

The Global Security Matrix

Objectives:

Students will: Explore the concept of security.

Consider threats to security and how they affect a range of actors from individuals to global society.

Identify and assess media sources' coverage of security.

Rank threats to security and explore how these threats might be addressed.

Note: This lesson requires the use of computers and the internet. The lesson can be done either in class or as homework. If it is done in class, each of the eight groups should have access to at least one computer. If the activity is assigned as homework, you may want to give students an introduction to the Global Security Matrix ahead of time. Teachers may also want to review guidelines for internet usage with students.

Online Resource:

Global Security Matrix <choices.edu/gsm>

Handout:

Exploring the Global Security Matrix

In the Classroom:

1. Focus Question—Ask students the following question: “What makes us feel safe?” What do we mean by “safe”? What do we mean by “us”? Do we mean ourselves, our friends, our families, our neighbors, our country, our planet?

Now ask students to consider the concept of “security.” What does it mean? Does it mean the same thing for different people or different groups? Is individual security the same thing as state security or global security? Are there certain goods, services, or laws that make us feel safe?

Now pose the following question to students: “What threatens our safety?” Ask students to consider safety on a wider scale,

including threats that affect themselves and their families as well as threats that affect individuals and societies around the world. List student answers on the board. Encourage students to group the threats that they’ve brainstormed and come up with broad categories, such as “economic threats” or “threats from crime.”

Tell students that a group of scholars at Brown University created an online tool called the Global Security Matrix to explore the world’s most pressing security issues. The scholars identified what they felt were the greatest threats to security and then considered how these threats affect different actors. In this case, “actors” doesn’t mean different individuals but rather different types of actors, for example individuals, states, or the world as a whole. Today students are going to explore one version of the Global Security Matrix in order to consider a variety of threats to security and judge for themselves how great they believe these threats are.

2. Understanding the Matrix—Before beginning this activity, you may want to review the Global Security Matrix with students. The matrix is a grid. Each box and each category (listed on the top and on the right) has a definition and associated multimedia. To access these definitions, simply click on the square or category and the definition will appear on the right. Note that while the categories will give broad definitions for each actor or threat, a box will give a specific definition for that intersection, for example the effects of “warfare” on “humans.”

On the right side of the matrix are the eight threats: warfare, terrorism and crime, malfunctioning and uncooperative states, resource scarcity, pandemics, environment, WMD proliferation, and economic insecurity. Help students to define any words they don’t know. How do these categories compare with the threats that students identified?

Listed across the top are the different actors. Carefully review with students the

definitions for each actor, taking special care to make sure that students understand “network” and “system” as these two terms are the most confusing. (With certain classes, you may want to have students only focus on “human,” “state,” and “global” the first time they work with the matrix.) Why do students think that the creators of the Global Security Matrix chose to break up “actors” into these categories? How is it different to consider the security of each of these actors as opposed to considering security in general? Do students think this is a useful way to think about security?

3. Group Work—Divide the class into eight groups and give each group a handout. Assign each group one of the threats.

This group work activity is divided into three parts. First students will explore the boxes of the matrix that relate to their assigned threats. Groups will come up with definitions for their threats and explanations for how their threats affect different actors. Once they have finished, each group will search online and choose a source (for example, an article, photo, or video) that illustrates the risks that their threat poses to security. Finally, groups will consider how serious their threats are to the security of each actor and begin to think about ways to improve security.

Note: Choices welcomes student suggestions for multimedia content to add to the Global Security Matrix. Please send suggestions to ChoicesGSM@brown.edu.

4. Group Presentations—After students have finished the worksheet, call on each group to give a short presentation to the class. Each group should define their threat, explain how it affects the different actors, and share their source with the class. Ask students to suggest how their threats might be addressed. Who is most responsible for improving security?

5. Discussion—Which of the eight threats do students think pose the greatest risks to

security? What makes a threat “great”? Is it the likelihood of it happening? The enormity of the consequences? The fact that it affects many actors or many individuals? Are there certain threats that are more likely today than in the past? Which threats are likely to become greater in the future?

Do students think that the seriousness of each threat depends on the actor? What do students think are the greatest threats to human security? What about global security? If the greatest threats differ by actor, why do students think this is the case?

In what ways are the threats faced by people in the United States today the same as those faced by people elsewhere? In what ways are they different? In what ways do different groups within the United States face different threats? What can be done to reduce security threats? Who should be responsible for reducing threats? What role should individuals have?

6. Thinking Further—Challenge students to question the notion of security. Could policies designed to increase the security of one actor actually compromise the security of another? For instance, the U.S. Patriot Act was designed to increase state security from the threat of terrorism, however some argue that the act threatens the rights and security of individuals. Recently, the U.S. has condemned Wikileaks saying that the release of confidential intelligence could compromise government security, but some people think that the transparent flow of information makes the world a safer, more democratic place. Similarly, while protesters might threaten the security of the state, they could be demanding greater security for their families.

Is the goal of promoting security simply to protect and maintain the status quo? Does this limit opportunities for positive change? For instance, does seeking to protect the international system ignore calls to make that system more just and equitable?

Name: _____

Exploring the Global Security Matrix

Instructions: Work with your group members to answer the questions below. This activity is divided into three parts. First, you will define your threat and the risks it poses. Then you will find a source that illustrates your threat and its related risks. Finally, you will work with your group members to judge how serious your threat is to security.

Part I

Define your assigned threat and describe how it affects each of the five actors. Do not copy the definitions in the matrix. Instead, work with your group members to create easy-to-understand definitions in your own words.

Threat:

1. How does it threaten security?
 - a. How does it affect humans?
 - b. How does it affect networks?
 - c. How does it affect states?
 - d. How does it affect systems?
 - e. How does it affect the world?

Part II

With your group members, find an article, photo, video, or other multimedia that demonstrates how this threat affects security. The multimedia and links associated with your threat are examples of the types of sources you should be looking for. Strive to find a source that will help your classmates better understand your assigned threat and the risks associated with it. Once you have chosen a source, answer the following questions with your group members.

Source:

Name: _____

1. Who created this source?

2. What information about your threat can you gather from this source?

3. According to this source, which actors (e.g., humans, states, etc.) are threatened and how?

4. How does this source influence your perspective on the severity of your threat?

Part III

Now consider how serious your threat is to security. On a scale of 1-10, with “1” being “no threat” and “10” being “enormous threat,” how greatly does your assigned threat affect the various actors? Work with your group members to rank the threat level for each actor, then answer the questions below.

Humans	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Networks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
States	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Systems	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
World	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

1. Which actors did you rank as most threatened? Least threatened? Why?

2. Who do you think is most responsible for addressing your threat (state governments, international organizations, individuals)? What policies or actions would improve security? Consider how different policies might improve security on different levels. Keep your rankings in mind, but your policies should also reflect your values about whose security matters most.