

Anticipating global catastrophic risks and their implications to the security and defence sector

Gergely Nemeth, PhD
Defence Innovation and Research Institute (VIKI)
Chief Executive Officer
Email: gergely_nemet@yahoo.com
ORCID: -

It is beyond any doubt that we live in an age of polycrisis. The emerging nature, as well as increasing frequency and diversity of shocks clearly require new approaches to understand our strategic and operating environment.

Starting from the early 70s, US strategic thinkers in the defence sector and a multinational team working for SHELL in the commercial arena have championed a new set of methods to anticipate the emerging strategic environment more efficiently, with a view to avoid shocks, adjust to changes and if possible shape conditions towards a more favourable environment.

This method, called strategic foresight is in use ever since, while it remained highly utilized in both commercial intelligence and defence. That said, foresight is underemphasized in most other sectors, including the disaster relief and management.

The presentation aims to highlight the utility of strategic foresight through showcasing major trends which may lead to a global catastrophic risk (ie. low-probability, high-impact events that could threaten the continuity of human civilization). These risks have been assessed as systemic, transboundary, and often lie beyond the horizon of conventional security frameworks, therefore a multidisciplinary effort is required to anticipate.

Amidst most consequential challenges, including climate breakdown and loss of biodiversity, resource scarcity driving instabilities, the age of AI and emerging disruptive technologies, geoeconomic competition and scramble for the commons, the international order is clearly in transition.

In these circumstances, a movement from national to global perspectives is highly necessary, acknowledging that traditional security competition may intensify the very threats it seeks to contain, while leaving many of the Global Catastrophic Risks unattended and unsolved.

With the context of the LOCALIENCE conference, the presentation is addressing the importance of anticipating risks and acting together to create resilience against these challenges to come.

Keywords: strategic foresight, global catastrophic risks, disaster management, extreme weather, responses, resilience, project