As information networks, and international supply chains and infrastructures are increasingly interdependent, so are threats to security in today's globalised world. Population growth, resource scarcity, urbanisation, social and economic inequalities, environmental change, and technological innovation interact with one another in complex and sometimes unexpected ways and have unclear impacts.

The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 established that 'everyone has a right to life, liberty and security of person'. Yet the 2011 *World Development Report* on the theme of 'Conflict, Security and Development' states that 'one and a half billion people now live in areas affected by fragility, conflict, or large-scale organised criminal violence, and no low-income fragile or conflict-affected country has yet to achieve a single United Nations Millenium Development Goal.'

The prosperity as well as the security of citizens in the UK and worldwide will be affected by how we respond to these challenges both nationally and internationally. The efficiency of these responses depends on a better understanding of how security threats can be predicted, detected, prevented and mitigated.

We believe that the research base can make a vital contribution to the security of the UK and its citizens as well as the broader global setting through understanding the causes and spread of conflicts and the potential for reconciliation; understanding the motivations of, and patterns of interaction between, terrorists and other criminals; developing and using novel detection and sensing technologies in physical and cyber space; understanding the potential of new technologies for both good and misuse, and through providing analytically skilled manpower. Research which anticipates future challenges or identifies plausible outcomes of present dynamics will be an important element of the Partnership's overall funded portfolio.

The Partnership for Conflict, Crime and Security Research

The Partnership for Conflict, Crime and Security Research (PaCCS) is an inter-disciplinary partnership that brings together security research and other activities that are sensitive to the changing global context and have an impact in the detection, prevention, reduction and mitigation of security threats. By working together across disciplines, researchers have greater opportunities to develop their joint knowledge to address areas of particular concern in the medium and longer terms. The Partnership aims to generate an evidence base founded on excellent and innovative research with significant potential for impact.

The PaCCS has grown out of the RCUK Global Uncertainties Programme which began in 2008. Following a five year review of the programme in 2013, it was decided to change to a partnership model that allows for greater agility of funding and responsiveness to new opportunities with the focus on a narrower set of thematic areas. Significant continuities remain, and a key stream of work under the new partnership will continue facilitating knowledge exchange and supporting impact from previously funded and current activities.

The PaCCS is not a traditional programme with a dedicated budget, but a strategic partnership through which funders can work flexibly with one another adding value to their individual activities to respond to emerging opportunities through a collaborative approach. We will work together, although in practice

each funder will hold their own budget for contributions under the Partnership. Given the Partnership's limited funds there may not be specific calls addressing every area indicated, but the research community is encouraged to make applications through standard responsive mode routes as well as through specific PaCCS-funded calls. Where research is of a cross-disciplinary nature and spans the remits of two or more research councils it will fall under the Cross-Council Funding Agreement[1] (CCFA).

The Research Councils remain committed to collaborating in this area. The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) are core members of the Partnership who expect to be very engaged in cross-disciplinary research in the security area. BBSRC, MRC, STFC and Innovate UK (formerly the Technology Strategy Board) are affiliate members of PaCCS and may opt to co-fund activities of relevance to their remits and strategic objectives. The Partnership will build upon the fruitful collaboration established to date and will continue to develop links with a range of external partners in government, business and third sector organisations.

In order to remain adequately placed to respond to current and future challenges to global security, the Partnership is open to new opportunities for research and is committed to revisit its priority areas on a regular basis. Initially, PaCCS has identified as priorities the the core areas of:

- Conflict
- Transnational Organised Crime
- Cyber-security

To respond to the interdependent nature of these global challenges the Partnership will collaborate with other Research Council initiatives such as Living with Environmental Change, the Energy Programme and the Food Security Programme.

The thematic sections contained in this document outline some of the broad challenges and overarching questions which research and other activities funded through PaCCS might seek to address. PaCCS partners will collaborate where common themes and objectives can be identified and addressed through cross-disciplinary research, knowledge exchange and other activities. Consultative activities will continue throughout the lifetime of PaCCS in order to inform the work of the Partnership and the final scoping reports will be made available to the research community as and when they are completed.

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[1] More information on the CCFA can be found at http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/fundingagreement/

Objectives and Key Principles

The **Partnership for Conflict, Crime and Security Research (RCUK Global Uncertainties Programme)** will deliver high quality and cutting edge research that will help improve our understanding of current and future security challenges. It will look for opportunities for this research to deliver impact by helping those who seek to address and counter these challenges in government, businesses and societies, while considering the inter-relationships and trade-offs between security, protection of human rights and privacy.

OBJECTIVES

- To generate a strong research and evidence base with an initial focus on conflict, transnational organised crime and cyber-security;
- To fund innovative cross-disciplinary collaborative research and methodologies in the security field;
- To facilitate knowledge exchange and high uptake of research knowledge by policy-makers, practitioners and decision-makers in the public, private and third sectors;
- To develop enhanced capacity of UK researchers to conduct, lead and communicate high quality cross-disciplinary security research, including through effective international partnerships.

KEY PRINCIPLES

In planning and implementing activities under the auspieces of the PaCCS the members agreed to adhere to the following key principles for collaboration:

Human Security

The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 established that 'everyone has a right to life, liberty, and security of person'.

The PaCCS will focus on security at a variety of levels – community, national, regional and global while recognising that the individual remains the main referent for security.

Independence

The partners emphasise the importance of independence, transparency and impartiality and will work without compromise or political bias to pursue a research agenda reflecting the wider needs of society.

Impact: Linking Research to Policy and Practice

The Research Councils expect that the researchers they fund will seek to make a positive societal and economic difference. For further information please see the RCUK Mission and Statement of Expectation on Economic and Societal Impact.

PaCCS is seeking to build a knowledge base that has high potential to change behaviours, policies, practices and technologies.

PaCCS will support and encourage researchers to co-design, co-produce and co-deliver their research with stakeholders and end users. The Partnership will also adhere to these principles and will furthermore seek to foster networks which link research base expertise with end users.

Cross-disciplinary Research

Responding to the breadth and complexity of challenges facing researchers and practitioners in the security field, PaCCS will entail both building on disciplinary strengths and effective linking through and across disciplines. PaCCS will therefore facilitate and support high quality cross-disciplinary research.

Partnership – within and beyond RCUK

The challenges in this area cut across many disciplinary silos. The Partnership will add value to the activities of individual members by bringing both additional resources and a broader range of disciplinary perspectives to bear on key research questions.

PaCCS activities should therefore be jointly designed and co-funded by at least two Research Councils.

Councils will also seek to build strategic partnerships, as appropriate, with funders beyond RCUK, including international partners, government, third sector organisations and business.

Agility

The thematic content of PaCCS will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that our collaborative efforts are agile and able to exploit opportunities, respond to needs, inform debates and are well placed to anticipate future trends.

Thematic Content 1: Conflict

The **Conflict** theme is led by **AHRC** on behalf of the Partnership.

Recent decades have seen significant changes in the mosaic and character of conflict, and changes in the roles played by different actors involved in violence. While many countries and subnational areas experience cycles of repeated violence, weak governance and instability,[2] such cycles of conflict are not inevitable and new areas of violent confrontation continue to emerge across the globe. Conflict is complex, context-specfic and multi-causal, and understanding and addressing issues of conflict therefore require inter- and cross-disciplinary approaches. A broad range of expertise needs to be brought together to understand a wide range of factors that affect conflict including, for instance, unresolved historical grievances, enmities and fears; resource scarcity; environmental insecurity , migration and forced displacement; poverty and inequality; lack of social cohesion; weak state institutions; corruption, and identity politics.

Further cross-disciplinary research is needed to deepen our understanding of the nature of conflicts, gendered roles and behaviours, how conflicts have arisen and are perpetuated, their regional and global impacts, and appropriate approaches and tools for conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict development.

Questions which activities funded by the Partnership might seek to address include(but are not limited to) the following:

- How has conflict changed and how has it remained the same over the course of history?
- How and why are the causes and consequences of intra-state and secessionist conflicts changing? Do we need to reconceptualise conflict to reflect the complexity of modern forms of armed violence such as terrorism or violent extremism?
- What drivers contribute to the formation of non-state armed and terrorist groups and what are their motivations? How can we better understand issues around state-sponsorship and attribution?
- What role does gender play in the prevention, participation, escalation, negotiation and resolution of conflict?
- How do vulnerable populations (women, children, economically-deprived) respond to insecurity and how might their resilience to conflict be increased?
- How can we better understand the impacts and legacies of conflict, both direct (e.g. deaths, casualties, identity based violence, sexual violence, poverty, famine, trauma, forced displacement, and economic costs) and indirect (e.g. destruction of heritage, disease and environmental damage)? How can we develop better, more reliable and more meaningful ways of deterring these impacts?
- How can we better understand the interrelationships between existing global systems and changing patterns of conflict? What are the key dynamics of coalition formation, especially in cases where unlikely or unexpected partnerships emerge?
- What is the nature of contemporary war economies and are they fuelled by external state and non-state interventions? What is the most effective way to support the transition to post-conflict economies?

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[2] WDR, 2011

- Which mechanisms and approaches should be developed for reparations and restitution in post-conflict societies?   How can arts and cultural interventions effectively contribute towards peace-building and conflict resolution?
- How does technology influence the scale and spread of conflict, and how might technological drivers of conflict be reduced, either through technological or regulatory approaches? How is technology changing the character of contemporary conflict, for instance as an enabler of distancing?
- How do competing parties in conflict present and justify their grievances? How does the role and use of language and the media impact on the ways in which conflict is perceived and/or conducted?
- How is conflict memorialised and remembered? How can memories contribute to prolonging and perpetuating grievances?
- What is the role of communities, faith groups, civil society organisations and local leadership in the design and implementation of post-conflict transformations?
- Conflict is usually viewed entirely in negative terms. How can conflict be a positive mechanism for social change?

Thematic Content 2: Transnational Organised Crime

The **Transnational Organised Crime** theme is led by **ESRC** on behalf of the Partnership.

Organised crime poses a significant and persistent threat to population and economy. The operation and the reach of organised crime are often no longer confined to individual states and are becoming predominantly international. Organised crime networks are responsible for the illicit movement of people, goods, money and data across international borders, including the trafficking of people, arms and illegal drugs, large-scale and high volume fraud, stolen and counterfeit identities and goods, money laundering and other financial crimes.[3] Reacting to global changes and issues, transnational organised networks are extending into new areas of activity such as enabled and cyber-dependent crime, collusion with some terrorist networks, and environmental crime including the dumping of hazardous waste.

Further research, particularly of a multi-disciplinary nature, is needed to understand the complexity and evolving nature of organised crime, why and how it extends or fails to extend across borders, and what impact it actually has on the economy, safety, cohesion and well-being of populations, including possible unintended consequences of socio-economic practises and regulation.

Understanding the drivers behind transnational organised crime, as well as associated risks, will help to develop effective approaches and technologies for preventing and mitigating its impact.

Questions which activities funded by the Partnership might seek to address include (but are not limited to) the following:

- What is the morphology of transnational organised crime? How does it function on a variety of scales from the global to the local and vice-versa?
- How has transnational organised crime changed over time, what are the emerging vulnerabilities and how might they be addressed?
- What are the factors incentivising individuals and groups to be drawn into criminal activities? What are productive and counter-productive regulations for the cessation of criminal activities? What can be learned from failed attempts to disrupt transnational criminal networks?
- What are the impacts and harms associated with transnational organised crime and how can society be made more resilient?
- How do criminals negotiate trust and distrust? How do criminals interpret threat and risk and what does this mean for their decision-making?
- What are the inter-relationships between various different types of transnational crimes? How can we better understand the nature and scale of cross-cutting crimes, and how might we develop effecting measures for countering them?
- What role can technology play in detection and investigation of transnational organised crime, and what are the social, legal and ethical implications of the use of new technologies?

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[3] HM Government, Serious and Organised Crime Strategy, (October 2013)

Thematic Content 3: Cyber-security

The **Cyber-security** theme is led by **EPSRC** on behalf of the Partnership.

Malicious individuals and groups have long realised just how lucrative the cyberspace can be, how it can make criminal or antisocial activity easier, the opportunities it presents to disrupt normal life, and how the opportunities can increase in scale. The complexity of software, systems and processes, both on their own and in combination, increasese the scope and incidence of vulnerabilities. The increasing digitisation and connectivity of the economy means that successful cyber interventions and attacks are likely to have significant and possibly damaging consequences. The combination of enhanced threats, increased vulnerabilities and more serious consequences increases the cyber risk to which we are all exposed.

Better cyber-security can help to reduce the risk to an acceptable level with significant economic and societal benefits. A clearer understanding of our current and future vulnerabilities, the threats and consequences that result from them, and the inadequacies of current approaches is required. Interdisciplinary research is needed to achieve more effective cyber-security and to help develop new mitigations. Crucially, successful technological approaches need to rely on a better understanding of human factors in cyber-security. This aspect of the PaCCS feeds into the National Cyber Security Strategy and means that there are opportunities to work in partnership with other security players in this space.

Questions which activities funded by the Partnership might seek to address include (but are not limited to) the cross-disciplinary aspects of the following:

- How can we better understand the interplay between physical space and cyber space in a variety of contexts and what might this mean for security?
- How can we best protect cyberspace from malign uses and ensure its sustainability?
- What are the regulatory challenges associated with cyberspace and how might they be tackled (including issues around cross-border jurisdiction)? How can security systems be designed to incorporate the needs of people while also taking into account regulatory approaches?
- What steps can be taken to reduce the vulnerability of infrastructure and individuals to cyber-attacks? What is the psychology and sociology of cyber-victimisation?
- How do issues of personal and social identity play out in cyberspace? How are empathy and trust developed, maintained, transformed and lost in social media interactions?
- How do different groups conceptualise and understand risk, and how do these different conceptions play out in the cyber-security space?
- What are the benefits and risks of privacy trade-offs? What is the effect of trust (or lack of trust) on the perceived quality of data?
- What is the acceptable balance between ensuring national security through surveillance/ monitoring and individual freedoms and privacy? How can this be ensured?
- What are the security implications of the 'internet of things' including the system and human components?
- How can we develop user buy-in for security measures? Can users be empowered to be defenders of the systems they use?

Cross-cutting areas and intersections

Many research areas and questions cross-cut the three themes identified under PaCCS, including work on terrorism, ideologies and beliefs, threats to infrastructures and the proliferation of CBRN weapons and technologies. Research in these cross-cutting areas will also be sponsored/funded through PaCCS through their relevance to the three core themes.

The three core themes also intersect with one another in interesting ways. Both conflict and transnational organised crime have important dimensions which take place in cyberspace. Organised crime groups are known to exploit societies in conflict and play a role in perpetuating instability. Therefore there are also significant research questions which cross-cut the Partnership's core themes. These, for example, include the following:

Conflict and Cyber-security:

- How does cyberspace contribute to the proliferation and escalation of conflict, and how might society mitigate this? In what ways might cyberspace be used as a means to conflict reduction, peace building and state building?
- How vulnerable are nations and their critical infrastructures to cyber-warfare, and how might they protect themselves?
- What are the implications of conflict in cyberspace for traditional social, economic and political systems?
- What is the role of social networks in radicalisation and the propagation of violent extremism, and how might the risks be mitigated?

Conflict and Transnational Organised Crime:

- What impacts do conflict and violence have on the stability of nations and communities and the proliferation of criminal groups?
- What lessons can be shared between diverse research communities working on counter-terrorism, organised crime and international development?
- What is the relationship between transnational organised crime and conflict? Is it possible to disentangle cause and effect?

Cyber-security and Transnational Organised Crime:

- How does cyberspace enable transnational organised crime and how might this be tackled?
- What are the drivers of cyber-criminality and how might they be mitigated? What do the evolving cultures of cyber-criminality look like?
- How is the illegal cyber-enabled economy intertwined with the legal economic system?
- How can national and internationl law enforcement agencies work with business and government to develop tools, techniques and approaches to prevent illegal activities and pursue offenders?
- How do issues around trust play out differently in online and offline contexts?

Governance

The PaCCS is one of a number of Cross- Research Council collaborations bringing cross-disciplinary research to bear on key societal challenges. Effective co-ordination through RCUK and partnerships with key stakeholders will accelerate delivery of research and its economic and societal impact. Research Councils fund the very best world-class research as judged by independent expert peer review.

The PaCCS is supported by a **Strategic Advisory Group** whose membership is drawn from senior leaders in academia, government, business and the third sector. The main role of the Strategic Advisory Group is to inform the strategic and scientific coherence of PaCCS initiatives through offering advice to the Cross Council Strategic Group on the overaching strategy and the content of individual thematic areas. Based on this, the Strategic Advisory Group:

- advises Research Councils on the overarching strategy for the Partnership and content of its individual themes, ensuring its intellectual coherence;
- acts as a forum that brings together academic and non-academic perspectives that inform priorities for the future direction of the Partnership;
- brings potential new opportunities to the Research Councils' attention and advise on areas or issues that require further exploration;
- acts as a sounding board for the development of new activities; and
- advises on impact and communication strategies and plans led by the External Champion.

The list of Group members is available on the PaCCS website.

The **Cross-Council Strategic Group** is responsible for developing and implementing the overarching strategy and research priorities of the Partnership with input from the Strategic Advisory Group. The Cross-Council Strategic Group:

- develops new activities seeking advice from the Strategic Advisory Group on their thematic content;
- pursues the delivery of agreed activities through the development of funding, communication, impact, and other engagement activities.
- oversees the work of the External Champion;
- engages with a range of stakeholders seeking new opportunities for joint research activities in the security area.

The Cross-Council Strategic Group is chaired by the ESRC Research Director and reports to the RCUK Research Directors' group. AHRC, EPSRC and ESRC constitute the core membership of the Cross-Council Strategic Group. BBSRC, MRC, STFC and Innovate UK have a status of affiliated members.

Further information

For more information on the Partnership, its funded activities and future plans, please see
www.paccsresearch.org.uk