RISK ANALYSIS AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Teacher: Hélène Lavoix
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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Dr Helene Lavoix is Director of The Red (Team) Analysis Society (www.redanalysis.org), a think tank devoted to Strategic Foresight and Warning (SF&W), Anticipatory intelligence, and Early Warning Systems for national and international security issues, from war in the Middle East and North Africa, to crisis in Ukraine through energy and environmental security. The Red (Team) Analysis Society promotes the use of SF&W, and develops best practice through training, clients briefing, provision of early warning and strategic foresight and various issues, development of dedicated platform, research, and workshop design and facilitation. She is a political scientist (International Relations) and holds a PhD in Political Science and a MSc in International Politics of Asia (distinction) from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, as well as a Master in Finance (Grande Ecole, France - valedictorian). She has over 15 years experience as an international relations analyst, including working for the European Commission (Relex), and has more specifically focused over the last 10 years on SF&W as consultant, lecturer for post-graduate studies and executive training courses (RSIS Singapore, Vesalius College Brussels, Ecole Royale Militaire Belge, Geneva Center for Security Policy), researcher, or international coordinator (Strategic Foresight and Warning Community of Interest of the Global Futures Forum). She is the author of many studies, reports and articles on related topics, among others, "Ensuring a Closer Fit: Insights on making foresight relevant to policymaking" (2013/2014), "What makes foresight actionable: the cases of Singapore and Finland" (2010), "Enabling Security for the 21st Century: Intelligence & Strategic Foresight and Warning" (2010), "Constructing an Early Warning System" (2008), "Detailed chronology of mass violence – Cambodia (1945 – 1979)," (2008) and the editor of Strategic Foresight and Warning: Navigating the Unknown (2011).

COURSE OUTLINE

Part I. Strategic Anticipation for global, international and national security: function, scope and challenges

Session 1: Approaches to the future, from risk management to strategic foresight and warning through forecasting

Description: This seminar will introduce what could be loosely named as “anticipation,” including the discipline of Futures Studies, its history, its main foci of interests, methodologies and related typologies, and centres of research, study and practice. It will then move to the specific challenges related to the anticipation
of the future for security (both “traditional and non-traditional”) from the point of view of political authorities, thus within the framework of polities and their interactions. The structure and requirements of the course will also be explained and seminar topics allocated. The detail of the readings for each subsequent session, as well as the dynamics and break down of the group(s) work per session for Part 2 of the course will be communicated to the students during session 1.

Class Discussion: Risk analysis, Strategic Anticipation for security and crises

The Course Director will facilitate a discussion on anticipation for security, the difference and similarities with other kinds of anticipations and the reasons for those differences. What is security, the potential evolution of its meaning? How can we conceptualise a “security” that would incorporate an approach to the future? What are the consequences? Can we and should we continue anticipating once a crisis has started?

Required readings:


Recommended readings:

- Dator, Jim "What Futures Studies is, and is Not." http://www.futures.hawaii.edu/publications/futures-studies/WhatFSis.pdf

Session 2: Reducing uncertainty, policy-making and decision-making: a process

Description: This seminar will examine the function and place of anticipation as a process. It will notably emphasise the relationship between anticipation on the one hand, the policy process on the other, thus explaining the objectives and challenges that strategic anticipation must face and setting its larger context. It will notably address the delicate problem of the relationship to policy-makers.

Class Discussion (and presentations): The future of the modern state and of regimes

The Course Director will facilitate a discussion on the potential future(s) of the nation-state and of regimes. Which form could they take? Do we already see instances of such changes at work? Can the Islamic State be considered as a new kind of polity? What could change and why? Are there many paths forward? What
would be the impact on countries? What would be the impact on the international system, on instability, on war(s)? What could be the consequences of such potential evolutions for risk analysis and Strategic Foresight and Warning? Should risk analysis consider such issues? What could stop risk analysis and anticipation practitioners to consider such issues?

**Required readings:** to be communicated during session 1

**Recommended readings:** to be communicated during session 1

### Session 3: Opening up the “mind-forged manacles:” 1 part 1 - Cognitive biases

**Description:** This seminar and the next one requires students to address the problem of biases, notably cognitive ones, that influence perception, analysis and understanding, including reaction to strategic foresight and warning, risk management or anticipation, its practice and results or products, from the individual, group and organisation level to the paradigmatic one.

**Class Discussion (and presentations):** Identifying underlying assumptions – Global trends 2030

A cursory look at some foresight reports presents us with a challenging question: many constructed or imagined futures include fundamental assumptions or hypotheses that are not specified. These hypotheses are considered as facts and objective truth, when some of them could well be linked to systems of beliefs and perceptions, thus submitted to change. It is however much easier to identify biases with hindsight than without it, because of our many biases.

In Global Trends 2030, the quadriennal foresight product produced by the U.S. Intelligence Community for the president to be elected, in the chapter, “Game Changer 6: the role of the U.S.,” students will identify, explain and discuss as many as possible of the underlying assumptions, making them explicit if they are not.

**Required readings:** to be communicated during session 1

**Recommended readings:** to be communicated during session 1

### Session 4: Opening up the “mind-forged manacles:” 2 part 2 - Emotional biases and belief systems

**Description:** This seminar will address the role of emotions and belief systems or norms in influencing analysis on the one hand, the reception of strategic anticipation’s products on the other. Out of the various ways that have been used to struggle against those biases, it will more particularly detail the Delphi method and its variations.

**Class Discussion (and presentations):** Assumptions and the forthcoming Global Trends 2035

With the new president soon to be elected, the U.S. intelligence community has worked towards producing its new Global Trends 2035, including through publishing ideas and early findings on a website.

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The students will explore and read through the website for Global Trends 2035, and identify similarities and differences in themes, topics, issues compared with Global Trends 2030. Have various assumptions change? Which one? In which way?

**Required readings:** to be communicated during session 1

**Recommended readings:** to be communicated during session 1

### Part II- A Methodology for analysis: from question to warning

This week starts the second part of the course, which will be built as an ideal-type method or process for strategic foresight and warning, and presents for each step existing tools and methodologies as well as promising ways forward. Meanwhile, students will directly apply this knowledge in a group(s) project.

**Session 5: Question, scope and empirical material: Horizon/Environmental scanning and weak signals – part 1**

**Description:** This seminar and the next will present and explain the ideal-type method for risk management and SF&W. It will start with the beginning, defining the issue, scope and timeframe and gathering research material and empirical data. It will thus explore first various possible conceptual focuses, such as hazards, threats, risks, surprises, shocks or opportunities, but also categories such as themes or issues. As method, it will concentrate on “horizon/environmental scanning”, its use and challenges and outline ways to do it, including the possibility to combine it with text-mining tools or Delphi methods. It will notably address the problem of weak signals and the tension between the need to outline a scope and the need to remain open enough to perceive emerging (not yet well identified) issues, and brings in the iterative quality of the strategic foresight and warning process in defining new issues. It will start addressing the problem of prioritization.

**Class Discussion (and presentations):** Finding out strategic foresight and warning products

Students will explore the Internet notably to find global risks and strategic foresight documents and reports. They will present and discuss the various reports and products they found.

**Required readings:** to be communicated during session 1

**Recommended readings:** to be communicated during session 1

**Session 6: Question, scope and empirical material: Horizon/Environmental scanning and weak signals – part 2**

**Description:** This seminar is the second part of the previous one. More time will be devoted to the discussion to allow students to decide upon which issue the will focus for the rest of the course

**Class Discussion (and presentations):** Which questions or issues are on the agenda of risk management and strategic foresight and warning and which one will be the focus for the group(s) project?

Using the reports and products found the previous week the students will prepare for the class a list of interesting or crucial issues for the future as were identified by these documents. They may add critical
questions that they identified or saw addressing in other courses, and which appear to them to be crucial for the future (with appropriate footnotes). The students will then discuss among themselves those issues so as to decide through a vote which one to choose for the group project. This issue or question will thus become the theme for the remaining part of the course.

**Required readings**: to be communicated during session 1

**Recommended readings**: to be communicated during session 1

**Session 7: Identifying variables and interconnections: Graphs, networks and variations**

**Description**: Students will consider the next step of an ideal-type strategic foresight/risk analysis methodology: identify what constitutes the structure and underlying processes relevant to the chosen research topic. It will be shown that many, if not most, “futures methodologies” rely, for this step, on the same logic and fundamental tool, graphs, in a more or less developed form. Those methodologies will thus be presented from the point of view of graph theory, exploring various kinds of graphs and the possibilities and ways forward such an approach offers in terms of strategic foresight, including underlining the importance to reflect upon the nature of interconnections. This seminar will thus concentrate on directed graphs or networks, how they can help mapping key variables, interconnections, and impacts.

This week and the next will address related challenges and methodological problems, notably those arising from human cognitive limitations leading to the need to choose some variables, to clustering, use of mapping for visualisation, etc. This week will focus on the identification of variables and the number of variables.

**Group(s) work on chosen strategic issue, presentation during the class and discussion**

**Required readings**: to be communicated during session 1

**Recommended readings**: to be communicated during session 1

**Session 8: From variables to values and likelihood**

**Description**: Building notably upon the previous week and the knowledge acquired on graphs and networks, this week will focus first on the challenges related to reducing the number of variables we deal with, looking at influence analysis, propagation and clustering. Then it will concentrate on the need to consider probabilities, which is necessary to determine the range of plausibility for the relevant research topic. It will underline a few promising potential ways forward, notably describing agent-based models and suggesting how those could be integrated and suggests further areas for research.

**Group(s) work on chosen strategic issue, presentation during the class and discussion**

**Required readings**: to be communicated during session 1

**Recommended readings**: to be communicated during session 1

**Session 9: Scenarios**
Description: This week will deal with the development of scenarios and simulations. What are scenarios and how do we make them? How can we synthesize some of the variables identified during the previous stages and their outcomes (those which are not ruled out by logic and plausibility)? What are narratives and why to use them?

Group(s) work on chosen strategic issue, presentation during the class and discussion

Required readings: to be communicated during session 1

Recommended readings: to be communicated during session 1

Session 10: Wild cards and surprises

Description: This week will focus on unpredictability and an essential unknowable character of the future. It will examine such concepts as “unknown unknowns,” “grey and black swans” and “wild cards,” ponder in which way those may be understood as truly unknowable or as resulting from various human limitations and present methodologies to consider at best this unpredictability.

Group(s) work on chosen strategic issue, presentation during the class and discussion

Required readings: to be communicated during session 1

Recommended readings: to be communicated during session 1

Session 11: Monitoring, warning and updating

Description: This seminar will focus on the warning part of the cycle, explain how indicators can be developed and indications used for warning, including the potential happenstance of wild card scenarios, underlining that this part cannot be separated from the whole process at it is necessary both for action and for verification and falsification of the identified futures and their potential modification/update.

Group(s) work on chosen strategic issue, presentation during the class and discussion

Required readings: to be communicated during session 1

Recommended readings: to be communicated during session 1

Session 12: Thou shall be surprised and shocked: resilience and strategy

Description: Because a part of uncertainty will always remain while surprise is always possible, on the one hand, because of the necessity to anticipate yet another category of events, shocks, then, proper strategic foresight and warning or more largely anticipation may need to be conceived as including preparedness and action. In this context, the idea of resilience will be introduced besides normative foresight.

Group(s) work on chosen strategic issue, presentation during the class and discussion – Debriefing on group work and students group-evaluation.

Required readings: to be communicated during session 1

Recommended readings: to be communicated during session 1