Call for workshop papers

Security, Intelligence and Foreign Policy:
Learning Lessons from Fiascos

Centre for the Study of Conflict, Security and Terrorism, University of Nottingham
Tuesday 31 March 2015
Organisers: Oliver Daddow, Jonna Nyman and Wyn Rees

Workshop aims and rationale

There has recently been a re-emergence of interest in how we understand and explain policy fiascos, drawing on the seminal book *Understanding Policy Fiascoes* by Mark Bovens and Paul 'tHart, first published in 1985. Most of this work (for instance Marsh and McConnell, 2010; McConnell, 2010; Howlett, 2012) has come from an interpretivist/constructivist theoretical perspective and has been used in two ways: to challenge the rationalist model of contemporary governance and to consider 'lessons learned/identified' to improve contemporary practice.

The fiascos literature is, however, less well developed for security, intelligence and foreign policy than it is for domestic policy. It also tends to concentrate on obvious, often seismic fiascos such as the UK 'appeasement' of Germany in 1938, the bombing of Pearl Harbour, the US Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961 or the bungled Anglo-French Suez operation of 1956. Meanwhile, questions about how we 'construct' these fiascos temporally, politically and epistemologically tend to be overlooked altogether because the status of a fiasco as a 'fiasco' is often taken as given. The time is therefore ripe to extend the case study collection to more recent events, notably Iraq, and to think again about the part fiascos play in encouraging lesson learning in political, military and intelligence agencies.

This BISA-funded workshop seeks to develop this emerging research agenda by bringing together scholars working in two broad fields: first, those working on policy fiascos and failures from a public policy perspective; second, those working on security, intelligence and foreign policy from within History, European Studies and International Relations. Paper givers will be invited to address the following questions when studying their chosen 'fiasco' case study:

1. How, why and by whom was the policy outcome deemed to be a fiasco? What is the conceptual distinction between fiasco and failure? How did the fiasco narrative come to be the dominant discourse and were voices of resistance ('in defence of the fiasco') heard either at the time or later?

2. How far did judgements reached on the fiasco at the time alter with the benefit of hindsight? Did the alleged scale and impact of the fiasco increase or diminish over time, and why?

3. What is the relationship between procedural (decision-making) fiascos and policy outcomes? Does poor decision-making always result in a fiasco, failure or fiasco-type outcome?

4. How do organisations identify lessons from fiascos, and how do they implement those lessons (if at all)? Why do fiascos and failures seem to prompt more lesson-learning than policy 'successes'? Are there overlooked 'success stories' that organisations could learn more from than fiascos?

5. Does the study of security, intelligence and foreign policy fiascos pose distinct methodological, theoretical and/or empirical challenges, compared to domestic

policy fiascos? Does the study of 'security' and intelligence in particular raise any other issues which a focus on foreign policy fiascos may not face? How does the widening-deepening debate or the ethical debate in security studies open up for a wider reading of fiascos?

<u>Workshop details</u>
- The one-day workshop will be held in the School of Politics and International Relations, University of Nottingham, on Tuesday 31 March 2015.
- There will be up to 9 speakers, arranged in 3 panels.
- The output from the workshop will be a journal special issue or edited book. In the first instance *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* will be approached.
- To propose a paper please email a 200 word max abstract to Oliver Daddow: od21@leicester.ac.uk, to arrive by close of play on Friday 23 January 2015.
- Papers will be selected for inclusion on the basis of fit with the overall theme of security fiascos and the associated questions involved in their construction and narration.

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