

CPS Cluster Meeting, 24 January 2023

Discussion on changes over the last year

Middle East and North Africa:

Implications of Ukraine on research priorities. 3 research trends:

- 1. Arms supply from Ukraine to the MENA region. From a research point of view, what can the MENA team and SIPRI do on this? How do different teams and clusters team up on this issue?
- 2. Lessons learned for Ukraine from MENA in post-war reconstruction. Yemen, Syria can provide examples for this. Different contexts, but still a comparative element.
- 3. Lower levels of aid. The MENA region sees less aid due to Ukraine. What are the positive and negative consequences? Breaking cycles of aid might be both positive and negative.

Discussion on wider grants across the cluster and the Institute:

- Thinking more broadly within the cluster and approach grants (e.g., EU) that can bridge various research areas. For this discussion to be taken forward the teams within the cluster should get together, but also need for more support from the SMT in order to push for this language and narrative to other partners. One concrete example of this is the focus on climate change – is this something SIPRI would like to invest more in or not? If so, there are many possibilities in MENA region, e.g., Iraq that could be of value as a case study.
- The MENA team has data knowledge and thematic experience which could be used for similar collaborations across the Institute.
- Value to comparatively study third party involvement in Ukraine and MENA region. Further, how does UA affect foreign interventions/presence in MENA (role of Turkey, Russia, France, USA...)?
- Energy transition could potentially be of interest for several teams in the cluster (reference to the geopolitics of energy transition was also made).

Sahel and West Africa:

Discussion on research priorities:

- The arms transfers within the region, and eventually from Ukraine to Sahel, could be of interest (working with other databases, such as Eric Berman's).
- The effects of cutting off aid
- Funding of research: there is an increasing interest of funders in projects that have a thematic orientation (e.g., gender, climate change, food security), yet within regional or country contexts. There is a need to promote and create more collaboration between thematic and regional teams. Management should set some directions so that these nexuses happen more naturally.
- Donors are also looking for grassroots information and narratives. There is a need to develop (where possible) joint methodologies that can be used across the programmes. E.g. SWAP is working on a proposal for UNHCR on youth perspectives, and this has been discussed with MENA team, which also has a keen interest to get work on such a methodology.

- The theme of disinformation in the Sahel region calls for an analysis on Russia's influence, and the scope of their influence through Wagner in the region.

European Security

Research of interest:

- A project on energy transition would be a great angle that MENA team suggested. Valuable with a geopolitical perspective.
- The role (and balance) between NATO, EU, OSCE, etc. In general, there will be more focus on the political-military dimension and hard security, and therefore likely less OSCE and more focus on NATO and EU.
- Rebuilding and reconstructing Ukraine, and its position in the European security system.
- Attention for the Arctic, the Baltic region, role of Turkey.
- Wider conversation on the relationship of European states with other world regions: East Asia, and the issue of deterrence (what is changing in the concept?); South Asia, focus on Europe-India cooperation with a focus on security and on supply chains (India vs. China) – mention of interest by the EU delegation.
- Lack of work on eastern Europe and on human security. War in Ukraine cause human security problems. Exploring launching a centre in Moldova. Currently not high risk, and Moldova wants to strengthen relationships with the West.

China and Asia Security:

Research of interest:

- Japan: changing regional security position and a changing role due to its new defence spending, making it the third largest spender.
- US–China encounter. The rivalry at a strategic level
- With Russia's invasion of Ukraine, we see ambivalence in Chinese positions, and the long debate on China–Russia relations.
- In Southeast Asia: Pakistan, India and China are all nuclear countries, but there are no mitigation measures to manage conflict.
- The issue of decoupling remains of importance as part of the intensified/intensifying US–China relations. Exploring the economic and military consequences for US-China, but also the region and in relation to e.g. green energy
- Valuable to study China's presence in the MENA region

Changes for SIPRI

- Thematical research and data research at SIPRI may benefit from a stronger focus on state-centric and geopolitical aspects. This would also benefit the research on food, energy, trade and supply chains, etc.
- With increased capacity in other institutes in Stockholm, not having a Russia programme might put SIPRI into a disadvantage.

Peace Operations and Conflict Management:

Ukraine's impact on research:

- Impact of the relationship with Russian turning from adversary to enemy.
- Impact of Sweden's accession to NATO: Sweden joining NATO, e.g., affects collecting data, which is not as easy as before.

- Impact of the new Swedish government: not clear what to expect in terms of funding (quantity nor focus)

How do we position ourselves in SIPRI?

- Usually, we position us as neutral. Yet, it may also be difficult not to take a position in view of certain developments, which may/will be seen as taking sides. What does this mean in the new context, and how will that affect options for SIPRI?
- It is difficult to conduct discussions and collect data when not being (perceived) neutral.

Recommendation: There should be a conversation at the Institute on this.

Globally, developments have impacted POCM research in three ways:

- Changes for the practice of peace operations: More organisations are involved. Will there be more regional cooperation? Going back to traditional peace operations? Worst case, competing peace operations.
- Hybridity, PoC, human rights and disinformation in conflict, and the involvement of PMCs, e.g., Wagner.
- A shift away from Africa to Eastern Europe

Broader for SIPRI (funding)

- The change of strategic grant, less funding, means we must apply to other donors.
- Admin needs more resources to respond to such shift in application.
- Need for larger grants across programmes
- Need for high-level fundraising from senior management.
- Establish a position with expertise that works with developing proposals

Retooling/New Topics:

- Fundraising will become more important
- A greater variety or more donors will also imply more a change in terms of reporting and rules and therefore more admin.
- The need for more funding and donors also implies a need for more support to:
 - o Scope for grants (with a cross programme perspective)
 - o Develop project proposals (and expertise in terms of working with donors)
 - o Seek alternative core funding from other donors than the Swedish MFA/Govt.