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Participation of Civil Society in Security and Defense Foresight Exercises

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ABSTRACT

In democratic countries, citizens are informed about economic policies, health systems, and public education, as well as the policy actions addressing these areas. However, the public often only notices security and defense policies when they are lacking. Security and defense foresight exercises are typically seen as the domain of military personnel, technology experts, and politicians, due to their experience with strategic assets and classified information. Although citizens are represented by elected politicians, security and defense issues frequently remain in the political background, overshadowed by more immediate concerns like energy availability and pricing. To increase meaningful citizen participation in security and defense issues, a well-informed citizenry is essential. This requires knowledge of threats, civil rights, technological developments, and international affairs. The multidisciplinary nature of these topics makes selecting suitable participants for foresight exercises complex. While informed citizens can contribute to discussions on future developments and threats, such as artificial intelligence, fake news, and electoral processes, the question remains: how can citizens participate in security and defense foresight exercises? This study, based on the Spanish case, reveals that experts agree on the need for greater citizen participation in defense and security politics. However, they did not offer specific ideas or suggestions for achieving this. Consequently, a review of participatory foresight instruments was conducted, resulting in a proposed workflow for future exercises and recommendations for practice.

1 | Introduction

In so-called democratic societies, citizen participation—refers to the individuals' right and ability to voluntary and actively engage in decision-making, and the management of public affairs that affect their daily lives at various levels of the political system. It is one of the main points of contention in current political and social affairs (Matos 2011; Resh and Sabbagh 2017). Political and civil rights become visible when people participate in elections, attend public meetings and hearings, submit complaints and suggestions through official channels, make petitions, or create groups and organizations, although recent years have witnessed a growing demand for

more elaborate forms of engagement (Davies and Selin 2012; Webler and Tuler 2002). Citizen participation is also the basis of a healthy and effective democracy (Resh and Sabbagh 2017), because voters can monitor most of the actions taken and the decisions made by politicians. However, it is difficult to establish what is the best type of citizen participation process (Konisky, Thomas, and Beierle 2001), and arguments have been put forth to question the benefits of active engagement for both participants and the rest of society (Irvin and Stansbury 2004). For instance, Christens and Speer (2006) suggest that participation has become a new kind of “tyranny” that promotes new forms of oppression. In the same line, considering national security affairs, some have argued that consultation—in

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practice—is a way of “getting groups of citizens together so that they can indoctrinated with the official point of view” (Rourke 1969, p. 54). Therefore, there are two opposite opinion trends regarding citizen participation (Guston 2014), but this article takes a constructive approach.

In recent years, European defense budgets have remained largely uncontested. However, how to prioritize expenditure, what capabilities should be improved to face current threats, or how to improve the protection for people when responding to these threats requires planning policy and some sort of positive anticipatory governance (Guston 2014). Public engagement enhances the influence of citizens, promotes open dialogue, and builds consensus and learning (Susen 2010; Turnhout et al. 2020), that can enrich foresight exercises in societies with well established democracy. In this way, civilian society could participate in the design of actions to face future security and defense scenarios, political actions and decisions about how to be protected against threads of any kind. If civil society do not participate in the democratic institutions, these are delegitimized and renders democracy meaningless. Citizens may be unwilling to participate, especially if they consider that their participation do not make any difference, and there are studies that showed that critical citizens still tend to be marginalized for example, Glimmerveen, Ybema and Nies (2022). The citizens engagement mechanism in several countries are too fresh to evaluate their appropriate impact (Abelson and Gauvin 2004), and their political traditions have an impact on the diversity actors that take part in the exercises (Keenan and Popper 2008).

The present results and proposals are part of a larger research entitled “Rethinking the role of the Armed Forces in the face of new security challenges.” These are part of an interdisciplinary research (political science, international affairs, economics, law, modern history, project management, and sociology) developed by seven institutions and coordinated by the University of Barcelona. This article aims to answer the following research question:

- How can civil society be made to participate in security and defense foresight exercises?

There is a certain degree of consensus among academics and practitioners that participatory foresight exercises can contribute to policy design in an “bottom up” way (Rosa et al. 2021), although some conditions must be met for security and defense foresight exercises to lead to real change, as frequently noted in the literature (Bas and Guillo 2015; Dinges, Biegelbauer, and Wilhelmer 2018; Eames and McDowall 2007; Guillo 2013; Hebinck et al. 2018; Hertzog et al. 2017; Rosa, Gudowsky, and Warnke 2018; Rosa et al. 2021). Foresight studies in security and defense use hybrid methodologies, but rarely involve all stakeholders or citizens (Vicente-Oliva and Martinez-Sanchez 2018). This article is mainly based on a two-round policy Delphi and bibliographic review of the literature of foresight exercises to propose methods that increase citizen participation in the future. Previously, during 2021 and 2022, interviews with experts and three focus group sessions were conducted in Spain, and results showed the necessity to increase the participation of civil society, but there was not a single proposed way to do it either.

1.1 | Background About Security and Defense Policies

In this text,

- *defense* is understood in the sense that the aim of defense is to protect a country from external threats and to maintain its sovereign status, while
- *security* has a broader scope, extending protection to other areas such as internal strife, terrorism, economic attacks, or cybercrime.

Security may be the broader term as it covers scenarios where defense threats do not only reach the traditional territorial integrity. Some characteristics of security and defense are idiosyncratic and distinguish it from other policy areas. For example, security is perceived by the public only when it is lacking, according to the principles of *intangibility* and *taken-for-granted materialization* defined by Martínez González (2013). Thus, the performance of some actors involved in the provision of the service, such as military personnel, employees of the defense industry, members of think tanks, and so on, is governed by the two principles mentioned above (Duch-Brown, Fonfría, and Trujillo-Baute 2014; Vicente Oliva, Martínez-Sánchez, and Escribano-Bernal 2019), although their relevance is questioned by some groups that reject the authority of the state or consider security and defense an unnecessary public good.

While *security issues* seem to be guaranteed by the mere fact of the existence of a state, *defense issues appear* in some countries as uncomfortable and controversial forms of public budget spending, consuming public resources and detracting from other relevant expenditure items such as education or health. In addition, strategic conditions and international alliances vary from country to country, leading to significant policy differences.

There are three main schools of thought—Copenhagen, Paris, and Aberystwyth or Welsh—that contribute to the analysis of security and defense issues from different perspectives, although they are all based on post-positivism. They all advocate an ongoing process of social negotiation in which the state and all actors involved in security issues share their concerns about the issues that affect them (Olteanu 2019).

- The Copenhagen School emphasizes the concept of “*securitization*” and distinguishes between different audiences that engage with security actors in different domains, such as the military, environmental, economic, social, and political (Buzan, Waever, and Wilde 1998; Kaunert, Léonard, and Occhipinti 2013). Thus, their academic discussions go beyond the military with a **broader concept of security**, proposing that <<security is [...] constructed through intersubjective social and discursive interactions between powerful actors who propose definitions of threats and relevant audiences who acknowledge these definitions>> (Stepka 2022, p. 18).
- In contrast, according to the Paris (Political Anthropological Research for International Sociology) perspective, security actors do not necessarily have a position of power

that allows them to form a collective understanding of security. For Bigo and McCluskey (2018), the relationship between security and insecurity is a *möbius strip*, a metaphor to say that security is the absence of insecurity and threats (Tadjbakhsh and Chenoy 2007). This school analyzes social forces that are able to impose their meaning for a period of time and drive dynamics that lead to long-term change, because **elite discourses cannot determine lives and experiences**. Security claims involve a contest over the legitimacy of certain ambiguous practices, involving violence or the control of an actor's behavior, that go beyond the political sphere.

Moreover, the practices that are carried out could reveal resistances that escape power could be revealed, constructing centrifugal and dispersed dynamics that prevent the symbolic power of the elites. In this sense, some researchers have considered the lack of limits in the development of security as “anti-security,” and the question of war outside the country <<linked politically, ideologically, technologically and industrially, to maintaining order at home >> (Neocleous 2011, p. 201).

- Finally, for the Aberystwyth or Welsh school, security can be one of the best ways to achieve human emancipation by removing social, physical, economic, and political restrictions from individuals and social groups (Ağır 2023). Individuals have an “*emancipative power*” and are protected by people from structures, processes, and relationships (Bilgic 2015). This separation between spheres of personal security and other spheres of providing for the society is referred by Olteanu (2019, p. 39) who pointed out that this school <<questions the link between state security and security of the individuals, showing the low congruence between the two dimensions>>. This school has its roots in several works of thinkers such as Hanna Arendt, who indicated that individuals can think, create and resist together in the process of exercising the collective power (Bilgic 2015; Hansen 2013). In this line, **political space cannot be reserved only for specialists**.

It is not the purpose of this article to side with any of these schools or denotes their particularities for foresight discipline, but merely to reflect on participatory exercises in security and defense-related issues since a post-positivism perspective is common for the three of them.

1.2 | Spanish Case

Security and defense issues were not a primary concern for the Spanish population (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas CIS 2023). The Spanish public was concerned (in order of importance) by unemployment, economic issues, corruption, politicians and political instability, the Catalan conflict, gender-based violence, retirement pensions, housing, immigration, and healthcare. According to the survey undertaken by Real Instituto El Cano (González Enríquez and Martínez 2022), 77% of Spanish respondents recognized that the war in Ukraine was the main threat for Europe, although they perceive its effects primarily on economic terms. Second in this survey was fuel prices, and the third position was shared by electricity prices

and climate change. Therefore, economic issues take priority for Spanish citizens.

Spain has been a member of the European Union (EU) since 1986. The perceptions and concerns of EU citizens have changed in recent years, although security issues are generally not among the main concerns. At the end of 2018, immigration was the first concern at EU level (with 40% of mentions), and terrorism was the second mentioned (20%). Other concerns such as crime, rising prices/inflation/cost of living or energy supply were mentioned by less than 10% of respondents (European Commission 2018). At the beginning of 2024, rising prices/inflation/cost of living was the main concern (34%), followed by energy supply were the next concern (28%). However, looking to the future, in 2024 citizens responded that the areas where the EU should take action in the medium term (the next 5 years) were security and defense issues with 34% of mentions (in Poland this was higher with the 49% of mentions) (European Commission 2024).

Security and defense issues are therefore a growing area of concern for European citizens, not only because of recent geographical conflict scenarios, but also because of real-virtual battlefields, the ethics of using remote control systems or the use of artificial intelligence, individual privacy versus collective security, and so on. And citizens have opinions that could be channeled to their elected representatives to pave the way for more representative policy-making on security and defense issues.

Another trend that has emerged in recent years in Spain and in many other countries is the question of **the limits and uses of military personnel in special situations**. The activation of the armed forces to support people in natural disasters, pandemics, terrorism, cyber-attacks on critical infrastructures, and so on, makes the public opinion question their role and their use to face this type of security challenges, although there is a growing tendency (Bueno and Martínez 2023; Colom Piella 2016). This and other tendencies related to civil rights, technological development, and so on are of interest to citizens and their opinion could be considered by politicians. The project **REPENFAS21** was conceived in the scenario exposed above from January 2022 to May 2024 (Figure 1). This paper draws on the views from elites (experts in security and defense issues) who advocate for greater civil society participation in security and defense issues for the future. However, they do not provide concrete methods to achieve this, due to concerns about significant risks, the protection of their interests, or a lack of knowledge about how to conduct foresight exercises. Therefore, a new literature review was needed to provide recommendations for researchers and futurists, and to suggest a workflow and tools suitable for involving citizens in these processes.

2 | Citizen Participation and Social Change

Citizen participation in foresight exercises can contribute to change society in different ways. Citizen participation empowers the public, promotes open dialogue, and builds consensus and learning (Susen 2010; Turnhout et al. 2020). There are several triggers to promote the participation of citizens in

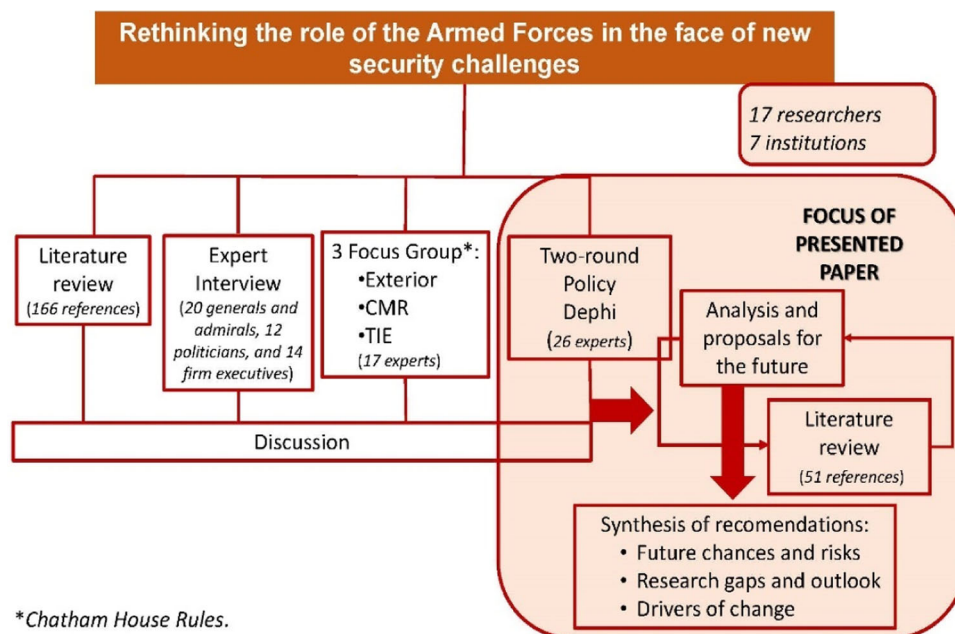


FIGURE 1 | Research design and focus of presented paper.

political issues; Callahan pointed out that direct participation is idealistic (Callahan 2007), but she defined the most suitable conditions for effective participation in some communities. In this way, adult citizens must be wrapped up in an active political culture to engage in political action (Resh and Sabbagh 2017). As such, some authors suggest that encouraging the understanding of and interest in defense issues should be part of the civic education that some authors argue should supplement general education (Dagger 1997). About 2000 years ago, Seneca wrote that there is no good wind for they who do not know where they are headed. Therefore, our reflection process should begin with a double question because people should be aware of the starting point before having an opinion concerning the destination:

- are citizens aware of how they are being protected? and,
- what are their preferences regarding future protection?

2.1 | Participatory Foresight

Threats do not come with a compass and an instructions manual about how to face them, and they are confronted by many agents, each with their own recipe. Likewise, no country operates in isolation; they rely on diplomacy and their national strategies are often shaped by multinational alliances defined through treaties.

Historically, all governments tend to keep security issues secret. This is owing to strategic considerations, because exposing a country's weaknesses might facilitate attacks by potential enemies; acknowledging or even publishing the systems' vulnerabilities paves the way to those who wish to target them. However, this view may also be concealing accommodative behaviors by policymakers. That is, issues that have no bearing on the everyday life of citizens are

electorally less profitable than others, and actions that strengthen security and defense in peacetime have little electoral traction. Therefore, providing citizens with information that is not necessary for their everyday life or for decision-making in an electoral process seems to work only to discredit politicians, especially in countries like Spain, where the ghost of military dictatorship is still relatively fresh and historical memory remains an unresolved social issue. This goes a long way to explain the categorical separation of military foresight programmes from other government areas (Vicente-Oliva and Martinez-Sanchez 2018).

Foresight can create a potential "space for opinion elicitation and deliberation among a diverse, extended set of actors" (Keenan and Popper 2008, p. 25). In terms of defining future governance, participatory foresight is a promising avenue to address uncertainty and complexity, facilitating dialogue among stakeholders, promoting inclusivity in governance processes, and driving transformative change (Hebinck et al. 2018; Rutting et al. 2022), as long as the governance context, social dynamics, and methodological factors provide for a structured process with the tools to anticipate and plan for the future (Nikolova 2014). Foresight exercises must take into consideration national alliances and their implications, from national policies to operational constraints. These exercises must be taken at the national level, connecting all the stakeholders involved, and must adopt hybrid methodologies.

In recent decades, many countries have conducted security and defense-related foresight exercises to inform their stakeholders (e.g., Herz, Lucas, and Scott 2006; Hundley and Gritton 1994; Narula 2013; Yasunaga, Watanabe, and Korenaga 2009). The most common methods used were horizon scanning and trend impact analysis, although some government agencies introduce new security and defense-related concepts to increase the number of strategic variables to be considered in the analysis (Vicente-Oliva and Martinez-Sanchez 2018).

The ability to inspire individuals towards a shared goal and to navigate transformative shifts continues to be the cornerstone of these exercises, and all the relevant stakeholders must be engaged to translate planning into action (Godet 2010). Collective involvement and commitment are essential to effectively implement the strategies outlined and ensure a more resilient and sustainable future (Vervoort and Gupta 2018).

Anticipatory governance involves three critical aspects:

- Empowering citizens to shape their desired future.
- Engaging citizens in policymaking through transparent and participatory methods.
- Enhancing public trust and legitimacy in decision-making.

By including multiple perspectives and fostering inclusive policies, policymakers can ensure effective governance and public cooperation with transparent and accountable processes. As such, participatory foresight processes encourage reflexivity in policymaking and catalyze transformative changes through the integration of normative and explorative approaches (Hebinck et al. 2018; Rosa et al. 2021), and may have significant impact on possible long-term shifts on preferred futures within a narrow topic. However, it is important to acknowledge that the impact of these processes can be affected by various factors, as discussed above.

Issues relative to security and defense are often less transparent to citizens compared to other subjects like economic development or healthcare. However, embracing a participatory approach in foresight exercises requires involving stakeholders which have traditionally been regarded as external (Nikolova 2014). Participatory foresight processes comprise individuals who may not have specific knowledge about every aspect of a country's security landscape but are motivated by or affected by future developments. Furthermore, specialists who may not have expert knowledge of specific topics may have relevant knowledge concerning causes or consequences of related-policies and can thus make valuable contributions to the exercise. According to Popper (2008), the interaction of experts from different fields in foresight studies often leads to significant benefits, as it allows them to come together and engage with other areas of expertise, including the perspective of nonexpert stakeholders. In societies where democratic values are prevalent and legitimacy is rooted in participatory and bottom-up processes, it becomes crucial for foresight studies not to solely rely on evidence and expertise. Therefore, implementing participatory methods, such as citizen panels or future workshop, is a frequent exercise (Popper 2008, p. 70), although no studies about security and defense foresight are known to the author.

Expert selection for foresight exercises aims to include skilled and well-informed individuals with specialized knowledge in relevant fields, ensuring that their professional group and outlook are represented (Mauksch, von der Gracht, and Gordon 2020). However, several factors need to be taken into account, such as consensus, disagreement, heterogeneity, and homogeneity, as well as potential changes during the foresight process (Makkonen, Hujala, and Uusivuori 2016).

One critical aspect to consider concerning the participation of experts is potential control and overconfidence bias (Green and Armstrong 2007; Harvey 1997; Hilary and Menzly 2006). While seeking experts with a wide range of backgrounds concerning security and defense is important, there is also a category of partial experts who may be regarded as stakeholders, such as citizens participating in foresight exercises. In foresight exercises, steering committees must consider the way to select individuals with suitable knowledge and concerns.

2.2 | Social Change

The principle of civilian control over military affairs has been a fundamental pillar of the political framework of democratic countries and their commitment to freedom. This principle does not imply an inherent conflict between the civilian and military sectors; rather, it emphasizes the need for effective collaboration between them, because close coordination and cooperation among the civilian and the military authorities is essential to maximize their efficiency. A sensible implementation of national policies by the military is equally important, aligning their actions with the country's broader goals and objectives (Earle 1940). However, effective citizen participation in political issues can have economic costs, and could be regarded as unwelcomed, and even idealistic, under some circumstances (Callahan 2007; Irvin and Stansbury 2004).

Political participation is the bridge that connects the public with the governance process (Cho and Rudolph 2008). To facilitate this connection, several approaches can be adopted, including civic education, access to public information, and platforms and channels for participation, with the goal to increase cooperation between government agencies and civil society. In this article, *civil society* is understood as a public space of political action for citizens that is open to participation and to the discussion of issues that they regard as important (Bourdieu 1989; Habermas et al. 1981). This allows society to bring about changes as a collective, and also in the construction of their identity, which, in turn, paves the way for new changes (Sequeiros Bruna and Puente Bienvenido 2020) if there is mutual recognition and tolerance of dissenting ideas (Alexander 2006).

Increasing the legitimacy of decisions and improving the outcomes of policies and decisions have been identified as the main benefits. Since participation in and of itself can be a driver of social change (Nelson and Wright 1995), it is striking that there is no typology to define which type of participation is most appropriate for each type of setting (Konisky, Thomas, and Beierle 2001).

Irving and Stansbury analyzed the ideal conditions for citizen participation in decision-making and distinguished two variables—costs and benefits—with several indicators for 2×2 combinations (low and high costs and benefits for each variable) (Irvin and Stansbury 2004, p. 62). Security and defense issues have no *low-cost indicators* and a single *high-benefit indicator*, that is, measures to reduce hostility toward government agencies. The most relevant of *low-benefit* and *high-cost indicators* are:

- The groups are not homogeneous.
- The topic requires representatives to master complex technical information quickly.
- The agency has previously succeeded in implementing policies without citizen participation.

These findings suggest that citizens should not be involved in public consultations on security and defense issues, as the benefits of this process are limited for both the participants and the government. The main benefits identified in this context are increasing the legitimacy of decisions and improving the outcomes of policies and decisions.

Havas, Schartinger, and Weber (2010) pointed out that the requirements of the new application areas in which foresight is used are challenging. In the case of security and defense issues, technology foresight has a long tradition, but citizen participation in exercises seems to be a part of civil rights that needs to be explored. In recent years, members of civil society have increasingly demanded greater participation in the political process, to be consulted on decision-making, and to be able to raise objections and perform functions which have traditionally been the remit of official agencies (Nikolova 2014). Information and communication technologies are channels for the emergence of new agents with the ability to potentially affect social dynamics, although the popularization of security issues is anything but problem-free. Some methods are used for participatory foresight, for instance, scenarios, narratives, citizen envisioning, dialogue, common reflection, storytelling, and regular meetings (Davies and Selin 2012; Irvin and Stansbury 2004; Rosa et al. 2021; Springett and Masuda 2017). Following this approach, the question to ask should be:

- what methods are effective to enhance citizen participation in S&D foresight exercises?

3 | Research Methodology

The Delphi method is a scientifically based approach used to facilitate and structure expert discussions, which aims to generate insights on contentious topics with limited available information (Beiderbeck et al. 2021). It was adapted by Turoff (1970) for studies that concern diverse goals, such as generating a range of potential alternatives, exploring underlying divergent perspectives, and seeking information that can foster greater consensus, among other possibilities. This methodology has been used in public policy, political science, environmental studies, and medicine (Maxey and Kezar 2015); the method is used to foresee the effect of policies (Popper 2008) by facilitating the formulation of multiple possible options on a given issue, estimating the impact and consequences of specific options, and, most importantly, assessing the degree of support enjoyed by each option (Baker and Moon 2010). Several complementary methodologies are used to present the options to experts and to refine their choices and validate results, such as structured and in-depth online interviews conducted before the Delphi process (e.g., Cummings and Kuzma 2017 and Vega, Arvidsson, and Saïah 2022) or after several rounds of Delphi questionnaires (e.g., Dawson et al. 2016; Lemmen, Woopen, and Stock 2021).

Expert selection depends on the aims of the study (Keeney, Hasson, and Mckenna 2011), and this variable can have a direct bearing on the quality and credibility of the results (Donohoe and Needham 2009). A team of Spanish academics set up a research project with the aim to examine the future of armed forces in the 21st century. Trends related to security and Spain's relations with allied countries were collected and analyzed. To ensure that a comprehensive and diverse expert panel was represented a rigorous selection process was conducted. These results validate the expert selection process, which aimed to explore all outlooks and reach a more consensual understanding.

According to Linstone, Turoff and Helmer (2002), the focus of a policy Delphi study should be on the diversity of experts on the panel rather than the number of panelists. There is no consensus on whether the criteria for consensus rates should be established before the study is conducted (Powell 2003), as an expanded view of the proposals presented to the experts was required in this modified Delphi. However, an association measure is calculated (Cronbach's α and Spearman's correlation coefficients) which is a less strict concept than the degree of consensus or agreement between the experts' responses (Meijering et al. 2013). The aim of these analyses is the determination of whether the variation in one variable is in relation to the variation in others.

At the end of this exercise, questions about participation in foresight exercises were used to structure subsequent research on "participatory foresight." A meta-analysis was conducted based on Zupic and Čater (2015), as "uncovering relationships not studied in existing studies" (Donthu et al. 2021, p. 287) can reveal interesting avenues for future work. A search of Web of Science Collection and Science Direct in English language returned 51 articles on this topic from 2010 to June 2023. These were cited by 495 other papers, book chapters, and conference proceedings; duplicities were checked and two references that did not align with the topic were discarded. The average number of citations per item was 9.7, although this is not a prolific academic field. Concerning the source journals, considerable concentration was attested: 47.67% of citations were in *Futures* and 38.58% in *European Journal of Futures Research*. The results of the meta-analysis and the project's results open new avenues for future research on the participation of civil society in political decisions.

The two-rounds *policy* Delphi described in this article is the culmination of a methodological process designed to arrive at a more enriched final questionnaire. We started with a review of literature and institutional documentation from the time of the approval of the Spanish Constitution in 1978, which allowed us to identify the issues on which to develop the questions for in-depth semi-structured interviews and the questions for the initial questionnaire. The interviews were conducted with 20 generals and admirals from the Spanish Ministry of Defense, while the 12 politicians were the spokespersons of the defense committees in two relevant Spanish institutions: Congress and Senate. In addition, the 14 company executives were selected based on the relevance of their companies to the security and defense sector (consulting engineering, satellites, armaments, information and communication technologies, logistics,

aerospace, naval and land-based systems). We received no responses on how to involve civil society in security and defense foresight exercises during the three focus groups with 17 experts (external policy, civil-military relations [CRM], and technology, industry, and economy [TIE]). Instead, we received strong recommendations for increasing their involvement in these areas, as discussed in the next section, as well as an analysis of current methods for increasing their involvement in future exercises.

4 | Results and Proposals

Academics highlighted several key topics related to the public's understanding of security and defense issues and how to address them in the future. One significant concern was the Spanish public's limited understanding of military affairs, which is conditioned by the country's historical context, including a nearly four-decade-long dictatorship, and the growing weight of pacifism. Experts in focus groups suggested ways to improve the Spanish public's knowledge and awareness of, and engagement with, these issues. It was also noted that the defense culture is intertwined with the security culture, and that defense policy is a foreign policy tool, although citizens seem to have limited awareness of this distinction. Among the experts, politicians advocated a "culture of peace," rather than solely focus on the defense culture, and strove to dispel the notion that military professionals are inherently violent. Two of the experts who supported this had a military background before pursuing other careers.

The *policy* Delphi study included several questions about the future of the armed forces, the responses of which were expressed in a Likert scale. All questions concerning civilian-military relations commanded significant agreement, except for question "Why do you believe there is a political aversion in Spain toward using the armed forces in combat operations?" Responses varied widely, except for the response "Citizens do not perceive threats," on which all participants agreed. The analysis of the poor defense culture among the Spanish population was regarded as crucial for future arguments.

The most frequently cited reasons for the Spanish population's lack of concern in security and defense matters were as follows: no perception of threats (100%); the authoritarian historical legacy (80.76%); and lack of understanding of what defense culture entails (65.38%); and other reasons.

Concerning civilian-military relations, the *policy* Delphi results indicate that, in the first round, 63% of participants agreed that societal participation in defense policy will increase by 2035; this rose to 77% in the second round. Additionally, 51% (first round) and 81% (second round) of respondents agreed that, by 2035, security and defense issues will be more regularly included in the parliamentary agenda. Finally, 63% (first round) and 85% (second round) of respondents agreed that understanding of security and defense issues among political elites will be greater by 2035. These were binary Yes (1)/No (0) questions, so the mean approaches the unity; the question concerning societal participation yielded the highest standard deviation. The variables yielded positive, moderate, and

significant Spearman's correlation coefficients, while a Cronbach's α value of 0.7 suggests good internal consistency based on the mean of the correlations (Table 1). However, specific suggestions on how to increase participation or how to encourage politicians to prioritize S&D issues were lacking, which poses a challenge for future developments.

Based on these results, a proposal (Figure 2) is presented. During the preparation stage of foresight exercises, actions to make security and defense issues more accessible to citizens could improve their knowledge and participation. However, these actions should avoid indoctrination, focusing instead on transparency, legitimacy, and the empowerment of participants. Some issues may be more suitable for public opinion than others, so the engagement of different types of participants—ranging from experts to informed citizens—must vary accordingly. Ensuring that panels are representative is crucial for conclusions and proposals to be of significance beyond the exercise, increasing the commitment of stakeholders with the results. Relevant issues mentioned above, such as whether citizens' awareness of how they are being protected or their preferences for future protection, should be taken into account when prioritizing issues before selecting instruments and tools. All decisions should in line with the objectives of the exercise to identify the necessary methods or combinations of methods.

The selection of instruments and tools to achieve the foresight exercise objectives becomes crucial. If regular foresight exercises on security and defense topics are to be conducted, a balanced mix of these tools, considering their pros, cons, resource availability, inclusiveness and ability to accommodate diverse perspectives, and long-term thinking, is essential.

From a methodological perspective, the use of citizen participation instruments in the field of security and defense issues were analyzed, considering their advantages and disadvantages and the idiosyncratic nature of these issues (Popper 2008). Table 2 summarizes the main characteristics and pro-cons of every method, some of which are based on expert criteria and are included because they can contribute in some way to increase citizen participation.

4.1 | Citizen Surveys

Surveys undertaken for foresight exercises can take various forms, such as online questionnaires, telephone interviews, or in-person interviews. The use of open-ended questions allows participants to freely share their ideas, aspirations, and concerns; these surveys can be conducted through various channels, such as online platforms, mobile applications, or traditional paper-based methods. In public consultations, citizens can be invited to provide feedback and suggestions on specific issues, especially in the early stages of a nationwide foresight exercise. Methods like public hearings, open forums, and online platforms enable citizens to voice their opinions and contribute to shape future directions.

Investing in citizen engagement may involve creating citizen panels that meet regularly to discuss and analyze future proposals, identify emerging issues, express opinions, review and

TABLE 1 | Descriptive statistics: means, standard deviations (SD), correlations (Rho Spearman) and Cronbach's α (in bold) about the future participation.

In 2035		Mean	SD	1	2	3
1	Societal participation in defense policy will increase	0.77	0.43	0.73		
2	Security and defense issues will be more regularly included in the parliamentary agenda	0.81	0.40	0.66 ^a	0.58	
3	Knowledge that political elites would possess about security and defense issues will be higher	0.85	0.36	0.52 ^a	0.33	0.47

^aCorrelation significant 0.01 (bilateral).

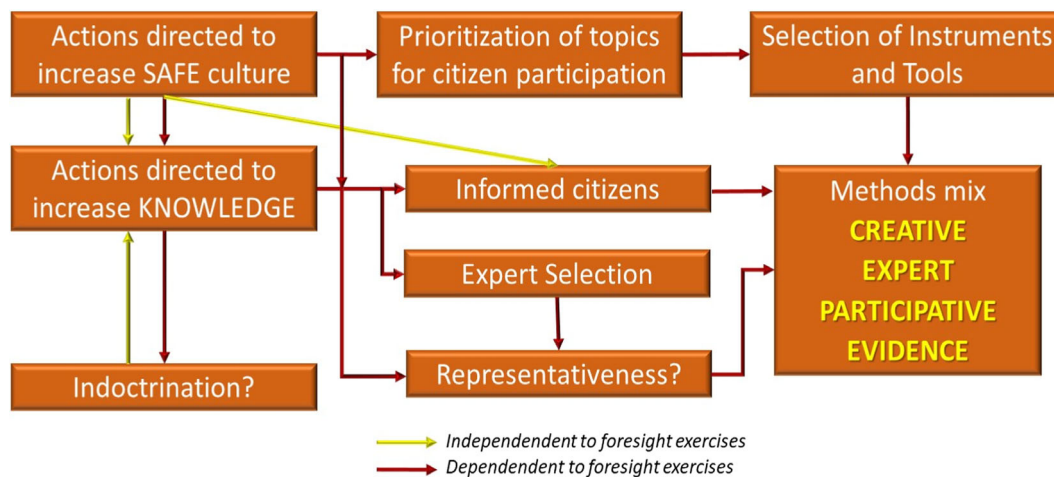


FIGURE 2 | Proposal for useful participatory security and defense foresight exercises.

evaluate existing narratives, provide input on policy decisions, and contribute to the foresight exercise more broadly. To ensure diversity of outlooks, these panels can be randomly selected to represent a cross-section of the population at large in terms of age, gender, socioeconomic background, and other relevant factors. For instance, the Spanish CIS distinguishes participants based on political ideology (left-wing, right-wing, and center). However, the method has some disadvantages, including a lack of commitment from participants, leading to low response rates, especially in topics that, in principle, attract little interest. Moreover, there may be limitations on the range of topics that can be effectively considered by a general population sample, and the representativeness of panels is open to question.

4.2 | Collaborative, Participatory, and Deliberative Workshops

Collaborative workshops with the participation of citizens, experts, policymakers, and stakeholders can foster a diverse range of perspectives, facilitate meaningful discussions, and promote collaboration among different groups. These workshops provide a platform for participants to collectively explore and shape future scenarios in relation to complex S&D topics. Brainstorming, storytelling, and group discussion are ways in which citizens can actively contribute their insights and help envision the future. Presentations, case studies, simulations, and interactive exercises help participants to gain a deeper understanding of the subject and encourage the exchange of knowledge.

However, some aspects of S&D—particularly those concerning national security or advanced technologies—may not be suitable for such workshops if they require specialized knowledge. Additionally, workshops should be designed carefully to avoid collective thinking, whereby participants conform to dominant ideas, potentially limiting the exploration of alternative perspectives and foresight outcomes. By striking a balance and addressing these considerations, collaborative workshops can be a powerful tool to engage citizens and stakeholders in shaping the future of S&D.

4.3 | Collaborative Story Mapping

This tool enables citizens to collectively create visual narratives to explore the complexities of S&D issues. It encourages active engagement and holistic understanding, considering technological innovations, social dynamics, ethics, and policy implications. The visual aspect helps to understand the consequences of different actions, facilitating the analysis and evaluation of S&D choices. Story mapping leverages collective intelligence, fosters collaboration, promotes visual comprehension, allows the exploration of different scenarios, and supports long-term thinking, and is therefore useful to generate ideas and shape the future of science and technology.

However, the effectiveness of this method heavily relies on the participants' perspectives, knowledge, and creativity. Without the necessary technical expertise, the narratives generated may lack depth or accuracy, limiting the usefulness of the exercise.

TABLE 2 | Pros- and Cons- of instruments and tools for S&D foresight exercises.

Instrument	Tools	Pros	Cons	Nature of method
Citizen survey	<i>Online survey</i> <i>telephone interviews</i> <i>in-person questionnaire</i> <i>stable panels</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Diversity of perspectives · Representativeness · Inclusivity · Broad knowledge base · Democratic participation · Long-term engagement · Policy relevance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Limited expertise · Biases and misinformation · Time and resource constraints · Low response rates · Lack of engagement · Influence of group dynamics · Limited scope of topics · Ethical considerations 	Participative
Workshops	<i>Brainstorming</i> <i>storytelling</i> <i>group discussion</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Collaboration and exchange of Ideas · Enhanced understanding · Real-time feedback and iteration · Stakeholder involvement · Networking and building of relationships · Active participation and engagement · Creative thinking; new ideas · Practical and actionable outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Limited representation · Time- and resource-intensive · Group dynamics and power imbalances · Potential for groupthink · Limited expertise and technical knowledge · Time constraints · Generalizability of conclusions · Bias and influence 	Participative creative expert evidence
Collaborative story mapping	<i>Narratives</i> <i>visual representation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Collective Intelligence · Co-creation and ownership · Enhanced engagement and collaboration · Visual representation · Scenario exploration and flexibility · Sensemaking and narrative building · Alignment and consensus building: · Long-term thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Subjectivity and bias · Time- and resource-intensive · Lack of representativeness · Limited generalizability · Uncertainty and complexity · Lack of technical expertise · Resistance to change · Interpretation challenges 	Creative participative
Focus group	<i>Future scenarios</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · In-depth exploration · Diversity of perspectives · Collaboration and exchange · Real-time feedback · Nonverbal communication · Group dynamics and synergy · Participant empowerment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Limited sample size · Potential dominance of vocal participants · Group dynamics and conformity bias · Time and resource intensive · Difficulty in managing conflicting views · Potential bias and social desirability effects · Lack of anonymity 	Expert participative creative
Online engagement platforms	<i>Forums/on line discussions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Accessibility and reach (geographical barriers are overcome) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Digital divide (Internet access and digital literacy) 	Participative expert

(Continues)

TABLE 2 | (Continued)

Instrument	Tools	Pros	Cons	Nature of method
	<i>social media groups</i> <i>crowdsourcing ideas</i> <i>interactive activities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Large-scalability and efficiency · Flexibility and convenience · Anonymity and equal voice · Enhanced collaboration and co-creation · Data management and analysis · Continuous engagement and iteration · Transparency and documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Limited representativeness · Digital disengagement · Quality and verification of information · Limited depth of discussion · Lack of face-to-face interaction · Digital fatigue and overload 	evidence
Participatory scenario development	<i>Co-creation narratives trends</i> <i>S&D key factors</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Inclusive and diversity of perspectives · Co-creation of knowledge- enhanced ownership and legitimacy · Increased robustness and adaptability · Empowerment and capacity building · Improved decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Time- and resource-intensive · Difficulty in managing group dynamics · Representation and diversity challenges · Influence of dominant voices · Complexity and uncertainty · Limited generalizability 	Creative expert participative evidence

However, its advantages outweigh its disadvantages, making story mapping a creative and valuable approach to foresight in S&D issues.

4.4 | Focus Groups

Focus group discussions with citizens deliver valuable insights and in-depth debates about future S&D scenarios. Chairs must create a safe and nonjudgmental environment to encourage open and honest discussions. Real-time feedback enables iterative refinement of foresight outcomes and deeper insight into the participants' contributions. Deliberative workshops foster collaborative decision-making and may lead to innovative solutions for S&D issues.

The observation of nonverbal cues during focus groups enhances the understanding of the participants' perspectives, especially with sensitive topics like gender-based violence. However, focus groups typically involve a small number of participants, limiting representativeness and variety of perspectives. Additionally, managing conflicting views in focus groups requires skilled moderators to ensure constructive engagement and avoid polarization.

Despite these challenges, focus groups offer a platform for citizens to express their views and concerns about the future of S&D, making them valuable tools in foresight exercises.

4.5 | Online Engagement Platforms

Online platforms, such as forums, social media groups, and dedicated websites create a space for inclusive discussions and citizen input in the development of narratives and future scenarios. Online engagement enables crowdsourcing of ideas, interactive activities, and debate, reaching citizens that face mobility constraints or reside in remote areas.

The digital nature of this instrument facilitates record-keeping, traceability, and efficient data collection and analysis. It opens the range of outlooks, resulting in richer insights and wider engagement. However, internet access and level of technological skill could pose barriers for some individuals, undermining their motivation. To address this, online engagement should be complemented with other instruments to facilitate nuanced discussions, empathy, understanding, and trust-building among participants.

While these platforms facilitate interactive exchange and wider participation, the commitment of participants may be low without adequate incentives. Additionally, in countries like Spain, where S&D issues are not among the primary social concerns, alternative strategies may be necessary to effectively foster citizen engagement.

4.6 | Participatory Scenario Development

Engaging citizens in the co-creation of future scenarios involves collaboration with experts, policymakers, and stakeholders.

This participatory approach ensures that the citizens' perspectives are considered in the development of future scenarios, contributing to more inclusive and responsive strategies. To achieve this, facilitators must create supportive environments that encourage active engagement, diversity of outlooks, and respectful dialogue.

Careful design and facilitation and clear objectives and guidelines are essential for effective group interaction. Combining workshops with other participatory methods, like surveys or online platforms, can capture a wider range of perspectives and maximize returns on time and resources.

Ethical considerations, such as informed consent and confidentiality, should be prioritized throughout the process. Careful recording and follow-up actions ensure that outcomes and recommendations are effectively incorporated into decision-making.

While managing group dynamics and potential exclusions are ongoing challenges, combining several participatory methods helps to mitigate these cons and fosters a sense of ownership and legitimacy among participants. Overall, inclusive and participatory spaces empower citizens to contribute their ideas and outlooks, increasing the impact and relevance of foresight exercises.

5 | Discussion and Conclusions

5.1 | Future Opportunities and Risks

The importance of collectives thinking and acting together is recognized by academics (Godet 2010), the participation of civil society in security and defense foresight exercises could play a crucial role in transforming society, not only by helping to improve current public understanding of these issues, but also by increasing citizens' engagement and involvement in shaping future policies (Hebinck et al. 2018; Nikolova 2014; Rutting et al. 2022). Inclusive citizen participation ensures that a diversity of perspectives, including those from marginalized groups, is considered to define policies.

Rethink the present for a better future would foster a more comprehensive understanding of defense and security challenges and encourage the search for solutions that address the needs and concerns of all members of society. If transparency and accountability would be promoted, in line with social values and goals (Susen 2010), citizen participation should build trust on and legitimacy of security and defense policies, because when citizens are actively engaged and their input and perspectives are valued, this leads to a greater sense of ownership and trust in security and defense-related decisions (Resh and Sabbagh 2017).

In recent decades, the growing number of foresight programmes in different countries and domains of knowledge domains suggests that they are useful (Havas, Schartinger, and Weber 2010). Although several differences in the 'status' of foresight by world region are noted (Keenan and Popper 2008), involving citizens increased sense of collective responsibility,

and a greater citizen awareness of threats and the actions needed to face them increases societal resilience. Engaging citizens in discussions, training, and scenario-building exercises paves the way to a better understanding of the complexities and trade-offs involved in security and defense decision-making. All of this would increase public engagement and support for transformative security and defense policies, creating the conditions for an understanding of security that transcend traditional military approaches, encouraging a broader approach to security issues that includes such topics as human security, environmental security, and cybersecurity, and reflecting the evolving nature of threats and challenges in contemporary society.

Although foresight exercises that consider national policies as a boundary condition are easier to implement than those that challenge national policies (Andersen and Borup 2009), more stakeholder participation in policy discussions and accessible integration of citizens' perspectives require new tools (Dhar et al. 2023), although there is a strong risk of elitist bias and protection of vested interests. New technologies have brought several tools useful for research purposes, this article includes tools are traditionally used by futurists but the opportunities to create new methodologies or transdisciplinary tools is a stimulating future opportunity.

Among the future threats to participatory foresight in security and defense exercises, *indoctrination* of participants emerged as the most critical. Other risks common to other foresight exercises, for example, sample selection, commitment to complete exercises, fatigue if too much time is required without or insufficient compensation, insufficient understanding of the issues presented, being too challenging, expensive and time consuming to conduct (Keenan and Popper 2008). For each context, consideration should be given to assessing the likelihood and impact of each risk and its potential contingency measures.

5.2 | Drivers of Change

The influence of national traditions and cultures in foresight exercises requires attention, because context matters (Andersen and Rasmussen 2014). In this line, (Keenan and Popper 2008) compared six world regions to show differences in their foresight styles according to their political traditions. However, the potential development of these regions remains understudied in a global context. Citizen participation in politics is a driver of future, and participatory foresight could be an excellent way to involve them in the potential design of future policies, and to increase citizen engagement in shaping future policies (Hebinck et al. 2018; Nikolova 2014; Rutting et al. 2022). However, there are multiple influences on public policy, so the impact of participation impact would be difficult to measure (Georghiou and Keenan 2006).

Participation opens a more flexible and conscious path to the future, where diversity appears as crucial, differentiating analysis that seeks solutions to current and future problems, to policy options in political agendas (Andersen and Borup 2009; Keenan and Popper 2008). In any case, the inclusion of

participation requires the participation of stakeholders traditionally considered as external (Nikolova 2014), the stimulation of public engagement in all areas where potential societal impacts can be expected (Scapolo and Miles 2006), and the expansion of future visions beyond expert opinions to increase foresight in long-term perspectives (Gudowsky and Peissl 2016). In this sense, participatory foresight processes promote reflexivity in policymaking and catalyze transformative change with the integration of normative and explorative approaches (Hebinck et al. 2018; Rosa et al. 2021).

Preferences about how citizens would like to be protected and their views on future protection could be important drivers of change, as they may influence decisions about the types of institutions that should respond to different demands, the use of different military or security forces for different purposes, the numbers of military and police personnel required, public spending on security and defense, the involvement of private companies, and other related issues.

Attending to some commentaries of experts approached by this study, the use of civil society organizations rather than approaching randomly selected citizens, although the representativeness of the exercise will depend on the selection methods used. Some experts in the focus groups recommended recruiting citizens with pre-existing knowledge in security and defense matters, and education seems to be a useful tool to improve social awareness, but other approaches could also be considered in line with the Aberystwyth school, especially to address specific issues. For example, engaging both experts and nonexperts in discussions concerning limitations to artificial intelligence until its potential risks are better understood can be facilitated by social networks, workshops, and conferences followed by interactive discussions. However, concerning more politically oriented topics, *such as the size of a country's armed forces or their involvement in theaters of operations, how can citizen participation be promoted using the tools described above?* More analysis is required to determine the nature of foresight tools.

If participation empowers citizens by giving them a voice and an active role in shaping the future, their engagement in foresight exercises could lead to more inclusive and representative outcomes. *Would random invitations to be part in foresight exercises increase participation?* This is a challenge for futurists for several reasons.

- First, a minimum level of knowledge to participate in politics of security and defense may not be necessary to participate in security and defense policy, as citizens are able to participate in the issues that concern them (Hansen 2013; Sitton 1987; Straehle Porras 2015).
- Second, for some issues related to defense and security, citizen participation in decision-making would not be worth the effort in terms of cost–benefit (Irvin and Stansbury 2004).
- Third, how to identify which issues will be relevant to citizens in the future so that they can participate in foresight exercises today.

Finally, looking at the intersection of these questions, the most important would be how to choose which kind of issues are

suitable for citizen participation because they are interesting enough for their lives, and which instrument and tools could maintain a reasonable cost–benefit ratio affordable by the ministers of interior and defense.

5.3 | Knowledge Gaps and Outlook

Involving civil society in foresight exercises through participative methods is a huge challenge that is being studied, and in this sector, there are not enough public information about past experiences or lessons learned collected. The interest of civil society in participating in the future shaping of security and defense policies should be circumstantial, as the Spanish case has shown. However, these circumstances could change and be more conducive to increased participation in other scenarios where potential threads are closer in space and time; or in the case of some “black swan” event that seems to change citizens’ perceptions. As a result, societies that do not perceive immediate threats may have little inclination to engage with security and defense issues, making it difficult to engage citizens in a foresight exercise unless they clearly see the benefits.

This design of political action may remain unchanged if the topics are difficult to share outside of secret channels, although a far-sighted vision of the experts in our study showed that societal participation in defense policy will increase. Even if they did not know how to achieve this goal, we examined the benefits and risks.

If citizen participation promotes democratic principles and practices by enhancing the transparency, accountability, and legitimacy of decision-making processes, citizen involvement in foresight exercises would encourage open dialogue, debate, and consensus among different stakeholders, including policymakers, experts, and the public. This participatory approach would contribute to decisions being informed by a broader range of perspectives and values. Moreover, the participation of civil society in foresight exercises enhances societal learning and the dissemination of knowledge in relevant security and defense issues. Through their active involvement, citizens could access and contribute with information, data, and insights about emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities. This exchange of knowledge would foster a better informed and more engaged citizenry, enabling individuals and communities to adapt, anticipate, and respond to social, technological, economic, and environmental changes. Participants could collectively develop strategies, policy recommendations, or action plans based on the insights generated during workshops. All these actions could help to bridge the gap between foresight exercises and their implementation in real-world security and defense contexts, because they enhance the quality, relevance, and legitimacy of foresight exercises to address these issues by leveraging the collective wisdom and greater engagement of stakeholders. If responses to mass invitation are nonbinding, *is it possible to create nonephemeral communities to deal with specific security and defense topics?*

If citizen participation in foresight exercises can facilitate social innovation and collective action by involving citizens in envisioning alternative futures and identifying potential pathways,

they can also foster creativity, collaboration, and experimentation. Citizens would become co-creators of solutions, actively contributing to the development and implementation of policies, initiatives, and projects that address societal challenges and promote positive social change (Rosa, Gudowsky, and Warnke 2018). However, not all topics related to security and defense can always be shared with the public owing to national security concerns, or simply because they require advanced technological knowledge, for example, the state of the art in guided energy weapons; or have political projections, for example, the clauses of a treaty signed 40 years ago and their future foreign policy implications.

At any rate, the design of security and defense-related nationwide foresight exercises should consider the limitations of the instruments described:

- First, workshops may involve participants with uneven levels of expertise and technical knowledge in relation to S&D issues. This could limit the depth of discussions, and the accuracy of the insights generated, because their outcome may not always be generalizable to the broader population or apply in different contexts. It is essential to strike a balance between a diversity of outlooks and expertise in the relevant subject matter, although the perspectives and insights generated in a workshop setting may not accurately reflect the views and concerns of society at large. Care should be taken to interpret the outcomes of workshop within their specific setting and consider additional methods of data validation and triangulation; this, however, is a general recommendation to palliate the potential weakness of instruments.
- Second, the multiconnected and flexible nature of online platforms, and the ease of data handling that they afford, can be very helpful to increase the scope of foresight exercises. However, continuous online engagement can lead to digital fatigue, whereby participants can feel overwhelmed or burnt out by excessive online activity, which can have deleterious effects on the quality and sustainability of their contributions. Moreover, anonymity can help mitigate power dynamics, ensuring that all participants have an equal voice in the foresight exercise, but it undermines interest in participating and in sharing “good” inputs.
- Third, political notions, such as the concept of state, power relations, and, indeed, security and defense, tend to be approached conservatively, which could hinder the exploration of innovative solutions and the transformative potential of foresight exercises. Furthermore, misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the contribution of participants could undermine the effectiveness of the foresight exercise and the validity of its conclusions. In the participatory settings implied by the tools described, conflicting opinions and power dynamics can arise, especially when they deal with sensitive and controversial issues. Managing group dynamics and ensuring a balanced and inclusive discussion can be challenging, and time- and resources-intensive.
- Fourth, the “boundary problem” in democratic theory, as articulated by Dahl (1970), offers further insight into the requirements of citizen participation in democratic

processes. Since then, the literature on the boundary problem has reflected the diversity of available modalities of inclusion (Arrhenius 2005; Magaña 2024). It might also be the case that the way in which the pool of citizens is designed differs depending on whether a type of foresight exercise is being prepared. This is because security and defense issues are sometimes considered sensitive areas. It might be helpful to consider this as a potential future line of work, with a view to gathering empirical data.

And finally, some issues that concern transdisciplinary concepts, from participation in development to empowerment, civic engagement, and the psychological sense of community are not considered in this article, although they are pertinent avenues for future research. The analysis focuses on the trade-offs for policymakers to conduct foresight exercises involving the participation of citizens and the associated social, economic, and political costs. This trade-off remains a preliminary consideration to the selection of the most appropriate methodologies in each scenario. It is important to note that the level of citizen interest in security and defense issues in each country will play a crucial role in shaping their future development.

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Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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