INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION IN EUROPEAN SECURITY, AND THE RISE OF ETHICAL-ANALYTICAL CENTRES

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Problem: Existing approaches to European security governance remain fragmented, focusing either on traditional deterrence or on sector-specific risk management. Such compartmentalization fails to capture the systemic complexity of hybrid threats, strategic volatility, and democratic vulnerabilities. Subject: This article examines the institutional design and function of ethical-analytical centres, focusing on the International Security Competence Center (ISCC) in Vienna and the Centre for Security Studies (CSS) in Kraków as innovative nodes within the evolving European security architecture. This perspective is enriched by insights from collaborating institutions such as the Military Institute of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, the Hayek Institute (Vienna), the University of Southern Denmark, the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Ivan Franko National Universities (Lviv and Poltava), and the UN U4SSC initiative in Vienna, forming a transnational reference frame that links ethical education, systems modelling, governance diagnostics, and resilience research. Goal: The goal is to conceptualize an integrated framework that combines ethical governance–value orientation, narrative competence, democratic legitimacy–with systems-based foresight, including policy simulation, resilience modelling, and governance diagnostics. Objective: Specifically, the study addresses the lack of a unified institutional model that translates foresight outputs into operational procedures while safeguarding democratic principles and proposes a pathway to close this translation gap. Methods: The analysis applies system analysis to map cross-sector vulnerabilities, narrative analysis to examine the role of ethical literacy and public trust in crisis leadership, and comparative institutional analysis to assess complementarities between ISCC and CSS. Results: The article identifies key gaps in operational metrics for ethical and narrative competence, cross-domain integration, and the education-to-policy pipeline. It demonstrates how

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hybrid institutions like ISCC and CSS can address these deficits by embedding ethical reflection and systems analysis into European security governance. Conclusions: The proposed framework positions ethical-analytical centres as prototypes for anticipatory, value-coherent, and operationalizable security governance, offering measurable dimensions – readiness, legitimacy, and narrative integrity–to guide future research, education, and policy implementation.

Keywords: European security architecture; hybrid threats; institutional resilience; ethical and normative governance; narrative competence; systems-based foresight; crisis preparedness; EU–NATO coordination; civil–military integration; strategic autonomy; policy–implementation gap; cross-sector governance; democratic safeguards; anticipatory and adaptive security governance.

1. Europe's New Security Landscape

Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine disrupted decades of territorial stability in Europe, provoking military escalation and exposing critical vulnerabilities in civil preparedness, cyber infrastructure, and strategic coherence [19, 22, 23]. This war has not only reignited kinetic conflict on the continent but also deepened hybrid threats such as cyberattacks, information warfare, energy coercion, and the weaponization of migration [3, 20, 27]. The geopolitical implications have been far-reaching, from Finland and Sweden's NATO accession to the intensification of EU defense integration through PESCO and the European Defense Fund [1, 8].

In parallel, the resurgence of Trump-era unpredictability in U.S. foreign policy–marked by isolationist rhetoric, transactional diplomacy, and wavering NATO commitments – has forced Europe to reconsider its reliance on transatlantic security guarantees [17]. Under the shadow of possible U.S. disengagement, European states have begun accelerating efforts toward strategic autonomy, including the development of independent rapid response forces, reinforcement of the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP), and expanded investment in dual-use innovation [8, 17].

These tectonic shifts challenge the adequacy of traditional security institutions built during the Cold War and early post-Cold War periods. They expose the need for more agile, interdisciplinary, and ethically grounded frameworks that can anticipate and manage complex security environments [16, 26, 28]. This has led to the emergence of novel security actors such as ISCC Austria and CSS Kraków, which aim to close the gap between normative vision and operational capacity [5, 6, 9–15]. Their integration of crisis leadership, narrative analysis, systems modeling, and resilience training reflects a paradigm shift–from reactive security postures to proactive, anticipatory governance grounded in democratic values [1, 17, 26].

Research Gap

Building on these contextual shifts, it is necessary to examine the state of current research on hybrid threats, resilience, and security governance [1–4, 16, 20, 23], in order to identify the specific gap this article aims to address.

Despite substantive advances, several issues remain underspecified or unresolved in current research and practice, and it is precisely in these areas that this article seeks to contribute.

First, there is a lack of a unified ethical-analytical institutional model [16, 17]. The existing literature continues to treat ethical governance – including values, legitimacy, and public trust – and systems-based analytics such as risk modelling, scenario design, and governance diagnostics largely in parallel silos [1, 4, 16].

Second, operational metrics for narrative competence and ethical literacy are underdeveloped [2, 4]. Although narrative warfare and moral clarity are broadly recognized as decisive factors, there are few validated indicators to measure how training in ethics and narrative competence shapes crisis decision-making, enhances inter-agency coherence, or strengthens societal trust over time [1, 3].

A further challenge concerns what may be called the translation gap from foresight to implementation. While reports and academic contributions increasingly recommend foresight exercises, stress tests, and simulations, the field still lacks implementation playbooks that demonstrate how insights derived from scenario work are translated into standard operating procedures, procurement decisions, inter-ministerial governance arrangements, and municipal preparedness plans [16].

Another unresolved issue is the insufficient development of threat-agnostic frameworks that integrate across domains [26, 28]. Many existing approaches remain bound to specific sectors such as cyber, energy, or information, without offering modular protocols that can function across governance levels – from EU institutions down to regional and municipal authorities – and that systematically involve private-sector operators and civil society actors [1, 4, 23].

The education-to-policy pipeline is also under-theorized [2, 18]. Although summer schools, executive programs, and practitioner trainings are widespread, their causal impact on institutional readiness and

the quality of policy outcomes is rarely modelled or empirically tested. Research has yet to produce robust frameworks that link curricula, competencies, exercises, and measurable improvements in resilience and preparedness [7, 18, 21].

Finally, governance diagnostics under conditions of stress remain insufficiently coupled with democratic safeguards [17]. Existing assessment tools typically focus on capabilities and compliance, but less attention is paid to methodologies that test resilience while simultaneously safeguarding fundamental rights and democratic norms, such as proportionality, transparency, and accountability during crisis response [1, 17].

2. ISCC Austria: Ethics, Leadership, and Civil Preparedness

ISCC Austria, rooted in the EU DX "Danube Excellence" initiative, positions itself as a Vienna-based platform committed to fostering ethical leadership and civic resilience [9–15]. Drawing from Austria's historical commitment to neutrality and social solidarity, ISCC emphasizes the integration of value-based governance into civil crisis preparedness [9, 10, 14].

It distinguishes itself through a range of activities:

• Executive-level crisis leadership education for public and private actors [9, 12]

• Publication of normative frameworks and ethics-focused analyses (e.g., "Mord darf sich nicht lohnen" by Dr. Rüdiger Stix) [9]

• Facilitation of cross-sector discourse on ethical dimensions of statecraft and public safety (e.g., seminars on judo ethics as a metaphor for strategic restraint) [10, 13]

• Memorial initiatives aimed at linking historical reflection with present-day security ethics [14]

At the conceptual core of ISCC's mission lies the idea that ethical competence is not a "soft" counterpart to security but a prerequisite for strategic foresight [9, 14]. The centre draws on interdisciplinary ethical theory, reflective leadership models, and narrative psychology to shape what it calls "moral agency in crisis" [9, 11, 14]. It regards narrative competence as crucial for building public trust, countering disinformation, and guiding decision-makers through moral ambiguity in real-time [11].

ISCC's ethos reflects a broader Austrian approach to security governance that blends normative legitimacy with pragmatic resilience [9, 14]. As Dr. Rüdiger Stix emphasizes, the phrase "murder must not pay" signals not only a legal dictum but a commitment to embedding ethical clarity in societal responses to violence, crime, and extremism [9]. Through its educational initiatives and public dialogues, ISCC Austria aspires to establish a new standard for ethical literacy in European crisis governance [9, 12, 14].

3. CSS Kraków: Governance, Resilience, and Systems Modeling

The Centre for Security Studies (CSS) at the Kraków University of Economics has emerged as a strategic think tank dedicated to understanding and mitigating contemporary risks facing Central and Eastern Europe [6]. Situated at the intersection of academic research and policy consultation, CSS provides a robust platform for analyzing hybrid threats, institutional fragility, and the resilience of democratic systems [3, 16, 23]. Its methodological core is built around systems thinking and interdisciplinary integration [3, 16], including the development of scenario-based foresight techniques to anticipate socio-political disruptions [3, 16], the modeling of institutional vulnerabilities across policy domains such as migration, energy security, cyber governance, and regional development [3, 16, 23], and empirical studies on governance capacity and legitimacy under conditions of stress and uncertainty [16, 17, 23]. A further focus lies on the alignment of national strategies with NATO objectives and EU defense initiatives, particularly in light of Poland's evolving geopolitical role [1, 8, 23].

CSS serves as a complementary counterpart to ISCC Austria's ethics-centered programming by translating complex risk dynamics into actionable insights for governments, NGOs, and multilateral actors [6, 23]. It plays an especially critical role in calibrating Poland's strategic posture as a frontline NATO country with a historically contingent relationship to both Eastern and Western security traditions [1, 23]. Moreover, CSS has contributed significantly to discussions on democratic backsliding, strategic disinformation, and civil-military coordination [3, 16, 23]. Its research outputs influence not only national policy debates but also EU-level preparedness mechanisms and resilience planning tools [3, 16]. By equipping decision-makers with systemically grounded policy scenarios, CSS enables evidence-based governance capable of weathering the complex emergencies of the 21st century [3, 16, 23].

4. Institutional Complementarity

Domain	ISCC Austria	CSS Kraków
Orientation	Ethical/normative, leadership-driven	Analytical/systems-based, governance-focused
Core Methods	Workshops, discourse, cross-sector training	Policy simulations, resilience modeling
Strategic Focus	Crisis preparedness, narrative ethics, social cohesion	Governance adaptation, hybrid threat diagnostics
Institutional Base	NGO-linked educational platform	University-based research centre
Regional Links	EU-DX, Vienna–Budapest educational alliances	Central/Eastern Europe, Ukraine, Baltic partnerships

While ISCC Austria and CSS Kraków are grounded in distinct institutional cultures–one rooted in normative ethics and leadership pedagogy, the other in systems analytics and governance modeling–their missions increasingly converge [3, 6, 9–15, 16, 23]. Both address the strategic vacuum between political rhetoric and

operational capability in the European security space [1, 16, 26]. ISCC's focus on ethical reasoning, narrative resilience, and moral clarity complements CSS's data-driven policy simulations and anticipatory diagnostics [3, 16, 23]. Their partnership models demonstrate how integrated knowledge production–bridging philosophy, policy, data science, and organizational psychology – can inform a more coherent European security posture [1, 26, 28].

Both centres participate in cross-border educational consortia such as EU-DX, CURSOR, and HYBNET and maintain working relationships with critical actors including the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy (AIES), SBA Research, and the Security Academy of the Ministry of the Interior (SIAK) [12, 13, 15, 16]. These collaborations create an institutional latticework that enhances the adaptive capacity of the European security ecosystem [4, 16, 26].

In sum, ISCC and CSS reflect a broader trend: the need for hybrid institutions capable of anchoring security innovation in both normative orientation and empirical validity [3, 16, 26]. Their efforts reveal the contours of a future European security architecture – less dependent on traditional power blocs and more reliant on intellectual agility, ethical foresight, and interdisciplinary coherence [1, 26, 28].

5. European Security Knowledge Network, Strategic Volatility, and Future Mandates

ISCC Austria and CSS Kraków are embedded within a wider pan-European security knowledge ecosystem that supports resilience-building through a networked approach [4, 6, 9–15, 16]. Collaborations with entities such as AIES (focused on strategic analysis), SBA Research (expert in cybersecurity and digital infrastructure), and SIAK (focused on law enforcement training aligned with European CEPOL standards) illustrate how ethics, governance, and technology intersect [12, 13, 15, 16]. EU-funded programs like EU-DX, CURSOR, and HYBNET provide additional platforms for joint training, simulations, and scenario development [4, 15, 16].

This knowledge-sharing environment is particularly relevant against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine and the strategic uncertainties introduced by potential U.S. foreign policy reversals under figures like Donald Trump [17, 19, 22]. Europe must prepare for a less predictable transatlantic relationship and invest in its normative and material sovereignty [1, 8, 17]. Institutions like ISCC and CSS contribute by embedding ethical foresight and systems diagnostics into European strategic culture, thereby anchoring security discourse in both values and adaptive expertise [5, 6, 9–15, 16, 26].

Moreover, their significance is further underscored when examined considering the so-called "Putin Doctrine" – a framework of Russian foreign policy emphasizing historical entitlement, national interest over international law, and extralegal intervention [19]. As Menkiszak [19] outlines, the doctrine promotes a revisionist logic that directly undermines democratic pluralism and rule-based order. In contrast, ISCC and CSS represent a counter-hegemonic response rooted in transparency, normative coherence, and epistemic
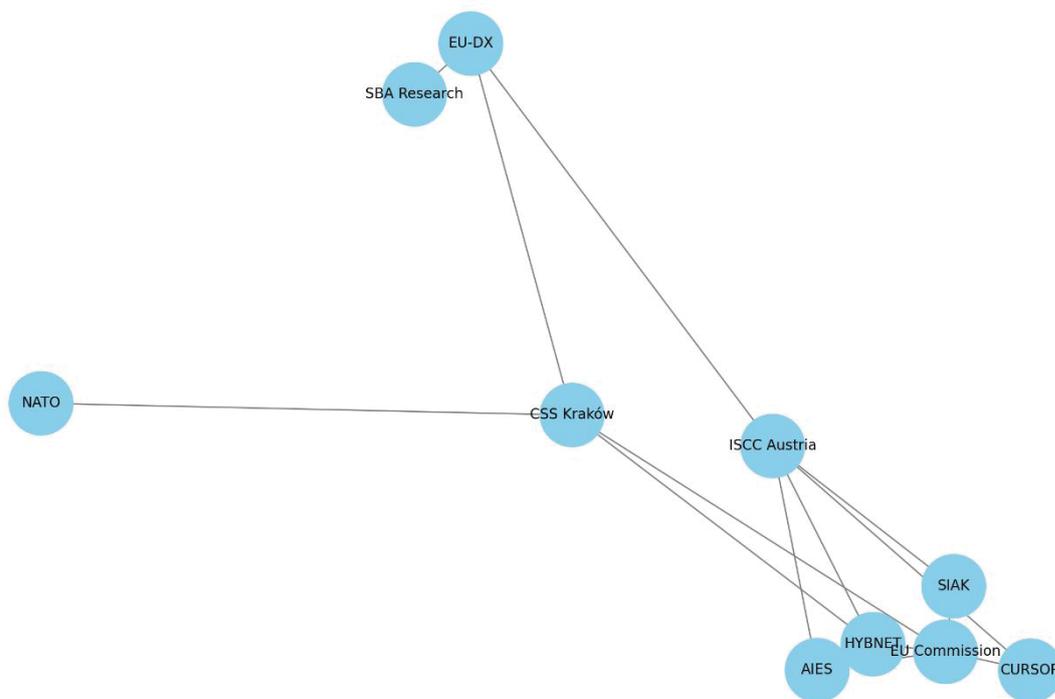

Figure 1. Institutional Network for European Security Collaboration

accountability [6, 9–15]. Their presence strengthens Europe's ability to resist not only physical encroachment but also the ideological drift toward authoritarian legitimation strategies [17, 26, 28].

6. The Need for Ethical-Analytical Centres in 21st Century Europe

In the face of multiplying and overlapping security threats, Europe requires more than conventional deterrence or centralized command structures [1, 16, 26]. The emergence of hybrid warfare, cyber disruption, political polarization, and normative disinformation campaigns underscores the limitations of hard power alone [3, 20, 23, 27]. In this context, institutions like ISCC Austria and CSS Kraków serve as essential nodes of resilience – not merely for their research outputs but for their institutional design and integrative function [5, 6, 9–15]. These centres embody a hybrid model that blends ethical reflection with systems analysis, education with strategic foresight, and localized initiatives with cross-European dialogue [3, 16, 26].

From a theoretical standpoint, their work addresses a growing vacuum in security scholarship and policy: the gap between abstract norms and operational functionality [17]. ISCC addresses the erosion of moral clarity in public discourse by fostering ethical literacy, narrative competence, and values-based decision-making [9, 11, 14]. CSS, in turn, offers quantitative and scenario-based instruments to diagnose governance failure, democratic fragility, and regional vulnerability [3, 16, 23]. Together, they allow policymakers and civic actors to act not only reactively but with anticipatory judgment [1, 26, 28].

In addition, the cross-fertilization of epistemic communities – academia, practitioners, civil society – creates fertile ground for systemic innovation [4, 15, 16]. ISCC and CSS challenge the siloed traditions of security studies and institutional governance by building hybrid competencies in their students, fellows, and policy partners [6, 9–15, 16]. As they evolve, their capacity to shape not only what we know about security, but how we educate future generations, becomes central to Europe's strategic future [7, 18].

7. Future Functions: Strategic Expansion and Normative Leadership

The next evolution of centres like ISCC and CSS will involve a widening of scope and influence in both vertical and horizontal dimensions [1, 6, 9–15, 16]. Vertically, they may grow into advisory entities for European Commission frameworks, NATO civil coordination structures, or OSCE conflict monitoring [8, 16, 21]. Horizontally, their remit will extend beyond current thematic portfolios to include counter-disinformation strategies embedded in behavioural science [20, 27], digital literacy campaigns to counteract algorithmic radicalization [28], civil-military dialogue platforms for fragile democracies [3, 16, 23], normative auditing of technological adoption such as AI in public security [28], and ethical scenario planning for climate-induced migration or health crises [16, 26].

Moreover, as the EU develops instruments such as the Strategic Compass and the European Peace Facility, there will be increased demand for value-driven assessments of mission design and strategic

Figure 2. Institutional Networks and Areas of Cooperation between ISCC Austria and CSS Kraków

Legend:
ISCC – Ethical-normative hub; public security education, civilian resilience
CSS – Systems-based analysis; hybrid threat mapping, governance foresight
AIES/SBA/SIAK – Functional integration with cybersecurity, defense policy, and law enforcement training
EU-DX/CURSOR/HYBNET – Horizon 2020-linked EU training ecosystems

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communication [1, 8, 17]. Centres like ISCC and CSS can play a consultative role in ensuring that Europe's military and civilian responses remain legitimate, inclusive, and democratically anchored [5, 6, 9–15, 16].

8. Educational Impact: Summer Schools and Doctoral Integration

Education remains a cornerstone of these centres' long-term influence [7, 18]. Both ISCC and CSS are expanding their offerings through transnational summer schools, doctoral networks, and advanced practitioner programs [6, 9–15]. These formats support not only knowledge dissemination but also the formation of new epistemic communities that operate across borders, disciplines, and institutional traditions [3, 16].

Examples of similar successful models include the NATO Defense College's PfP Consortium, the Geneva Centre for Security Policy's summer academy, and the War Studies summer programs at King's College London [7, 18, 21]. ISCC and CSS mirror these approaches while anchoring them in the Central European context, emphasizing normative literacy and systems resilience [6, 9–15, 16]. Partnerships with Erasmus+, Jean Monnet networks, and EU-DX consortia enable these institutions to scale their outreach and establish enduring training infrastructures for both students and professionals [4, 15, 16].

9. Toward a Networked Security Paradigm

The combined activities of ISCC Austria and CSS Kraków exemplify a transition toward a networked security paradigm in Europe [1, 6, 9–15, 16]. In this paradigm, security is no longer the exclusive domain of armed forces or intelligence services; rather, it becomes a distributed and co-produced public good [17, 26]. Ethical educators, systems modelers, civil society leaders, resilience trainers, and policy innovators share responsibility for anticipating, preventing, and mitigating hybrid threats [3, 20, 23, 26].

These centres do not merely respond to crises – they expand the very definition of security to include foresight capacity, ethical coherence, and societal trust [9–15, 16, 26]. The networked approach emphasizes interoperability between state and non-state actors, cross-domain data integration, and iterative learning through exercises and diagnostics [1, 4, 16, 28].

Safeguarding Europe in the twenty-first century will depend not only on battalions, budgets, and hard capabilities, but also on institutions capable of translating complexity into clarity, foresight into practice, and values into actionable strategies [1, 16, 26, 28]. In this sense, ISCC and CSS function not merely as infrastructure but as inspirational prototypes for a security governance model that is anticipatory, adaptive, and normatively grounded [5, 6, 9–15, 16].

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ІНСТИТУЦІЙНІ ІННОВАЦІЇ В ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКІЙ БЕЗПЕЦІ ТА СТАНОВЛЕННЯ ЕТИКО-АНАЛІТИЧНИХ ЦЕНТРІВ

Проблема. Сучасні підходи до управління європейською безпекою залишаються фрагментованими, зосереджуючись або на традиційному стримуванні, або на галузевому управлінні ризиками. Така сегментація не дозволяє адекватно відобразити системну складність гібридних загроз, стратегічну нестабільність та вразливості демократич-

них інститутів. Предмет дослідження. У статті розглядається інституційний дизайн і функціонування етико-аналітичних центрів із фокусом на Міжнародний центр компетенцій у сфері безпеки (ISCC) у Відні та Центр досліджень безпеки (CSS) у Кракові як інноваційні вузли в межах еволюційної архітектури європейської безпеки. Дослідження доповнене аналітичними напрацюваннями партнерських інституцій, зокрема Військового інституту Київського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка, Інституту Гаєка (Відень), Університету Південної Данії, Університету Аляски у Фербенксі, Львівського та Полтавського національних університетів імені Івана Франка, а також ініціативи ООН U4SSC у Відні. Це формує транснаціональну аналітичну рамку, що поєднує етичну освіту, системне моделювання, діагностику врядування та дослідження стійкості. Мета дослідження. Метою є концептуалізація інтегрованої моделі, яка поєднує етичне врядування – ціннісну орієнтацію, наративну компетентність і демократичну легітимність – із системно орієнтованим форсайтом, включно з політичним моделюванням, аналізом стійкості та діагностикою врядування. Завдання дослідження. Дослідження спрямоване на подолання дефіциту єдиної інституційної моделі, здатної транслювати результати форсайт-досліджень у практичні управлінські процедури із збереженням демократичних принципів, а також на запропонування шляхів подолання цього розриву між аналітикою та впровадженням. Методи дослідження. У роботі застосовано системний аналіз для виявлення міжсекторальних вразливостей, наративний аналіз – для дослідження ролі етичної грамотності та суспільної довіри в кризовому лідерстві, а також порівняльний інституційний аналіз для оцінювання комплементарності між ISCC та CSS. Результати. Виявлено ключові прогалини в операціоналізації показників етичної та наративної компетентності, міждоменній інтеграції та ланцюгу «освіта – політика». Показано, що гібридні інституції на кшталт ISCC і CSS здатні усувати ці дефіцити шляхом інтеграції етичної рефлексії та системного аналізу в практики європейського безпекового врядування. Висновки. Запропонована модель позиціонує етико-аналітичні центри як прототипи випереджального, ціннісно узгодженого та операціоналізованого безпекового врядування, пропонуючи вимірювані параметри – готовність, легітимність і наративну цілісність – для спрямування подальших досліджень, освітніх програм і політичної імплементації.

Ключові слова: архітектура європейської безпеки; гібридні загрози; інституційна стійкість; етичне та нормативне врядування; наративна компетентність; системно орієнтований форсайт; готовність до криз; координація ЄС–НАТО; цивільно-військова інтеграція; стратегічна автономія; розрив між політикою та впровадженням; міжсекторальне врядування; демократичні запобіжники; випереджальне та адаптивне безпекове врядування.