Final Report Summary - EVOCS (The evolving concept of security: A critical evaluation across four dimensions)

Executive Summary:
The FP7 EvoCS project, as its title implies, deals with ‘evolving security concepts’ as they are being discussed in the popular security discourse of 12 European countries (which were analysed in-depth, the countries being Italy, Malta, Spain, Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, the UK, the Netherlands, France, Bulgaria, Serbia and Turkey) and four regions (which were created for the purpose of this project: West-Mediterranean EU, Eastern EU Border, North-West EU and South-Eastern Europe). The analysis was used to draw recommendations for future European policy making and, where applicable, its security end-
An evolving concept of security in the context of EvoCS is made up of and modeled in five dimensions, namely: 1. Core values (e.g. Physical safety and security); 2. Actors (e.g. the government); 3. Levels (e.g. the national level); 4. Ethics and human rights and 5. Security challenges (e.g. terrorism or climate change). The items these dimensions are applied to are documents from different source types, from Government policy documents to newspapers or academic publications. These different sources were chosen in order to have a broad data base which reflects the written popular security discourse. In total, the EvoCS project used and analysed over 4000 items. The analysis has been done through a process of “coding”, i.e. characterizing each item in relation to the five dimensions of the EvoCS project. The coding process captured documents from the time period of November 2013 until October 2014. In a second stage, the analysis was broadened to include documents from the years 2004 till 2013. Here the researchers did not code the documents but carried out desktop research in order to put the results of the coding into a broader historical perspective, thus understanding the evolution of the concept of security. In this way, a quantitative-objective approach (the coding of the five dimensions) was combined with a qualitative-subjective approach (the desktop research) in order to provide a comprehensive view on the popular security discourse.

The main results of this project are its analytical framework (in its different iterations), which was used to analyse the countries and regions, and the recommendations which were formulated and presented at various events, in different publications and in the final deliverable.

Project Context and Objectives:
The FP7 EvoCS project, as its title implies, deals with ‘evolving security concepts’ as they are being discussed in the public security discourse. These ‘security concepts’ are made up of and modelled in multiple dimensions. The items these dimensions are applied to are documents from different source types, from Government policy documents to newspapers or academic publications. These different source types were chosen in order to have a broad data base which reflects the published popular security discourse. In total, the EvoCS project used and analysed over 4000 items. This high number of items was necessary in order to reach the goal (which was stated in the DoW) to "provide a holistic view on the subject", i.e. the popular security discourse.

The analysis has been done through a process of “coding”, i.e. characterizing each item in relation to the five dimensions of the EvoCS project. The coding process captured documents from the time period of November 2013 until October 2014. In a second stage, the analysis was broadened to include documents from the years 2004 till 2013. Here the researchers did not code the documents but carried out desktop research in order to put the results of the coding into a broader historical perspective, thus understanding the evolution of the concept of security. In this way, a quantitative-objective approach (the coding of the five dimensions) was combined with a qualitative-subjective approach (the desktop research) in order to provide a comprehensive view on the popular security discourse. Taken together, these two stages represent the goal of the EvoCS project to establish an analytical framework which enables the provision of robust results in the context of popular security discourse analysis. The framework was amended a number of times during the project in reply to feedback from the researchers who were using it.

The first dimension of the EvoCS concepts of security are six core values: Physical safety and security; Territorial integrity and security; Environmental and ecological security; Social stability and security; Cultural identity and security; Information and cyber security. These core values reflect the different aspects (with regard to the content) of the public’s security. The topics of a security discourse were
categorized using these core values. It was possible for an item to have more than one core value.

The second dimension deals with the actors of the public security discourse, ranging from national governments and international organization to the media and civil society. These actors can take a number of different roles like addressor, addressee, object actor (the actor who is being affected by a security issue) or ‘absent’ (if the actor is not mentioned in the source item).

The third dimension is about the levels the public security discourse can take place (from local to global) on and the fourth dimension is constituted of ‘Ethics & Human Rights’. If an item in one of the various source types dealt with ethical topics and/or questions of fundamental human rights, the coder would mark this and describe what these questions were about. Finally, the fifth dimension ‘Security Challenges (Threats, Hazards and Risks)’ was a free-text field in which the coder described the issues described in the item. We deliberately pooled together challenges, threats, hazards and risks because, even though they are distinct, they are often used interchangeably in various popular security discourses.

Since the scope of the EvoCS project is the whole of Europe, we chose to delineate four regions, in which we could conduct the above described coding for a number of case studies. The regions and countries that were chosen for the case studies were the following:

- West-Mediterranean EU: Italy, Malta, Spain
- Eastern EU Boarder: Poland, Hungary, Lithuania
- North-West EU: United Kingdom, Netherlands, France
- South-Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Serbia, Turkey

All of the analysed countries except Serbia and Malta are NATO member states. It was clear from the start of the project that it would not be possible to analyse all European countries, but it made sense to divide Europe into a number of characteristic regions and then choose a number of case study countries for deeper analysis. In this way, another one of EvoCS’ objectives could be fulfilled, i.e. to "work on identifying pan-European aspects of the different evolving concepts of security" (as stated in the DoW) while also keeping mind the different characteristics of Europe’s countries.

Project Results:
The main methodological S&T result is the final analytical framework as described above. Based on this, the recommendations for each region are the main content S&T results. They can be summarised as follows: The focus of the summaries is on common findings for the analysed countries, and how these relate to a common evolving concept of security for each region. While the inclusion of additional countries from the same region into the study may have altered the common findings, these changes would probably not have lead to completely different results. It has been found that there are many similarities between some pairs of countries in the same region. Comparing this to a third country showed more differences, but also some similarities. Also, the EvoCS approach to security is a rather broad one. In many cases, it is much broader that the definition of security in e.g. national security strategies.

West-Mediterranean EU
The case countries for the region of the “West-Mediterranean EU” were Malta, Italy and Spain. Italy incorporated almost all of the key findings for the region and overlapped to a certain degree with Malta and Spain. These two latter countries represented the opposite ends of a regional spectrum.

The region is characterised by the salience of the core values “Physical safety and security” and “Economic prosperity and security”, which were among the top three of the analysed countries. However, the salience of core values in all three countries was scattered quite evenly so that below the top three
core values a number of similarly important core values can be found (among them “Social stability and security” in Italy, “Information and cyber security” in Malta, and “Environmental and ecological security” in Spain). This finding points to a high degree of differentiation with a number of similar foci, due to the fact that the three analysed countries have enjoyed a period of peace of 70 or more years, which has led the societies to concentrate on more personal security concerns, which fall under the two most prominent core values. This is in line with the finding that, historically speaking, the three societies along with their evolving concepts of security seem to be converging towards a regional concept of security. This was shown strongly for Italy and Spain and more weakly for Malta.

The security challenges connected to the core values, which are common for the region, are illegal immigration, and the effects of the economic and financial crisis. These challenges are linked to each other because illegal immigrants have an additional perceived negative effect on the economy of the region. It seems however that security challenges linked to the economic and financial crisis are of a more temporary nature than the others (e.g. the ones linked to illegal immigration), which are seen as being long-term. Another interesting finding for the hypothesis that the long peace period has led to the present situation is that at those points where the core value of “Territorial integrity and security” were discussed, it was meant as an “invasion” of illegal immigrants and not the threat of a foreign army (this was found for the Italian case). In part, the third prominent security challenge of the region “terrorism” is also linked to illegal immigration, since the societies of the region discuss the effects of citizens returning from combat for the so-called Islamic State (IS). The security challenges of natural hazards and cyber-attacks are shared by Italy and Malta and in part by Spain (which shares environmental concerns).

What is a common finding for the region is that the national governments are the most important addressors in the security discourse (followed by the private sector) and the general public the most important object actor. Also, the most important level of discourse in the region is the national one.

The recommendations of the regional case study are based on the common findings: The most important addressors should be taken into account by EU policy makers and end-users, and the EU should strive to give more importance to the EU level of security discourse while not forgetting the presently most important national level. Additionally, the two most important security challenges, illegal immigration and terrorism, should be tackled proactively by informing the public of its backgrounds and possible solutions and debate about the possible impacts in order to prevent the spreading of extreme positions on this topic.

Finally, on the one hand, the growing convergence between the national concepts of security should be taken into consideration when implementing common policies, but, on the other hand, it should be kept in mind that a “one size fits all”-solution is not feasible for most of the current threats.

North-Western Europe

In contrast to other regions studied within the EvoCS project, particularly the Eastern ones, the North-Western Europe region (NWE) features a rather homogeneous concept of security. While there are of course specific differences between the security discourses in the three countries studied (France, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands), the main issues discussed and the way they are discussed show considerable commonalities (including the fact that security plays a major role in public discourse). The main values discussed are (percentage of mentions in the documents coded):

- Physical safety and security (FR: 66%, UK: 30%, NL: 29%, NWE overall: 48%)
- Social stability and security (FR: 15%, NL: 15%, UK: 7%, NWE overall: 13%)
- Information and cyber security (UK: 14%, FR: 11%, NL: 7%, NWE overall: 13%)
- Economic prosperity and security (UK: 20%, NL: 18%, FR: 3%, NWE overall: 12%)
Interestingly, environmental and ecological security is not among the four main regional core values, as it was only found to be of salience (16%) in the British security discourse. This is surprising given the Netherlands’ specific geographical situation. Nevertheless, the analysis might be biased by the occurrence (or non-occurrence) of natural hazard related events during the period analysed and the possibility that some threats (like rising sea levels in the Netherlands) are already well known. On the other hand, climate change (associated to the environmental and ecological security core value) is prominently featured in the security discourse of the whole NWE region, as it is seen as a “risk multiplier” in the context of natural hazard.

In all three countries, government and parliament publications focus on the national level. In contrast to this, other coded sources focus on local and regional levels, e.g. by discussing local effects of flooding or petty crime. Both in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, a formalised national risk assessment is carried out at regular intervals. The government expects other security actors to carry out their own risk assessments based on this national effort. In this context it is worth noting that governmental documents of the NWE region address the private sector more often than in the other regions studied.

Concerning security challenges, terrorism (associated to the values “physical safety and security” and “social stability and security”) and cyber security (associated to the values “information and cyber security” and “economic prosperity and security”) are the most salient.

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon to the NWE region, at least not for France and the UK. In both countries, terrorism in the 20th century was closely connected to territorial and political disputes, concerning the status of Algeria and Corsica in the case of France, and the “troubles” in the context of the status of Northern Ireland for the UK. Jihadist terrorism could thus be seen as a new card in a known game. Nevertheless, 9/11 and other recent terrorist events are perceived as novel and highly threatening security challenges. Consequently, all case study countries analysed in the NWE region have developed comprehensive strategies to deal with terrorism. Interestingly, while the strategies target “international terrorism”, their focus is mainly on the national actors that may be involved in terrorism activities (in particular radicalization), and the impacts this security challenge may have on a national level.

Cyber security, in particular cyber-crime, is the second big challenge in security discourses in the whole NWE region, recognizing the importance of secure and reliable information networks for the functioning and economic well-being of modern states. On the one hand, cyber-crime and cyber-espionage could cause disruption and losses to businesses and critical infrastructures, while on the other hand, a loss of trust in digital services would negatively impact the economic and social chances attributed to modern information technologies. There are variations concerning main addressors and addressees between the countries analysed, but in general, the private sector plays a distinguished role in the respective cyber security discourses.

The national government, the parliament and private sector play the most prominent roles across the region. The general public is perceived as the main object. Although variations exist between the countries analysed, the national government generally has the largest say when it comes to terrorism, while the private sector plays a distinguished role in the cyber security discourse. The National Security Strategies of these countries share similar ways of adopting an “all hazards all society” approach to security. While UK and Netherlands are particularly similar in this sense, France has its specifics. In accordance with its geographical situation, the French security discourse features much commonality with the discourse in the West-Mediterranean EU region. In France, security is traditionally seen as based on two pillars:

- Physical safety and security (including territorial integrity) which is guaranteed by the involvement in international alliances (EU and NATO);
Social security, political stability and economic prosperity are closely linked to the functioning of the state, and especially its social and health care services.

In the United Kingdom “security” is mainly seen as a responsibility of the national government, while “resilience” is assigned as a task to local actors.

In the Netherlands, the discourse has shifted from national to international issues in recent years, especially when terrorism and cyber-security are discussed. This outward perspective is much more pronounced than in other NWE countries. Further to this, “territorial integrity” and “peace” have re-emerged as important issues.

The discussion on the effects of the economic crisis since 2008 on security is noticeable both in France and the Netherlands, while it is not part of the United Kingdom’s security discourse.

Recommendations for EU policy makers and end-users drawn from the NWE case study include:
- Given the complexity of security challenges which affects multiple actors, overstepping the national context, a multi-stakeholder and a global approach are recommended in order to address them.
- The observed tendency to widen the security discourse, implying the securitization of non-security events (e.g. as illegal immigration), could help policy makers to mobilize more quickly the resources needed to deal with them.

Eastern EU Border

The countries analysed in the Eastern EU Border (EEB) region include Lithuania, Poland and Hungary. Overall, these countries focus on similar security threats, yet display different levels of salience of core values. Whilst Poland and Hungary display the same core values, Lithuania and Poland face similar security challenges. These congruencies are most likely the result of shared historical challenges, specifically the challenges the entire region faced after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The most salient core values in the region are “territorial integrity and security” and “political stability and security”: these core values play an important role in shaping the security discourse in all three countries. Economic prosperity and security is also considered an important core value, however it is more salient in Hungary and Poland. Such similarities can be influenced by a shared history of the lack of sovereignty these states experienced in the 20th century. Poland singularly highlights the salience of the physical safety and security, while it ranks second in Hungary.

The most salient security challenges identified as a result of the analysis are also similar, although they are addressed by and have an impact on different core values. The Ukrainian crisis plays a prominent role in the public discourse of the EEB region. However, whilst Hungary regards it as a “political stability and security” and “economic stability and security” issue, the other two countries are more concerned with territorial integrity. Another salient security challenge is energy supply, which directly evokes a Russian threat given Russia’s role as major supplier of oil and gas. In addition, the EEB region faces security challenges related to the countries’ social and economic development, including demographic trends and high unemployment. Road safety is also considered a salient challenge in terms of the physical safety and security, particularly in Poland. “Traditional” threats such as terrorism, organized crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, uncontrolled migrations, climate change or destructive ideologies have not been recognized as imminent security challenges in recent history by the studied countries in the region. However, together with the traditional historically driven challenges, the EEB region is also starting to experience new challenges such as cyber security and illegal immigration. While these topics have not yet entered the general discourse, it is likely that they will emerge as concerns in the future and impact on a number of core values.
The national government is seen as both the most prominent addressor and addressee in all three countries; the role of the national parliament as an addressor and an addressee is also important. As addressors, these actors mainly focused on political stability and security and territorial integrity and security core values, whereas economic stability and security was mainly discussed by the private sector. The discussion of security challenges and core values is mainly held at the national level. However, some security challenges such as terrorism are exclusively mentioned at the international level.

Human rights and ethics issues have not played a prominent role in the security discourse of the region: Lithuania and Poland have rarely referred to human rights in the context of security whereas Hungary’s focus (when mentioned) was mainly on security challenges concerning minorities and democracy.

The recommendations of the EEB regional case study include:
- Emerging security challenges such as rapid development of threats to cyber/information security, uncontrolled immigration, and an increase in disruptive ideologies will play larger roles in the near future and therefore have to be considered carefully by policy-makers and debated in the popular discourse;
- The issues triggered by the events in Eurozone (e.g. Greek debt, financial crisis) affect the debates in the EEB region and thus influence the shaping of the security discourse; these concerns have to be taken into account when regional development is discussed;
- European engagement in the regions legislative, economic, social and other reforms is crucial as its developmental state may have a critical effect on the security of the whole EU;

The region is likely to shift its focus from purely military developments towards a more holistic concept that stresses cooperation of various services and forces in order to strengthen non-military security

South-Eastern Europe

The core countries analysed for the regional case study South-Eastern Europe (SEE) were Bulgaria, Serbia and Turkey. Their main commonality is that they are situated in challenging international environments. Another commonality is their security perception, which has been shaped by historical experience, although the most traumatic events were quite different: the rocky transition from a socialist state to a member of the European Union for Bulgaria, the violent breakup of Yugoslavia for Serbia, and, further in the past, the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire for Turkey. Accordingly, the three core values most discussed in the SEE region are “physical safety and security” (main topic in 26% of the sources analysed), “political stability and security” (20%) and “economic prosperity” (19%). Of all security discourses analysed in the EvoCS project, the Bulgarian discourse was the only one featuring “political stability” as the most salient core value. The reason why this core value stands out is due to the often discussed challenges “corruption”, “organised crime” and the very special “relationship with the Russian Federation”. Furthermore, in Bulgaria a striking discrepancy between the security values discussed in official sources and in public media was observed. While official sources place the issue of “territorial integrity” and “physical safety and security” at the forefront of their considerations, with their main concern being the perceived negative influence of the Russian Federation on Bulgaria, the public discourse is more concerned with political stability and economic wellbeing. For Serbia, “physical safety and security” was found to be the dominant value in the national security discourse. This is not surprising as Serbia was heavily involved in the armed conflicts surrounding the breakup of Yugoslavia. The second most prominent value is “economic prosperity”, which is linked to challenges like the financial crisis in Europe and the privatisation of public property during the transition from a socialist state to a democracy (with some autocratic features in the 1990s). The frequency of armed conflicts makes “physical safety and security” and “territorial integrity and safety” the most salient values in Turkish security discourse, “Cyber and
information security” was hardly ever discussed in any of the studied countries.

Due to their diverse in history and international status (Bulgaria is a member to NATO and the EU, Turkey to NATO only, and Serbia is neither, but aspires EU membership) it is of little surprise that the security discourses in these three countries were dominated by different challenges. In Bulgaria, the Ukrainian crisis, which has blurred the border between war and peace, is of serious concern as it puts into question the political stability associated with EU and NATO membership. Other prominent issues in the Bulgarian security discourse are emigration (“brain drain”) and the demographic crisis closely linked to it, which, together with economic and political deficiencies, put long-term social stability into peril. One typical Serbian security discourse item is the much disputed question whether Serbia should orient itself towards the European Union, which seems to offer prosperity and more civil freedom, or towards the Russian Federation, which is a traditional ally. Another typical Serbian challenge is the existence of large football fan groups with a high affinity for violence. Of the three countries studied, Turkey is most troubled by open violent conflicts. While the Cyprus dispute, the armed uprising of Kurdish extremists (PKK), and the war in Iraq seemed to be cooling down in the last years, war in Syria has brought fighting back to the Turkish mainland, both in the form of terrorist attacks by various combatant groups of the Syrian theatre and by warfare overspill across the south-eastern border. For several years, Turkey refused to get involved in the Syrian war militarily, yet it diplomatically campaigned for the removal of the Assad regime and was the main transit route for fighters and goods of all conflicting parties and a destination for nearly two million refugees. In July 2015 the Turkish government decided to get actively involved in fighting and in the course of this activity broke the 2013 ceasefire with PKK. The threats to territorial integrity and physical safety associated with these developments dominate the Turkish security discourse. Beyond these specific challenges, corruption and energy security are salient issues in the whole region.

Although natural hazards do of course impact the region, they are not associated with climate change in popular discourse. Climate change is thus hardly ever identified as a security issue in the SEE region.

In general, most security challenges identified in the SEE region have a history and are long-term. Nevertheless, national governments fail to address them with long-term strategies. Instead they resort to short-term tactical measures that do not tackle the causes of the problems encountered.

Concerning the structure of the security discourse in SEE, the main actor (addressor and addressee) was consistently found to be the respective national government in all three core countries, and the level most frequently discussed was “national”.

Potential Impact:
The work done in the EvoCS project has already had a number of impacts in the field of policy-making and research and will continue to do so after the end of the project:

Impacts on policy-makers
At the project’s final conference in November 2015, being asked by one of the coordinators as to why EU officials do not take the national level of the popular security discourse more strongly into account in their work, one of the speakers answered that he cannot comment on that since he has been working on the EU level for decades and that he “lives in this bubble”. This comment was taken by the EvoCS consortium as encouragement to carry the results of their project into the EU institutions in order to build bridges into these “bubbles”. At the same conference, one of the panelists commented on the EvoCS project by critiquing some of its methodology and recommended changes while also praising the work that has been done. Being a policy maker, the panelist commented that it was possible to use parts of the preliminary
results of the project at the beginning of 2014 in order to inform his work on the Internal Security Strategy (ISS). This was also taken by the EvoCS consortium as a sign that their efforts to help policy making in the EU with their results were successful. Similarly, the four regional workshops, which took place in January 2015, have been able to reach over 100 security stakeholders, among them policy-makers, journalists and security end-users. Their feedback to the EvoCS analytical framework, results and recommendations has been mostly positive which makes it more likely that these will inform their day-to-day work.

The efforts in this field will continue even after the end of the project. It is planned by a number of consortium partners to use the analytical framework for other countries or modified fields. For example, it is possible that Fraunhofer INT will conduct an analysis, based on the EvoCS analytical framework, as to the perception of the refugee crisis in Germany.

Impacts on researchers

The analytical framework, results and recommendations from the EvoCS project have been presented at various conferences and articles have been published in a number of journals, proceedings and books (see list below). This has led to a heightened interest of the scientific community which has found its expression in the special issue of "Information & Security: An International Journal" which dealt specifically with EvoCS, its results and topics. The journal was distributed at the final conference and is available online.

Future publications will probably concentrate on new iterations or alternatives of the analytical framework, new case studies or updates to already existing case studies.

List of Websites:
http://www.evocs-project.eu/

Last update: 23 June 2016
Record number: 184347

Permalink: https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/605142/reporting

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