



Ministry
of Defence

SMA UK MoD Panel Discussion

Artificial Intelligence, COVID, and Global Democratic-authoritarian Competition

Part of the SMA UK MoD Speaker Series, entitled

*COVID-19: Second- and Third-Order Effects—System
Shocks, Disruption, and Emergence*

**Tuesday 10 November 2020
1030-1200 EST/1530-1700 GMT**

[Join the Event](#) via MS Teams

Strategic Multi-Layer Assessment (SMA) provides planning support to Commands with complex operational imperatives requiring multi-agency, multi-disciplinary solutions that are NOT within core Service/Agency competency. Solutions and participants are sought across USG and beyond. SMA is accepted and synchronized by Joint Staff/J-39 DDGO and executed by ASD (EC&P).

Agenda

Panel Description: In global competition, nothing is more important now than how Artificial Intelligence (AI), and the digital technologies are reshaping the way political systems work: from China’s “digital authoritarianism” to the various liberal democratic alternatives presented by the United States and European Union (EU). COVID massively sped up this digitisation, and some have looked to China’s digitally-backed surveillance as a relative success.

As the world rebuilds its societies evermore digitally after COVID: how can the democracies best compete in the global contest between these visions of our digital futures?

Our panel of world-leading experts will address this question, with extensive time after for Q&A:

- **Nicholas Wright (Affiliated Scholar, Pellegrino Center for Clinical Bioethics, Georgetown University Medical Center)** will set the scene, with his [recent report](#) describing why the AI-related technologies matter for the future of our social, political, and economic systems – and so for global competition.
- **Paul Nemitz (Principal Advisor, Directorate General for Justice and Consumers, European Commission)** is often described as a key architect of powerful EU approaches like GDPR and has written perceptively and extensively on democracy and AI. EU thinking was evolving rapidly even before COVID. He will discuss democracy and AI in a world of US and Chinese tech giants.
- **Jessica Chen Weiss (Associate Professor of Government, Cornell University)** will discuss China, its digital model and that model’s spread.
- **Steve Feldstein (Senior Fellow, Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace)** will look from the perspective of global swing states in global competition – what will they choose to do? He will draw on his recent fieldwork in states from Ethiopia to South East Asia.

Speaker Series Description: The US Joint Staff Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA) and the UK Defence Science Technology Laboratory (Dstl; part of the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence [UK MoD])¹ have partnered to create the “COVID-19: Second- and Third-order Effects—System Shocks, Disruption, and Emergence” speaker series. With all of the focus on the very important tactical aspects of arresting the infectious disease and preserving life in response to the novel coronavirus (first-order effects), the aim of this series is to elevate the conversation to a more strategic level and consider the second- and third-order effects across global systems. In this context, it is perhaps helpful to view COVID-19 as a Gray Rhino,² one of many highly probable, high-impact, yet underappreciated threats that could present similar patterns of systemic shocks and disruption in the future.

Our approach in this series is to ask gifted thinkers to apply a combination of foresighting and sensemaking for the SMA and the UK MoD communities. Speakers will explain what they are watching, communicate how they are making sense of these observations and patterns (analytic approaches), and give us a hint of what we should be keeping an eye on (e.g., Are there historical patterns? Should we expect transformative changes to the global order and who might be advantaged by them? Where do the speakers see fragility, anti-fragility, adaption, and even perhaps emergent behaviors that may have consequences?). Our goals are to reach beyond monitoring; to actively understanding the breadth, complexity, and impact on national defense and security with the clear aim of working towards mitigation, resilience, and sustainability; and to turn thought into action.

What do the second- and third-order impacts from the Gray Rhino that is COVID-19 teach us about future Gray Rhinos beyond infectious disease? What does this Gray Rhino reveal about the often-underappreciated relationships between national security, economic and financial systems, governance, populations and the social contract, and political stability throughout the globe? How might this understanding shape our decisions going forward? The future global world order, technology and COVID, the health and security nexus, societal resilience, and the utility of the systems thinking, and net assessment are just a few of the issues that we hope to explore in this series.

¹ SMA POC: Nicole Peterson, npeterson@nsiteam.com; UK POC: Ella Fleming, efleming@mail.dstl.gov.uk

² Popularized by Michele Wucker, a *gray rhino* is a highly probable, high impact yet neglected threat: kin to both the elephant in the room and the improbable and unforeseeable black swan. Gray rhinos are not random surprises but occur after a series of warnings and visible evidence.

Speaker Biographies

Jessica Chen Weiss (Associate Professor of Government, Cornell University)

Jessica Chen Weiss is an associate professor of Government at Cornell University, a political science editor at the *Washington Post* Monkey Cage blog, and a nonresident Senior Associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Weiss is the author of *Powerful Patriots: Nationalist Protest in China's Foreign Relations* (Oxford University Press, 2014). Her research appears in *International Organization*, *China Quarterly*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *Security Studies*, *Journal of Contemporary China*, and *Review of International Political Economy*, as well as in the *New York Times*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Washington Quarterly*. Weiss was previously an assistant professor at Yale University and founded FACES, the Forum for American/Chinese Exchange at Stanford, while an undergraduate at Stanford University. Born and raised in Seattle, Washington, she received her Ph.D. from the University of California, San Diego in 2008, where her dissertation won the 2009 American Political Science Association Award for best dissertation in international relations, law and politics. Weiss is a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Steven Feldstein (Senior Fellow, Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace)

Steven Feldstein is a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in the Democracy, Conflict and Governance Program. Previously, he was the holder of the Frank and Bethine Church Chair of Public Affairs and an associate professor at Boise State University. He served in the Obama administration as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor with responsibility for Africa policy, international labor affairs, and international religious freedom, and as Director of Policy at the U.S. Agency for International Development. He has also served as Counsel on the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, maintaining oversight of all foreign assistance agencies, budgets and programs. His research interests include the intersection of technology, democracy, and human rights; U.S. foreign policy; and Africa policy. His articles and commentary have appeared in outlets such as the BBC, Financial Times, Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, Journal of Democracy, MIT Technology Review, The National Interest, The Wall Street Journal, War on the Rocks, and The Washington Post. He received his B.A. from Princeton and his J.D. from Berkeley Law. His forthcoming book on the global rise of digital repression will come out in April 2021.

Paul Nemitz (Principal Advisor, Directorate General for Justice and Consumers, European Commission)

Paul Nemitz is the Principal Advisor in the Directorate General for Justice and Consumers of the European Commission.

He was appointed in April 2017, following a 6-year appointment as Director for Fundamental Rights and Citizen's Rights in the same Directorate General.

As Director, Nemitz led the reform of Data Protection legislation in the EU, the negotiations of the EU – US Privacy Shield and the negotiations with major US Internet Companies of the EU Code of Conduct against incitement to violence and hate speech on the Internet.

He is a Member of Commission for Media and Internet Policy of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), Berlin and a visiting Professor of Law at the College of Europe in Bruges. Nemitz is also a Member of the Board of the Verein Gegen Vergessen – Für Demokratie e.V., Berlin and a Trustee of the Leo Baeck Institute, New York. He chairs the Board of Trustees of the Arthur Langerman Foundation, Berlin.

Nemitz studied Law at Hamburg University. He passed the state examinations for the judiciary and for a short time was a teaching assistant for Constitutional Law and the Law of the Sea at Hamburg University.

He obtained a Master of Comparative Law from George Washington University Law School in Washington, D.C., where he was a Fulbright grantee. He also passed the first and second cycle of the Strasbourg Faculty for Comparative Law.



Recent publications: “The Human Imperative – Democracy, Law and Ethics in the Age of Artificial Intelligence”, forthcoming 2021, enhanced translation of “Prinzip Mensch – Demokratie, Recht und Ethik im Zeitalter der Künstlichen Intelligenz, with Matthias Pfeffer, Dietz Verlag, 2020; Critical reflections on Constitutional Democracy in the European Union, S. Garben, I. Govaere and P. Nemitz (Eds.), Oxford, Hart Publishing, 2019.

Follow Paul Nemitz on Twitter: @PaulNemitz . He is the #1 Technology influencer and overall #13 influencer on EU issues in the annual #EUInfluencer Ranking.

Nicholas Wright (Affiliated Scholar, Pellegrino Center for Clinical Bioethics, Georgetown University Medical Center)

Dr. Nicholas Wright is an affiliated scholar at Georgetown University, honorary research associate at University College London (UCL), Consultant at Intelligent Biology and Fellow at New America. His work combines neuroscientific, behavioural and technological insights to understand decision-making in politics and international confrontations, in ways practically applicable to policy. He leads international, interdisciplinary projects with collaborators in countries including China, the U.S., Iran and the UK. He was an Associate in the Nuclear Policy Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC and a Senior Research Fellow in International Relations at the University of Birmingham, UK. He has conducted work for the UK Government and U.S. Department of Defense. Before this he examined decision-making using functional brain imaging at UCL and in the Department of Government at the London School of Economics. He was a clinical neurologist in Oxford and at the National Hospital for Neurology. He has published academically (some twenty publications, e.g. Proceedings of the Royal Society), in general publications such as the Atlantic and Foreign Affairs, with the Pentagon Joint Staff (see www.intelligentbiology.co.uk) and has appeared on the BBC and CNN. Wright received a medical degree from UCL, a BSc in Health Policy from Imperial College London, has Membership of the Royal College of Physicians (UK), has an MSc in Neuroscience and a PhD in Neuroscience both from UCL.

