

RESEARCH ARTICLE

‘Social defence’ and the resilience of the domestic war on terror: A genealogy of social security, national security, and defence

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Abstract

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has moved attention within International Security back to Great Power Politics and interstate war, and away from phenomena like ‘foreign terrorist fighters’ and lone actor terrorism. Is the War on Terror paradigm receding? This paper argues that counter-radicalisation imaginaries and counter-extremism programming will all remain stubbornly present despite the shift back to interstate war. The resilience of domestic War on Terror policies will stem from their integration within local municipal-ity activity and *social* policy during the second decade of the 21st century. These policy areas and levels are detached from the international security community, meaning that shifts in attention at the global level will have little effect upon localised national security practices. The paper then interrogates *how* counterterrorism agendas have so successfully entered the world of social policy and local public administration, using genealogical methods to trace how social security and crime prevention were historically prefaced upon defence. The paper traces the policy paradigm of ‘social defence’ which dominated mid-20th century international organisations, targeting non-criminal juveniles with pre-emptive interventions to prevent ‘dangerous persons’ imperilling society. Effectively, this untold history of crime prevention in Europe demonstrates the profound interlocking of national security, social policy and defence across the 20th century, with implications for the resilience of this triad.

Keywords: crime prevention; genealogy; preventing violent extremism; vulnerability; war on terror

Introduction

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has ‘reset’ International Security agendas to the threat posed by interstate warfare. NATO has significantly expanded the support it provides Ukraine (including military equipment and technology) and has received applications for membership from Russia’s European neighbours; the European Parliament recognised the invasion as a ‘major geopolitical shift’ and endorsed the ‘strategic compass’ action plan for defence consolidation; Germany broke with decades of foreign policy tradition to deliver Leopard 2 battle tanks and anti-aircraft systems to Ukraine; and the United Kingdom responded to the invasion by reviewing its integrated security and defence policy – only a year after the previous ‘integrated review’ was completed. Terrorism has been displaced as the pre-eminent concern of policymakers, and interstate warfare has returned to dominate International Security agendas. The words of the EU’s ‘strategic compass’ emphasise the extraordinary importance of the geopolitical shift, framing it as ‘a time when war has returned to Europe’ requiring a ‘quantum leap’ in defence capacity:

The European Union has formally **approved the Strategic Compass**, at a time when we witness the return of war in Europe ... The more hostile security environment requires us to **make a quantum leap forward** and increase our capacity and willingness to act, strengthen our resilience, and invest more and better in our defence capabilities ... The objective of the Strategic Compass is to make the **EU a stronger and more capable security provider** ... This is all the more important at a time when war has returned to Europe, following the unjustified and unprovoked Russian aggression against Ukraine, as well as of major geopolitical shifts.¹

Academic studies of International Security are also experiencing the knock-on effects of this major reorientation within the security field. After a significant expansion of research into terrorism and radicalisation, the field now faces an abrupt turn back to interstate war as the primary threat to peace and security. What will remain of the War on Terror, in this new era? This paper argues that many counterterrorism practices experienced a sectoral shift during the War on Terror, entering the domain of welfare agencies, social policy organisations, and local administration. This relocation of this national security work to social policy sectors will make practices of preventing violent extremism (PVE) resilient to shifts in attention at the international level, such as the ‘return of war to Europe’. This resilience will draw upon a long history of such interconnection between defence and social policy.

The presence of counterterrorism programmes within social policy, health, and education sectors may seem surprising – yet there is a long, and international, history of hybridity between the social security and national security sectors. Of course, counter-insurgency doctrine has long imparted that – overseas – an occupying force can reduce the capacity of insurgent organisations by supplying the population with sufficient access to education, healthcare services, and welfare. But PVE programmes have refracted that insight back onto the domestic populations of protagonist states.² Here, a state’s own population is framed as potentially insurgent, should screening activities fail to identify those requiring intensive support from welfare and social services. This paper traces the intersection of social security and national security through genealogical research into the archives of the United Nations (UN) and Council of Europe. In the post-war era, these international organisations led the development of international crime policy agendas – where rising crime rates were securitised as a significant threat to state, society, and order. They framed their work in this area through the philosophy of ‘social defence’, a criminological theory which centralises the protection of state and society (from crime) through pre-emptive work by social policy agencies. ‘Defence’ of the population was prominent in this work because crime was understood to threaten the stability of the social and even political order. This exceptional, securitised orientation to a domestic threat makes the social defence era very relevant to considerations of the War on Terror and what will remain of it, in a new era.

The paper looks to history to explain the cohabitation of national security and social policy, and to contextualise the resilience of the War on Terror paradigm in domestic frontline services. The movement of counterterrorism practices into education, social services, and healthcare during the War on Terror has significant heritage in the development of social defence and social crime prevention throughout the 20th century.³ The UN’s recommendation of anticipatory

¹EU, ‘A Strategic Compass for the EU’, available at: {https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/strategic-compass-security-and-defence-1_en} (2022), emphasis in original.

²Rizwaan Sabir, ‘Blurred lines and false dichotomies: Integrating counterinsurgency into the UK’s domestic “war on terror”’, *Critical Social Policy*, 37:2 (2017), pp. 202–24; David Miller and Rizwaan Sabir, ‘Counter-terrorism as counterinsurgency in the UK “war on terror”’, in Scott Poynting and David Whyte (eds), *Counter-Terrorism and State Political Violence: The “War on Terror” as Terror* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 12–32.

³Sergio García García, Cristina Fernández Bessa, and Ignacio Mendiola, ‘El giro preventivo de lo policial presentación/The preventive turn of police presentation’, *Revista Crítica Penal y Poder*, 19 (2020), pp. 1–19; Charlotte Heath-Kelly and Sadi Shanaah, ‘Rehabilitation within pre-crime interventions: The hybrid criminology of social crime prevention and counter-violent extremism’, *Theoretical Criminology*, 27:2 (2023), pp. 183–203; Jennie Sivenbring and Robin Andersson-Malmros, *Mixing Logics: Multiagency Approaches for Countering Violent Extremism* (Gothenburg: University of Gothenburg, 2019).

intervention on pre-delinquents through welfare tools prefigured the modern era of multiagency counter-radicalisation, by making security the work of care professionals. Protecting society from terrorism – through social policy and welfare organisations – builds upon the work done in international crime prevention fora to link social policy with national security and defence. This genealogical heritage explains why counterterrorism was able to embed in the social security sector, and how the return to geopolitics on the international stage will have little effect on PVE programming.

The rise of Preventing Violent Extremism

Local authorities, municipal governments, and public sector organisations are not usually understood as security actors. Indeed, as Stephen Walt has argued,⁴ security studies focuses on the threat, use, and control of *military* force. For Walt, any attempts to broaden the field to consider disease, drug abuse, or environmental hazards risk destroying the intellectual coherence of the field. The sectors associated with the threat, use, and control of military force are – of course – not social policy or welfare provision organisations.

However, terrorism has proven very disruptive of sectoral siloing as well as of strict distinctions between national security and social welfare. During the past decade in Europe, national security duties have permeated social policy sectors, guided in part by the strategies and directives of the European Union (EU) in this area. For example, the European Council's *Internal Security Strategy* of 2010 advocated for a multi-agency and civil society-based approach to preventing terrorism. This later developed into the Radicalisation Awareness Network – a policy initiative which sidestepped the subsidiary norms of the EU to share counter-radicalisation expertise between local actors and cities of European Union member states.⁵ Across an ever-expanding array of working groups, practitioners from EU member states share their experiences of working with 'vulnerable' communities in health settings, in prisons, in online gaming fora, and beyond, in attempts to build their resilience to extremist ideologies and to prevent terrorist violence.

The desire to pre-empt terrorism has led to the integration of sectors beyond defence and policing within national security work. The imagination of pre-terrorist trajectories (through the 'radicalisation discourse') has positioned frontline workers as those who can detect, refer, and correct threats to society.⁶ The post-2011 period in Europe saw the continental expansion of PVE programmes in schools, prisons, communities, and health – aided by agencies such as the Radicalisation Awareness Network – which have expanded the work of terrorism prevention into social policy sectors under the rubric of preventing, identifying, and reporting 'radicalisation'.⁷ Alongside these statutory programmes, covert risk management programmes have been developed in Norway and the United Kingdom, where intelligence agencies and security police collaborate with welfare agencies to manage potential terrorist offenders in the community.⁸

⁴Stephen Walt, 'The renaissance of Security Studies', *International Studies Quarterly*, 35:2 (1991), pp. 211–39.

⁵Francesca Melhuish and Charlotte Heath-Kelly, 'Fighting terrorism at the local level: The European Union, radicalisation prevention and the negotiation of subsidiarity', *European Security*, 31:2 (2022), pp. 313–33.

⁶Charlotte Heath-Kelly, 'Counter-terrorism and the counterfactual: Producing the "radicalisation" discourse and the UK PREVENT strategy', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 15:3 (2013), pp. 394–415; Melhuish and Heath-Kelly, 'Fighting terrorism at the local level'.

⁷Joel Busher and Lee Jerome (eds), *The Prevent Duty in Education: Impact, Enactment and Implications* (Cham: Springer International, 2020); Håvard Haugstvedt and Svein Erik Tuastad, 'It gets a bit messy': Norwegian social workers' perspectives on collaboration with police and security service on cases of radicalisation and violent extremism', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 35:3 (2023), pp. 677–93; Melhuish and Heath-Kelly, 'Fighting terrorism at the local level'; Christine Winter, Charlotte Heath-Kelly, Amna Kaleem, and China Mills, 'A moral education? British values, colour-blindness, and preventing terrorism', *Critical Social Policy*, 42:1 (2022), pp. 85–106; Tarek Younis and Sushrut Jadhav, 'Islamophobia in the National Health Service: An ethnography of institutional racism in PREVENT's counter-radicalisation policy', *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 42:3 (2019), pp. 610–26.

⁸Charlotte Heath-Kelly, 'Multi-agency counter-terrorism in Britain and Norway: Intelligence agencies and the administration of welfare', *Security Dialogue*, 55:4 (2024), pp. 386–403; Hil Aked, Tarek Younis, and Charlotte Heath-Kelly, *Racism, Mental*

As Neil Basu (the UK's most senior counterterrorism officer) explains in his recent article, intelligence and security agencies now share classified information with frontline care professionals through the MAC (multi-agency centre) in the UK. Frontline professionals then deploy welfare, social support, and efforts to develop critical thinking skills, in an effort to stop these persons engaging in terrorism. In the MAC, care has become part of national security work:

The partners' role is to collectively understand the risk posed by subjects referred by MI5 and CTP ... Frontline partners are no longer distanced from the information they need to make effective decisions and provide better support through health, education, training, or critical thinking skills. The MAC has solved the problem of moving sensitive nationally held information into local partners, lawfully. If that sounds easy, you have never written a data sharing agreement – and even if you have, I bet you haven't written one between a doctor and a spy!⁹

Beyond MAC, the United Kingdom has even codified the duty for public servants to pay due regard to preventing radicalisation as a legal duty (in the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015). The core contention within PVE is that frontline services are 'closer' to local populations than national security agencies, and this spatial proximity allows them to intervene 'earlier' in the detection of radicalisation vulnerabilities and their correction. The assumption of 'closer = earlier' within prevention work characterises contemporary radicalisation prevention, situating care professionals within defence work.

The radicalisation era has facilitated the *entry* of local agencies and authorities into national security work (from their existing crime prevention commitments), but it might also preclude their *exit* from such work. The localism and context of these agendas (embedded as they are in social provision policies for health, social care, community, prison governance, and educational actors) will render them impervious to transformations of security and defence policy at the national and international levels. Local social policy has very little interaction with international security, and duties for 'radicalisation prevention' have been incorporated into professional guidelines on safeguarding, as well as international alliances on community safety (like the Nordic Safe Cities network), and community cohesion agendas.¹⁰ The purported 'end' of the War on Terror at the international level, then, will only have limited impact on the local implementation of terrorism prevention. Terrorism prevention has been added onto existing 'defence' duties within social policy (usually organised around crime) and will experience considerable resilience as a result.

Rather than make firm predictions for the future of International Security, this paper explores *how* national security was able to enter the duties of local municipalities and social policy agencies. How has it been possible to integrate healthcare workers, educators, and social care professionals within national security assemblages, when – in liberal democracies – there is a normative commitment to the independence of civil society and its freedom from policing? How has national security come to occupy a position within social security? And what intersections of Criminology and International

Health and Pre-Crime Policing: The Ethics of the Vulnerability Support Hubs (London: MedAct, 2021); Neil Basu, 'Learning lessons from countering terrorism: The UK experience 2017–2020', *Cambridge Journal of Evidence Based Policing*, 5 (2021), pp. 134–45; Charlotte Heath-Kelly, 'Health, the Prevent duty and covert operations', in John Holmwood and Layla Aitlhadj (eds), *The People's Review of Prevent: A Response to the Shawcross Report* (London: Preventwatch, 2023), pp. 53–7; D. Sestoft, S. M. Hansen, and A. B. Christensen, 'The police, social services, and psychiatry (PSP) cooperation as a platform for dealing with concerns of radicalization', *International Review of Psychiatry*, 29:4 (2017), pp. 350–4.

⁹Basu, 'Learning lessons from countering terrorism', p. 140.

¹⁰Busher and Jerome (eds), *The Prevent Duty in Education*, 2020; Haugstvedt and Tuastad, 'It gets a bit messy'; Charlotte Heath-Kelly and Erzsébet Strausz, 'The banality of counterterrorism "after, after 9/11"? Perspectives on the Prevent duty from the UK health care sector', *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 12:1 (2019), pp. 89–109; Thea Amalie Lovøy, 'Nordic Safe Cities – et nyttig nettverk for kommunene i forebyggingen av radikaliserings og voldelig ekstremisme?', thesis submitted to Nord Universitet (2022), available at: <https://nordopen.nord.no/nord-xmllui/bitstream/handle/11250/3021217/TheaAmalieL%C3%B8v%C3%B8y.pdf?sequence=1>}.

Relations, as academic disciplines, speak to the responsabilisation of local frontline workers with national security work?¹¹

The answer to this question stems from the relatively recent emergence of ‘national security’ as a distinct field (preceded by ‘defence’), and its borrowing of notions of ‘security’ from social security programmes. We think of national security, social security, and defence as long-standing and distinct traditions of practice – but tracing their development reveals a profoundly hybrid space of origin. ‘National security’ emerged as a discourse circa 1947, during the unification of defence forces in the United States. Before then, the language of defence was used to characterise threats to the nation. ‘National security’ became the predominant way to describe America’s relationship to the world during the Cold War; its popularity linked to its potential for articulating a wider set of policy objectives than simple ‘defence’.¹² But as Neocleous points out, this was not a simple replacement of one term for another. Rather, the terminology of ‘national security’ owes more to the preceding discourse of *social* security than it does to ‘defence’. And it carried with it profound assumptions about the objectives and methods of domestic governance.

How did the appropriation of ‘security’ from the discourse of ‘social security’ affect the business of defence? First, we need to understand how the preceding discourse and programmes of social security emerged, in their relevant contexts, to understand their functions and objectives. Like ‘national security’, ‘social security’ had a similar, but earlier, rapid ascendance to prominence in the USA. While it did not appear in Roosevelt’s Emergency Relief Act of 1933, it came to dominate the language of the ‘New Deal’ by 1936¹³ – just three years later. What had happened in these intervening years, to cause such a shift in terminology to the language of security? In Neocleous’s study, the shift is explained by the emergence of socialist movements challenging for influence and power. He identifies that the provision of ‘social insurance’, also known as ‘national insurance’ (the early forms of welfare provision which date back to the late 19th century), all speak to the concerns of elites that they might be violently usurped by revolutionary movements if they did not provide for their populations. Simultaneously, however, social security programmes (like the UK’s Beveridge Report) required recipients to show incentive and aim towards being economically productive.¹⁴ Social security was thus about governing the working classes and ‘conducting conduct’, in the context of threats to the political elite arising from industrial action and strikes.

The new ideology of security reshaped working-class behaviour and expectations, worked against trade union radicalism, improved the position of the well-paid middle class, preserved the notion of the paternalistic employer, and helped sustain levels of capital accumulation despite the supposedly ‘stringent’ demands made on business by the state. The radicalised political climate of the 1930s centred on the politics of security compelled corporations to offer a degree of economic security that they had previously failed to do.¹⁵

Social ‘security’, then, was not simply charity. Rather, it is a project which attempted to inculcate liberal individualist values within the working classes, in the context of labour agitation and movements which threatened the political elite. It emerged through competition with socialist agendas for the allegiance of the working classes.

This transformation of the language of governance to include (social) security language preceded the emergence of the discourse of national security in the USA by a decade. In the 1940s, policymakers appropriated security language from social policy to form the new concept of ‘national security’. This spoke to far more sectoral applications and ordering agendas than ‘defence’ was previously able to. ‘National security’ could invoke threats to the political system which came from

¹¹Didier Bigo, ‘Rethinking security at the crossroad of International Relations and criminology’, *The British Journal of Criminology*, 56:6 (2016), pp. 1068–86.

¹²Mark Neocleous, *Critique of Security* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 76–7.

¹³Neocleous, *Critique of Security*, pp. 82–5.

¹⁴Neocleous, *Critique of Security*, p. 86.

¹⁵Neocleous, *Critique of Security*, p. 89.

within a nation (just like the socialist mobilisation which provoked the invention of ‘social security’), not just requiring military force externally. Furthermore, the invocation of domestic threats opened up a new range of counterbalancing security measures – such as civil defence training, and even the Senator McCarthy’s project to detect and remove communist sympathisers from American social and political life.

Neocleous’s project makes a seminal contribution to our understanding of the hybrid origins and interconnectedness of national security and social security. However, his excellent work is focused mainly on the US context, and the reordering of defence policymaking around ‘security’. This paper uses his work as an inspiration but focuses on the United Nations and the Council of Europe to explore a concomitant intersection of national and social security. Where Neocleous studies the reformulation of defence around the concept of security, this paper explores the historical expansion of social policy *around defence*. The story of this paper is about the development of social policy agendas which secure society against ‘dangerous persons’ – the parallel movement to that analysed by Neocleous (and the historical counterpart to contemporary PVE programmes).

To interrogate how counter-radicalisation came to occupy social policy sectors (and its probable resilience to changes of focus in international security), this paper undertakes a genealogy of crime prevention in the archives of the United Nations and Council of Europe.¹⁶ The analysis will trace the heritage of questions about the ‘dangerous person’ and the role of social policy and welfare sectors in reforming them in advance of crime. Where Neocleous demonstrates the historical foundation of national security in social security, I show here that the expansion of the social policy field in the 20th century occurred around the spectre of defence against dangerous persons and social disorder. Exploring the archives of international organisations exposes the historic centrality of the question of the ‘dangerous person’ as well as the ‘pre-delinquent’ to the expansion of social policy fields (and, of course, both discourses later reappear in the contemporary question of radicalisation towards terrorism). Projects of international crime prevention fundamentally located ‘care professionals’ in *defending* society from disorder. International crime policy of the post-war era was predominantly oriented towards containing threats to society. These threats were criminals (understood as the most pressing threat to development and order), and the language of ‘defence’ was central to their management. Social policy, defence, and national security have emerged from the same hybrid origin, then, which underwrites the resilience of imaginaries of terrorism to change in the new era.

International organisations, crime, and ‘security measures’

The history of international organisations demonstrates a very long interest in the question of crime, although only specialist literature addresses these activities.¹⁷ The United Nations, Council of Europe, and League of Nations each possessed dedicated working groups on crime, its trends, and preventative responses. As far back as the 19th century, the League of Nations had a working group which covered topics of the opium trade, the circulation of obscene literature, and – fascinatingly – the white ‘slave trade’.¹⁸ The social dislocation of the post-war context in Europe (after

¹⁶For the full results, please see <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/research/projects/neoliberalterror/neoliberal-terror/timeline2/>.

¹⁷Jarrett Blaustein, Tom Chodor, and Nathan W. Pino, ‘Development as a historical component of the United Nations’ crime policy agenda: From social defence to the Millennium Development Goals’, *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 21:4 (2021), pp. 435–54; Charlotte Heath-Kelly and Sadi Shanaah, ‘The long history of prevention: Social defence, security and anticipating future crimes in the era of “penal welfarism”’, *Theoretical Criminology*, 26:3 (2022), pp. 357–76; Paul Knepper, *The Invention of International Crime: A Global Issue in the Making, 1881–1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Manuel Lopez-Rey, ‘The First U. N. Congress on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders’, *Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology & Police Science*, 47:5 (1957), pp. 526–38; Thorsten Sellin, ‘Lionel Fox and the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission’, in Charles Germain and Manuel Lopez-Rey (eds), *Studies in Penology Dedicated to the Memory of Sir Lionel Fox, C.B., M.C.* (La Haye: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), pp. 194–207.

¹⁸Knepper, *The Invention of International Crime*, p. 2.

the collapse of the Habsburg Empire) and the context of prohibition in the United States each contributed to the ‘invention’ of international crime as a governance issue for the League.¹⁹ The League partnered with several International Non Governmental Organisations (INGOs), active in matters of criminological research, which had preceded their work in the area. From 1935 onwards, one such affiliate, the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission (IPPC), came under the influence of Nazi theories on the biological roots of crime (eugenics) and received Axis funding.²⁰ This was to discredit the IPPC thereafter and provoked the transfer of responsibilities for international crime policy from the League of Nations to the UN.

After the Second World War, the UN adopted the mantle of international crime policy from the League of Nations (and the functions of the IPPC) – embedding them within a ‘social defence’ section which would produce knowledge on criminal phenomena, host quinquennial international conferences on the prevention of crime, and develop an international plan for dealing with crime and delinquency.²¹ The UN’s underpinning belief in the ‘modernisation thesis’ of development informed their initial approach to crime in the late 1940s – focusing attention on the crime wave expected to accompany rapid industrialisation and urbanisation in the recently independent nations of the Global South.²² International crime policy was figured as a method to prevent the future ‘crime wave’ and destabilisation of the international order.

Keen to establish significant distance between the discredited IPPC and its links to the League of Nations, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime reflects that:

As the League of Nations foundered on the rocks of global conflict leading to the Second World War, so did the IPPC. At the end of the war, the UN was formed with a brief that included the control and prevention of crime. However, the new Organization declined to affiliate with the IPPC for understandable reasons. Seventy-five years of valuable work and research were tarnished by the heavy hand wielded by the Axis powers in the Commission throughout the Second World War. Having furnished a substantial part of IPPC’s funding, the Axis powers used the Commission to publicize their bizarre theories on the racial and biological roots of crime and on draconian measures for its control.²³

The UN has dedicated its work on crime to the centralisation of human rights, rehabilitation, and prevention. Understandably, it wanted to distance itself from the Axis influence upon preceding international agendas on crime policy. However, the UN was to call its international crime prevention wing ‘the Social Defence section’ – a name which opens a Pandora’s box of questions regarding the origins, nature, and objectives of crime policy. The ‘bizarre theories’ attributed to the Axis powers (above) are based in eugenics, a criminological theory which radically postulated that biological and ‘racial’ characteristics were linked to propensity for crime and disorder. Uncomfortably, however, the name ‘social defence’ *also harks back to a similar era and trajectory in criminology*. The original social defence theories of the late 19th century emerged from the positivist tradition, which was dominated by eugenicists theorists such as Cesare Lombroso.²⁴ The name chosen by the UN (social defence) for their human rights-oriented approach to crime *simultaneously invokes the criminology used by authoritarian regimes of the 20th century*. That choice provides a valuable insight into the dominance of social defence criminology at the time, and the surprising malleability of such theories.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Slawomir Marek Redo, *Blue Criminology: The Power of United Nations Ideas to Counter Crime Globally* (Helsinki: HEUNI, 2012), p. 109.

²¹Sellin, ‘Lionel Fox’.

²²Blaustein et al., ‘Development as a historical component’, pp. 435–6.

²³UNODC, ‘International Penal and Penitentiary Commission (IPPC)’ (undated). Available at: <https://www.unodc.org/congress/en/previous/previous-ippc.html>].

²⁴Michele Pifferi, *Reinventing Punishment: A Comparative History of Criminology and Penology in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

How is it possible for one criminological approach to inspire both a human-rights oriented approach to criminal justice, and authoritarian codes which traverse upon the rule of law? The answer to this question takes us on a journey which emphasises the surprising proximity of liberal and authoritarian criminological approaches. When it comes to preventive approaches to crime, liberal and authoritarian regimes draw on the same theoretical canon. Social defence, and its centralisation of prevention and the protection of society from crime, is also the cornerstone around which 20th-century social policy developed. Its ideological malleability is useful for explaining the contemporary flexibility of social policy – such that it has come to perform national security duties in order to defend the nation from terrorist threat.

Social defence criminology is little known outside specialist studies of continental criminology like the excellent ‘Reinventing Punishment’,²⁵ or the works dedicated to analysing its place in international organisations of the 20th century.²⁶ It should not be confused with the broader Foucauldian concept²⁷ of social defence as racism. The theorisation of crime prevention measures as ways to ‘secure’ and ‘defend’ society began in late 19th-century criminology on the European continent. Italian scholars Cesare Lombroso, Rafeale Garofalo, and Enrico Ferri all contributed to the ‘positivist’ school of criminology – which focused upon the social, biological, and economic precursors of crime and denounced the previous retributive model of punishment.²⁸ Retributive criminology was founded upon the association of fixed universal penalties with criminal acts: the act of crime was matched with a corresponding penalty in sentencing. Responding to this tradition, the positivist and social defence traditions argued that retribution sidestepped the most important matter in crime policy: *what is necessary to protect society from crime*. Rather than centring criminal law on a ‘mystical’ association between penalty and offence, the social defence criminologists argued for *individualised* sentences – oriented towards the protection of society and decided upon by a judge.²⁹

Individualised sentencing created a very ambiguous climate in early 20th-century penology – bringing together advocates of indefinite detention alongside reformers who wished to humanise criminal policy around rehabilitation. Individualised sentences could lead either way. The determination of what is needed to protect society can involve severely extending sentences (until an offender is no longer able to threaten society due to old age and frailty), but it could also incorporate the early release of offenders who have demonstrated themselves reformed.³⁰ Reform and rehabilitation were central to the UN’s interest in ‘new’ social defence criminology. However, the ambiguity at the core of individualised sentencing (and the goal of preventing crime and protecting society from the dangerous individual) also explains how social defence criminology was central to the criminal codes of authoritarian regimes like the Soviet Union (from 1927 onwards) and Nazi Germany.

In 1930, the Italian (fascist) Rocco code was adopted into law, articulating three different means by which the law should interpret dangerousness and act to protect society. This social defence code remains on the books to date. Pifferi describes how the code classifies dangerousness in stages, and the intersection with security measures (which relate to pre-emptive detention, in the absence of conviction):

²⁵ Pifferi, *Reinventing Punishment*.

²⁶ Marc Ancel, *Social Defence: A Modern Approach to Criminal Problems* (London: Routledge, 1965 [1954]); Lopez-Rey, ‘The First U.N. Congress’; Reece Walters, ‘Social defence and international reconstruction: Illustrating the governance of post-war criminological discourse’, *Theoretical Criminology*, 5:2 (2001), pp. 203–21.

²⁷ However, Foucault published an excellent paper in 1978 which explored how the concept of the dangerous individual had emerged in psychiatry through the influence of Social Defence theorists: Michel Foucault, ‘About the concept of the “dangerous individual” in 19th-century legal psychiatry’, *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 1 (1978), pp. 1–18.

²⁸ Pifferi, *Reinventing Punishment*.

²⁹ Pifferi, *Reinventing Punishment*.

³⁰ Ancel, *Social Defence*; Pifferi, *Reinventing Punishment*, p. 9.

dangerousness would operate on three separate levels: a first level on which no crime is committed and subjects suspected of dangerousness are regulated by police measures that are administrative in nature; a second judicial level on which dangerousness coincides with unlawfulness as a constitutive element of a crime and becomes a criterion used to measure punishment; and a third level that is also judicial in its character and on which social dangerousness is the legal condition for the application of security measures.³¹

A similarly complicated application of social defence (where provisions were made for detaining ‘dangerous persons’ in the absence of committing a crime, as well as in addition to criminal conviction) was incorporated into law in Spain in 1933.³² The law on vagrants and malefactors, as it was known, was presented in eugenics terms as a law of ‘biological self-defence.’³³ The references to security measures and self-defence against threatening others in these laws demonstrate a central role being played by what we would now call securitisation. Criminal law served the political elite, working to detain those deemed ‘dangerous’ to society. As Marc Ancel, the premier post-war thinker of social defence put it, ‘the criminal law of Nazi Germany was itself concerned with the pitiless affirmation of the community – the *volk* – if need be by the suppression of the individual. Others again have recalled that the Soviet criminal code of 1926 – which ... purports to ensure by “measures of social defence” the protection of “the order created by the power of the workers and the peasants” against any “dangerous activities”’.³⁴

Across history, social defence agendas have straddled the boundaries of liberal and authoritarian politics (having been implemented in both types of political system), prioritising the defence of society as the main objective of crime control. Their focus on pre-emptive detection of ‘dangerous’ people, before they can commit crimes, has made them flexible to the whims of many political regimes; authoritarian systems like the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany utilised social defence criminal codes to adopt ‘security measures’ like pre-emptive detention and sidestep the rule of law. However, the UN interpreted a radical potential for a liberal social defence, oriented around reform of individuals rather than pre-emptive detention. Using the work of prominent court of cassation judge Marc Ancel on the ‘new’ social defence, the UN refigured social defence practice around human rights – driving an international crime policy agenda which aimed to protect society from crime through social policy interventions upon juveniles and through post-offence rehabilitation. Rather than abandoning social defence, the United Nations explicitly endorsed it, establishing a Social Defence Section in 1948, under the instructions of the Social and Economic Commission, to pursue leadership in ‘the international prevention of crime and the rehabilitation of offenders.’³⁵ Ancel’s modernisation of social defence as a liberal code which respects human rights and the rule of law was crucial to this endeavour. For Ancel (who also served as rapporteur to the ad hoc experts committee for the section in 1950), social defence was – at its origins – a supplement to punishment and retribution. Rather than considering the work of the state complete with the passing of sentence upon an offender, social defence – for Ancel – encouraged a broader spectrum of work inquiring into the causes of the offence and the means necessary to stop it repeating. For example:

The concept of social defence covers an active and preventive social policy which aims at the protection of society by protecting the offender as well, and is designed to ensure that the latter should receive the treatment which is appropriate to his individual case ... Thus conceived, social defence is largely based on the substitution of treatment for retributive punishment.³⁶

³¹ Pifferi, *Reinventing Punishment*, pp. 219–20.

³² A complete list of European nations adopting social defence codes or statutes in this era can be found in Ancel, *Social Defence*, p. 60.

³³ Pifferi, *Reinventing Punishment*, p. 201.

³⁴ Ancel, *Social Defence*, p. 12.

³⁵ Ancel, *Social Defence*, pp. 17–18.

³⁶ Ancel, *Social Defence*, p. 20.

The UN's establishment of a social defence section followed three years after Grammatica's foundation of a social defence study centre in Genoa (in 1945), and one year after the organisation of a social defence congress by the UN in San Remo, in 1947. On 29 March 1947, the UN Economic and Social Council recognised crime as a 'substantial problem with widespread social implications' and recommended that the Social Commission consider the necessary machinery for preventing crime and treating offenders.³⁷ For Ancel, the special climate of the post-war period drove international organisations to take up the question of law and crime, stating: 'specialists of all countries, who also felt themselves to be men of goodwill, sought to rediscover a great tradition and in a new spirit to give fresh thought to the problem of crime, envisaged as a social problem.'³⁸ For Ancel, social defence should be regarded as a humanistic code – replacing classical models of abstract punishments for offences with peer judgement, oriented towards protection and rehabilitation. Reece Walters presents a different reading of the UN's interest in crime prevention and the treatment of offenders. He acknowledges that the funding of policy-oriented criminological research by member states contributed directly to the securitisation of crime as a threat to safety and prosperity in the era of post-war reconstruction.³⁹ This state-centrism led, he argues, to the predominant focus of UN research and the quinquennial congresses held by the section on issues of juvenile delinquency as a threat to society.

Walters argues that social defence was (in the 1950s) a cipher whereby states pursued avenues for post-war governance and 'discovered' a widespread enemy (crime) against which the defence of the social could be practised. Leaning back towards the relevance of this setting for contemporary security, this global agenda prefigured the War on Terror by embedding the expansion and development of crime prevention programmes, within social policy, around the prospect of pre-delinquent citizens turning into 'dangerous persons' who threaten the social order.

The evolution of social defence in the UN and Council of Europe

In a passage describing the first United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and the Treatment of Offenders (held in Geneva, 1955), Manuel Lopez-Rey describes the session on juvenile delinquency as very well attended by national representatives and justice ministers. The Secretariat report prepared for the discussion pointed out:

that the term 'juvenile delinquency' suffers from over-generalisation ... that in preventing juvenile delinquency not only the minor but society should be protected as well; that preventive policies should aim at enabling the minor to behave in accordance with an accepted system of values; that terms such as 'potential delinquent' and 'pre-delinquent' are open to some criticism and that any standard prediction method aimed at establishing these situations raises, also, some reservations.⁴⁰

To any scholar of contemporary radicalisation debates in international organisations, these words will seem remarkably familiar. They parallel neatly the sudden popularity of 'radicalisation' discourse in the early 21st century, which had no precise meaning ('suffers from over-generalisation') or firm causal pathways but was taken up by governments and international organisations regardless.⁴¹ Furthermore, Lopez-Rey describes the secretariat report as containing significant commitments to the protection of both the juvenile *and* society. This is commitment that prevention should work on values-change in the potential offender to achieve the prevention of crime – thereby protecting the potential offender *as well as* preventing victimisation. These are

³⁷ Walters, 'Social defence and international reconstruction', p. 211.

³⁸ Ancel, *Social Defence*, pp. 69–70.

³⁹ Walters, 'Social defence and international reconstruction', p. 213.

⁴⁰ Lopez-Rey, 'The First U.N. Congress', p. 536.

⁴¹ Mark Sedgwick, 'The concept of radicalisation as a source of confusion', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 22:4 (2010), pp. 479–94.

remarkably early manifestations of features within contemporary discourse on ‘risk and protective factors’-led approaches to public health and social care. These attempt to identify the positive relationships and qualities in lives of young and/or vulnerable people, to emphasise those and prevent the aggravation of risk factors, contributing to the improvement of potential offenders’ lives as well as preventing crime, are present within PVE and in wider crime prevention work.⁴²

The ‘new’ social defence of the late 1940s and early 1950s articulated a justification for intervening in a person’s life *before* they commit an offence, which would balance with commitments to human rights. This justification centralises the need to protect the pre-delinquent or ‘vulnerable person’, who might otherwise become an offender, as well as society. As Reiss describes social defence:

the goal of the juvenile justice system and a core concern of modern social defense policy is to protect the society by changing offenders through treatment using some social technology such as re-education, behavior modification, or psychological treatment.⁴³

Through prevention, both the potential offender and society are to be protected from the future consequences of crime. There is a remarkable synergy, or parallel, between the contemporary era and the 1950s. The UN congresses on crime prevention and the treatment of offenders, and their immediate precursor workshops on (new) social defence in Europe,⁴⁴ represent an origin point for the discourse of ‘vulnerability’ to becoming criminal – which locates crime prevention around interventions which reform *potential* offenders. This has now become central to the notion of ‘vulnerability’ in contemporary PVE and child sexual exploitation prevention programmes.⁴⁵ To underline the remarkable similarities between the eras, readers should understand that crime prevention in the 20th century has otherwise been dominated by ‘situational’ models which preempt crime through ‘target hardening measures’ (effectively, adapting the environment to make it more difficult to steal or damage without detection).⁴⁶ *Social* crime prevention has been less prominent in the 20th century, more commonly applied to neighbourhood watch and victimisation prevention activities. Occasionally it has emerged within coercive agendas (for example, the Anti-Social Behaviour Orders [ASBO] introduced in the 1990s Britain) of increased social control. Far more rarely has social crime prevention involved the reform of *potential offenders* through values work. Work to reform potential offenders through social crime prevention are heralded as developing in France and the USA in the 1970s and 1980s, where urbanised (and usually racialised) youth were profiled as potential delinquents and taken to workshops, wilderness trips, and summer holiday camps.⁴⁷ As such, the appearance of offender-oriented social crime prevention in the ‘new’ social defence of the 1950s is striking.

⁴²Caitlin Clemmow, Noémie Bouhana, Zoe Marchment, and Paul Gill, ‘Vulnerability to radicalisation in a general population: A psychometric network approach’, *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 29:4 (2023), pp. 408–43.

⁴³Albert Reiss, ‘The evolution of criminal policy and prevention from the perspective of social defense and enlightenment through criminological research’, *International Annals of Criminology*, 29:1–2 (1991), pp. 9–20 (p. 10, emphasis in original).

⁴⁴Jean Graven, ‘Introduction juridique au probleme de l’examen medico-psychologique et social des delinquants’, in Georges Heuyer and Jean Pinatel (eds), *L’examen médico-psychologique et social des delinquants* (Paris: Société Internationale de Criminologie, 1953), pp. 29–48.

⁴⁵Kate Brown, ‘“Vulnerability”: Handle with care’, *Ethics and Social Welfare*, 5:3 (2011), pp. 313–21; Kate Brown, *Vulnerability and Young People: Care and Social Control in Policy and Practice* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015); Charlotte Heath-Kelly and Barbara Gruber (eds), *Vulnerability: Governing the Social through Security Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023).

⁴⁶Ronald Clarke (ed.), *Situational Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies* (Albany, NY: Harrow & Heston, 1992); Pat O’Malley, ‘Risk, power and crime prevention’, *Economy and Society*, 21:3 (1992), pp. 252–75.

⁴⁷Evelyne Baillergeau and Patrick Hebberecht, ‘Social crime prevention in late modern Europe: Towards a comparative analysis’, in Patrick Hebberecht and Evelyne Baillergeau (eds), *Social Crime Prevention in Late Modern Europe: A Comparative Perspective* (Brussels: VUB, 2012), pp. 21–36; Scott Bandoroff, *Wilderness-Adventure Therapy for Delinquent and Pre-Delinquent Youth: A Review of the Literature* (Washington, DC: US Department of Education, 1989); Adam Crawford, ‘The growth of crime prevention in France as contrasted with the English experience: Some thoughts on the politics of insecurity’, in Gordon Hughes, Eugene McLaughlin and John Muncie (eds), *Crime Prevention and Community Safety* (London: SAGE,

The prominent argument in the academic literature for the rise of social crime prevention in European nations in the 1980s concerns the development of new ‘middle way’ political orientations for left-leaning parties, who stepped away from a firm insistence that only structural provision would solve structural problems. Instead, the ‘middle way’ offered left-leaning politicians a new discourse of preventive interventions that were framed as socially progressive rather than repressive.⁴⁸ Given that the emergence of localised social crime prevention programmes (focused on potential offenders) is associated with the 1970s and 1980s in comparative criminologies, it is meaningful and striking to see the presence of these logics in 1955 material from the UN. Preceding the emergence of offender-oriented social crime prevention elsewhere by 20 years, this strongly suggests that the adoption of ‘new’ social defence by the UN produced an origin point for this policy approach. Indeed, paralleling the arguments made about the reorientation of social democratic politics towards ‘middle way’ options in France, the archival material from the UN also situates offender-oriented social crime prevention in the move away from structural solutions to crime. The welfare state was deemed *not enough* to prevent crime, by itself, in the social defence agenda. Materials produced by the secretariat for the first UN crime prevention congress of 1955 were characterised by Lopez-Rey such that:

programs of general social welfare are not sufficient by themselves to dispense with the need for more specific policies that focus attention on juvenile delinquency and its prevention. Concerning the family and school, the Congress adopted a series of recommendations among which parental guidance, and auxiliary psychological and social services were considered of exceptional importance.⁴⁹

The 1955 congress materials also demonstrate a repeated concern about the decline in family values as a contributing factor to juvenile delinquency (framed as ‘pre-delinquency’ by the congress, to focus attention on those youths yet to commit a crime). The records of the juvenile delinquency section of the congress state that:

industrialization and growth of cities have been accompanied by an increasing measure of social, family and personal disorganisation. Delinquency appears to have had an intimate relationship with the social and cultural changes that have operated through the family. It is vital therefore that preventive efforts be designed to produce closer family ties.⁵⁰

Recommendations were made for welfare payments to be made to families to prevent the need for the mother to work outside the home; for counselling to be provided to improve parenting skills and remedy conflict in the home; for educators to identify emotional and behavioural difficulties in children and undertake values- and character-building work with them; that psychological and social service auxiliaries to the school be developed to provide support for pre-delinquent children; and, crucially, that specialist police services be developed that could manage referrals into health, social, and psychological services for juveniles.⁵¹ This represents, to the author’s knowledge, the earliest appearance of offender-oriented social crime prevention – which otherwise didn’t appear until decades later in French ‘hot summer’ diversion activities for youth, and the 1974 emergence of Danish SSP systems (Schools, Social Services, and Police).

2002), pp. 214–39; Jacques de Maillard and Severine Germain, ‘Social prevention in France: Erasure, permanence, regeneration?’ in Patrick Hebberecht and Evelyne Baillergeau (eds), *Social Crime Prevention in Late Modern Europe: A Comparative Perspective* (Brussels: VUB, 2012), pp. 103–20.

⁴⁸Baillergeau and Hebberecht, ‘Social crime prevention in late modern Europe’; Anne Wyvekens, ‘The evolving story of crime prevention in France’, in Adam Crawford (ed.), *Crime Prevention Policies in Comparative Perspective* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 110–29.

⁴⁹Lopez-Rey, ‘The First U.N. Congress’, p. 536.

⁵⁰UN, *First United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Geneva 22nd August–3rd September 1955*, A/CONF.6/L.11, p. 4.

⁵¹UN, *First United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, Geneva 22nd August–3rd September 1955*, A/CONF.6/L.11.

In the early decades of the United Nations social defence section, attaining security through social policy measures of this sort was associated with industrialising nations in the Global South,⁵² sometimes referred to as 'less developed countries'.⁵³ It was in the new nations that the threat from crime was associated with urbanisation, sometimes described in racialised and infantilising language such as:

The complexity of urban living places special restrictions and requirements upon the individual in order to maintain an orderly society. It is not easy for the new city dweller to understand the necessity of them ... Analysis of some criminal and statistical data for certain Asian and African communities that often the bulk of criminal prosecutions result from non-compliance with regulations which are peculiar to urban living.⁵⁴

In this early era, social defence was a project of the UN directed at the Global South to produce 'order' and defend societies against the threat of crime. Programmes to reform the potential offender were associated with the Global South rather than Europe and North America at this time. Yet by the third congress of 1965, the first signs of change in this discourse can be seen. The third congress, held in Stockholm, began to replace the previous narrative of 'development leads to crime' (the modernisation thesis) with the 'crime impedes development' thesis,⁵⁵ which would dominate the social defence section's approach in the 1970s and 1980s.⁵⁶ Accordingly, in 1965, the application of crime prevention and social defence to European societies became possible in UN discourse. Under-Secretary de Seynes remarked that 'juvenile delinquency was a scourge affecting both rich and poor countries', while simultaneously noting the peaks in delinquency which accompany urbanisation.⁵⁷ Furthermore the opening speech of Justice Minister Herman Kling at the 1965 UN crime prevention congress emphasised the importance of humane societal attitudes and made reference to the continuing democratisation of European societies (such that Sweden's institutions now served the people, rather than nobility) and progressive changes in Swedish attitudes towards punishment:

Mr Herman Kling ... said it was particularly gratifying to note that in his country and elsewhere public support for the humane treatment of offenders had largely replaced the aggressive tendencies towards criminals ... This change of attitude towards criminal policy was characterized by the meeting places of the two Stockholm Congresses. In 1878 the Congress met in the House of the Nobility whereas this time it met in the House of the People.⁵⁸

The retreat of the modernisation thesis enabled the broadening of social defence applications to European societies, and the slow development of national and local crime prevention programmes

⁵²UN, *First United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders*, Geneva 22nd August–3rd September 1955, A/CONF.6/L.11.

⁵³UN, *Second United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders*, London 8–20 August 1960, 'Prevention of Types of Criminality Resulting from Social Changes and Accompanying Economic Development in Less Developed Countries': Report prepared by the Secretariat, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (1960), A/CONF.17/4.

⁵⁴UN, *Second United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders*, London 8–20 August 1960, 'Prevention of Types of Criminality Resulting from Social Changes and Accompanying Economic Development in Less Developed Countries': Report prepared by the Secretariat, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (1960), A/CONF.17/4, pp. 4–5.

⁵⁵At the 1965 Congress, the under-secretary for economic and social affairs, Mr Philippe de Seynes, remarked that 'failure to maintain law and order could disrupt or completely halt a country's development' (UN, *Third United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders*, Stockholm, 9–18 August 1965, Report Prepared by the Secretariat, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (1967), A/CONF.26/7, p. 6).

⁵⁶Blaustein et al., 'Development as a historical component'.

⁵⁷UN, *Third United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders*, Stockholm, 9–18 August 1965, Report Prepared by the Secretariat, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (1967), A/CONF.26/7, p. 7.

⁵⁸UN, *Third United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders*, Stockholm, 9–18 August 1965, Report Prepared by the Secretariat, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (1967), A/CONF.26/7, p. 6.

which integrated security duties (later called ‘urban security’) into the work of frontline care professionals. A fundamental step on this journey was the establishment of a companion organisation to the UN’s social defence work within the Council of Europe. In 1958, the European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC) was entrusted by the Committee of Ministers with the responsibility for overseeing and coordinating the Council of Europe’s activities in the field of crime prevention and crime control. The CDPC meets at the headquarters of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg (France) and was framed as a regional collaborator with the UN on activities of crime prevention and social defence. Its collaboration with the UN’s social defence agenda was so close that, in the early years, it was nearly named the Committee of Experts on Social Defence,⁵⁹ and – in later decades – the quinquennial conferences of the CDPC (attended by European justice ministers) functioned to prepare items, motions, and collective positions before the UN’s congresses on crime prevention.⁶⁰

Marc Ancel, the thinker behind ‘new’ social defence, was appointed as the French expert to the CDPC and was later to chair the Committee from 1960–2. Indeed, ‘social defence’ was the philosophical home for this working group. The commission’s multidisciplinary composition reflected that subscription to social defence ideas, to the extent that the CDPC described its own founding and organisation in terms of social defence: ‘the modern science of social defence had aspects at once penal and penitentiary, repressive and curative, preventive and educational and recommended that government representatives should include prison officials as well as penologists, physicians and, sometimes, sociologists.’⁶¹

It was the transfer of social defence agendas to the Council of Europe, via the UN’s initial advocacy, that paved the way for significant developments in crime prevention – and the proliferation of security duties within frontline social services. The CDPC began its work by surveying European countries’ experiences with and policies of crime prevention, with some engagement with pre-delinquency risk factors. The subsequent report concluded that more research was needed into effective treatment, otherwise simply identifying these children is beside the point: ‘after having detected children predisposed to delinquency, it remains to be seen what to do with them.’⁶² In 1963, another CDPC report tracked the development of juvenile delinquency prevention schemes in European states, identifying the development of ‘general prevention activities’ at the social level in Belgium, France, Denmark, and the Netherlands and ‘coordinated systems of prevention, treatment and research’ in Italy.⁶³

Between 1970 and 1973, a new subcommittee on juvenile delinquency operated, chaired by Mrs S. Huynen (Belgium), which drew up a report with conclusions on the subject in the light of an enquiry among Council of Europe member states. This coincided with the 1972 report of the CDPC on ‘The role of the school in the prevention of juvenile delinquency’, a study which emphasised a social model of juvenile delinquency and framed the school as the detective which can identify children at risk (of committing crimes) and bring in multi-agency collaboration to protect society – and the child. This is highly reminiscent of the contemporary PVE agenda which appropriates a ‘safeguarding’ platform to detect potential offenders (through their vulnerabilities) rather than victims. By 1975, the CDPC’s Conference on Crime Policy was attended by crime policy

⁵⁹ CDPC, *Summary Report on the First Meeting held at Europe House (30th June to 3 July 1958)*, CEPC (58) 1 Rev (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1958), p. 9.

⁶⁰ Council of Europe, *CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY: LEGAL COMMITTEE Sub-Committee No. 10 (Questions of Penal Law and Criminology)*, AS/Jur 17 20 (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1965); CDPC, *Council of Europe Activities in the Field of Crime Problems, 1956–1976* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1977); CDPC, *4th Conference on Crime Policy: Conference Report*, Strasbourg, 9–11 May 1990, CDPC (91) 2 (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1991), pp. 81–91.

⁶¹ CDPC, *European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC): A Look Back at the proceedings of the first meeting of the European Committee on Crime Problems held at Europe House from 30 June to 3 July 1958* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1998), p. 4.

⁶² CDPC, *Juvenile Delinquency in Post-war Europe*, CEPCV (59) 5, 4 December 1959 (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1959), p. 48.

⁶³ CDPC, *The Effectiveness of Current Programmes for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency*, COE.M.1.2/63 EF (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1963), p. 7.

officials of all member states and discussed the need for coordinated measures against violent crime and juvenile delinquency. The conference explicitly discussed ‘making the police part of a general preventive system ... co-ordinated through either central or local, if necessary new, agencies representing all circles concerned and “adapted to the various forms of crime”’.⁶⁴ Here, the function of policing and other frontline services blur into a hybrid association between the protection of society with the identification and treatment of the vulnerable, potential offender. This was summarised well, in 1976, when the CDPC described the work of the subcommittee on juvenile delinquency as *extending beyond the judicial system to protecting society*, because it is examining:

criminal policy not in isolation but under the aspect of *social policy*, using that term in the broad sense of policy aimed at protecting the interests of society and promoting the well-being of its members ... in this general frame of reference the criminal justice system has as objectives the protection of society and the rehabilitation of individual offenders.⁶⁵

This securitisation of youths ‘at risk’ of becoming offenders continued in 1977, when Henri Feraud of Interpol presented his report to the 3rd Criminological Colloquium of the CDPC. In it, he argued that a preventative police force is needed to protect potential offenders (from their descent into criminal lives) and society from those in a ‘dangerous pre-delinquent state’:

a purely preventive branch of the police could make an effort to detect cases of social maladjustment among young people, that is, a vagrant or parasitic way of life, membership of asocial or anti-social groups, deviant behaviour, etc. which can add up to as many warning symptoms of delinquency ... [it] could try to detect individuals who are in a state of pre-criminal crisis or in other words about to commit a serious criminal offence. This state is usually described as a ‘dangerous’ pre-delinquent state.⁶⁶

This continued, at pace, in 1979, when the CDPC’s report on ‘social change and juvenile delinquency’ extended the discussion of youth susceptibility to criminological influences to possible mass disorder and even terrorism! For example:

Youth would appear to be a concept used to evoke a set of behaviour patterns and social attitudes distinct from those of adults or children. In this sense, ‘youth’ represents a form of marginality ... If some manifestations of this challenge follow the usual channels of social conflicts through the political and trade union manifestations, others take the more incisive paths of rebellion and disorder. A tiny minority go so far as to adopt the violent methods of terrorism, in an attempt to impose anarchial demands through force and blackmail. Others express their unrest through the more insidious forms of social inadaptation and crime.⁶⁷

Here, we witness an early prototype for the radicalisation discourse which would emerge in the next century: youth ‘pre-delinquency’ must be tackled by care agencies and frontline workers, lest it develop into threats to society and order.

The securitisation of youth crime and disorder continued apace in this era through the French and Dutch establishment of social crime prevention programmes. In 1982, the Bonnemaïson Report in France (which responded to urban rioting) endorsed a national crime prevention council, local crime prevention councils, and holiday camps for disenfranchised urban youth in summer. Similarly in 1983, the Roethof committee of the Netherlands recommended a new national commitment to crime prevention, based around social measures, the surveillance of potential offenders

⁶⁴ CDPC, *Collected Studies in Criminological Research Volume XVI: The Police and Crime Prevention*, Reports presented to the Third Criminological Colloquium (1977) (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1979), p. 119.

⁶⁵ CDPC, *Alternative Measures to Imprisonment* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1976), p. 14.

⁶⁶ CDPC, *Collected Studies in Criminological Research Volume XVI: The Police and Crime Prevention*, Reports presented to the Third Criminological Colloquium (1977) (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1979), pp. 10–11.

⁶⁷ CDPC, *Social Change and Juvenile Delinquency* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1979), pp. 18–19.

by city wardens, and urban/environmental design of cities. These endeavours represent the dispersion of security responsibilities (for the protection of society and prevention of disorder) into frontline youth worker roles and the coming of the 'urban security' agenda. Bonnemaïson would then go on to chair EFUS (European Forum on Urban Security), which was formed in 1987 under the auspices of the Council of Europe to research solutions to urban insecurity, caused by drugs, crime, social alienation, and eventually radicalisation. EFUS would go on to influence the diffusion of multi-agency solutions to disorder, crime, and radicalisation through its participation in no fewer than four Horizon 2020-funded projects.⁶⁸

The Council of Europe continued to expand its work on urban policies in Europe from 1982. From 1986, this work transferred to its 'Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe' (CLRAE), which accelerated the development of Urban Security as a field of governance. By 1992, CLRAE's work on an Urban Charter led to a European Declaration of Urban Rights, which prioritised security as the first right of urban citizens – relating 'security' to freedom from crime, delinquency, and aggression. Here, 'security' has been formulated as the protection of society from local disorder, and the solutions proposed include multi-agency crime prevention partnerships from all agencies.⁶⁹ Social policy and frontline youth work are characterised explicitly as 'urban security' work, in a culmination of the 'social defence trajectory' journey through objectives of protecting/defending society to explicit security work.

Within this new field of social policy action on causes of insecurity, the distance to the radicalisation discourse (of violent threats to order) is reduced to barely a few steps. Language of 'attacking' and 'jeopardy' comes to the fore, framing the problem as one of security requiring defensive measures. In an early draft section for the Urban Charter, Philippe Yvin of CLRAE's subcommittee on urban policies wrote that societies faced 'jeopardy' if the security threat of delinquency was not dealt with:

Security is everyone's business. It is necessary to attack the root causes of delinquency by means of an appropriate urban social development policy which will give everyone a chance to find a place in the local community, restore social ties and develop mutual support structures. Without this commitment, confidence in society, quality of life in towns and human rights will remain in jeopardy.⁷⁰

Where EFUS would continue to maintain a generally progressive attitude within their work on urban security, often highlighting structural causes for social alienation and crime,⁷¹ CLRAE's congresses of 1996 and 1997 demonstrate increasingly securitised discourse on mass migration to Europe and associated 'crime waves'. The 1996 CLRAE report on Crime and Urban Insecurity in Europe opens with the incredible language of 'keeping the mob at bay' to analogise how 1990s Europe faces such terrible disorder that a threat to democracy could result. For example:

the Parisian bourgeoisie of 1900 took good care to halt the metro at the gates to the city in order to protect themselves from the 'mob' in the suburbs. These age-old fears are now resurfacing and urban crime and insecurity are a burning issue ... There is no denying that the phenomenon is genuine, albeit blown out of proportion by the media and widespread rumours at times. If it is exploited in a demagogic manner, it poses a real threat to democracy by appealing to racist and 'reassuring' impulses and calling for a 'simplified' form of justice.⁷²

⁶⁸ Available at: {<https://efus.eu/uncategorized/how-urban-security-benefits-from-the-european-unions-horizon-2020-research-programme/>}.

⁶⁹ CLRAE, *European Urban Charter*, adopted during the annual Plenary Session of the CLRAE 17–19 March 1992 (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1992).

⁷⁰ CLRAE, 'DRAFT EUROPEAN URBAN CHARTER: *Urban security and crime prevention*', Committee on the Natural and Built Environment, Sub-Committee on Urban Policies, CPL/ENV/UP (25) 4 REV (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1990).

⁷¹ Frantz Glowacki, Michel Marcus, Catherine Vourc'h, Clotilde T. Mennetrier, and Gwendoline Mennetrier, *Urban Security Practices*, EFUS Security and Democracy, trans. Barry Tullet (Saint Denis: Imprimerie NICOLAS, 1996).

⁷² CLRAE, *Crime and Urban Insecurity*, Explanatory Memorandum, CPL (3) 6 Part II, (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1996).

In the culmination of the trend explored in this article, the sectors tasked with responding to this ‘existential threat’ to European societies are those working in urban planning; public amenities (schools, playgrounds, stadiums, swimming pools, socio-educational centres); family welfare and assistance policy; maintenance, supervisory, and security staff; out-of-school social and educational services; as well as municipal police.⁷³

Here, we find the connection point with contemporary PVE programmes. PVE incorporates frontline services into the detection of ‘vulnerability’ to radicalisation, tasking professionals with averting the ‘threat’ to society through the promotion of liberal values, the challenging of extremist narratives, and the fostering of critical thinking. Where this pastoral work fails to divert a person from extremist interests, referral to specialist intervention programmes is recommended. Like the history of social defence-inspired work, PVE centralises the argument that the proximity of local professionals enables them to intervene earlier in the development of possible threats to society.⁷⁴ ‘Closer is earlier’, in the logic of this work. Social policy is not distinct from security or policing work but rather attempts to rehabilitate the subject *in advance* of them becoming dangerous to society.⁷⁵

We may have assumed that national security, social security, and defence are distinct fields and sectors; however, this genealogy has shown that all share a hybrid origin – with overlapping functions and fields. Social defence remains with us to this day, in all but name. Its pre-emptive identification and reform of pre-delinquents is justified (despite occurring prior to any criminal offence) in the name of defending society against threats. This field developed through the sustained international work of the UN social defence section (later incorporated into the UN Office on Drugs and Crime), the quinquennial conferences on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders, and the organisation of a companion body for European social policy and crime prevention: the CDPC. Through the decades, these fora shaped the contemporary field of social policy around the defence of society from crime – surveying member states, conducting research, and disseminating knowledge on crime prevention through working groups and international congresses. At first, the field of social defence was theorised in relation to the problems of cities in the Global South by the international community, before transitioning into the domestic governance of crime in Europe through regional organisations like the CDPC. There, the preventive agenda flourished, rapidly expanding the field of pre-emptive interventions which targets pre-delinquents, in the name of defending society. Finally, this discourse was rearticulated as ‘Urban Security’ in the 1990s and then PVE in the 21st century. The key unifying feature throughout is the use of social policy and welfare sectors to defend society from threats of disorder, violence, and crime. The domestic War on Terror builds upon significant heritage, in this regard, and is unlikely to be easily undone by shifts in International Security back to interstate war.

Conclusion

This paper opened by considering how the ‘return of interstate war’ to International Security (as the Russian invasion of Ukraine is often heralded) would affect the previous dominant paradigm, the War on Terror. While the diminishing influence of terrorism on international imaginaries of insecurity is expected, the article argues that domestic counterterrorism agendas – particularly PVE programming – will remain powerful at local levels. The perpetuation of PVE policies represents the continuation of the War on Terror, long after the terminology of the ‘Global War on Terror’ has been retired. The international wars fought in the name of ending terrorism are hopefully at an end, but they have been replaced by a resurgence of interstate war (Russian aggression in Ukraine) and the conflagration of the Israel–Palestine conflict. Yet PVE remains a remarkable creation of the War on Terror era, where terrorism was reimagined as the consequence of individual ‘vulnerability’,

⁷³CLRAE, Crime and Urban Insecurity.

⁷⁴Melhuish and Heath-Kelly, ‘Fighting terrorism at a local level’.

⁷⁵Heath-Kelly and Shanaah, ‘Rehabilitation within pre-crime interventions’.

socio-psychological deficits, and ideological grooming. In the continuation of PVE policies, part of the War on Terror remains with us – smuggled into community cohesion agendas, community policing, and the work of frontline services.

But, of course, the War on Terror did not invent the crossover between national security and social policy; rather, it simply applied a pre-existing discourse to the topic of terrorism. Crime prevention policies have long identified individualised social interventions as a mechanism to achieve social stability. To explore this legacy, this paper undertook a genealogical investigation of how national security responsibilities have been implemented and theorised within social policy. Rather than finding the War on Terror to be unique, a long history of social policy involvement with defence was discovered in international organisations, dating back to the League of Nations' involvement with the IPPC in the early 20th century. The theory of social defence (where the defence of society from crime and disorder is prioritised within social policy) goes back even further, to the late 19th century.

This paper traced the development of this discourse through the 20th century in UN and Council of Europe crime-prevention fora, analysing how a programme of work originally directed at the Global South came to occupy European policymakers' formulations for their own societies. The problematisation of crime as a destabilising problem for society, against which pre-emptive defence needs to be mounted, has characterised a significant chunk of international history. This history reveals the significant finding that social security, national security, and defence share common discursive origins – even though they are today understood to represent distinct fields of policy. The genealogy of social defence shows us that social policy and defence are profoundly intertwined across history and that it is inappropriate to think of health, education, or social policy as being recently 'securitised'.⁷⁶ Rather, the fields of social policy and defence have been thought through, against, and in relation to each other – from their very origin.

It is not uncommon for national security to be enacted through pre-emptive interventions on non-criminals, whether in the style of multi-agency counter-radicalisation interventions, social crime prevention programmes directed at pre-delinquents, or the 'security measures' of pre-emptive detention applied by illiberal regimes past. It is important to remember, however, that the influence of social defence philosophy on modern politics stems from its impressive flexibility: it has catered to the needs of authoritarian regimes as well as the care-oriented, preventive policies of liberal states. Preventing threats to society is an ambidextrous, ideologically ambivalent affair; the ideological character of the programmes implemented come from the states in which they are embedded. This should provoke in us a continued attitude of wariness, then, to their expansion and recharacterisation, given that social defence can be used to satisfy all political agendas, regardless of human rights implications. Intelligence agency-led, covert welfare programming in the United Kingdom (the 'multi-agency centre' and the Counter Terrorism Clinical Consultancy Service, both hosted by counterterrorism policing HQ) are cases in point here.⁷⁷

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⁷⁶This argument is made well in Alison Howell, 'The global politics of medicine: Beyond global health, against securitisation theory', *Review of International Studies*, 40:5 (2014), pp. 961–87.

⁷⁷Basu, 'Learning lessons from countering terrorism'; Heath-Kelly 'Health, the Prevent duty and covert operations'; Charlotte Heath-Kelly, *Unhealthy Liaisons: NHS Collaboration with the Counter Terrorism Clinical Consultancy Service* (London: MedAct, 2024).