THE COMPLEXITY OF SECURITY DIMENSIONS: A COMPARISON OF THE NORTH-WEST AND SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN REGIONS

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Abstract

Prone to multiple interpretations, 'security' is becoming a multiple and hence, nebulous concept. Security can be associated with national security and the State's military power; notions of the individual safety; or human values and fundamental rights issues. This is clearly demonstrated in Europe with various member states using various concepts of security, making them event and space specific. Using two case study regions, this paper demonstrates the increasing complexity of the concept of security, as prominent security discourses and their impacts and consequences fall across more than one category of security dimensions. A large number of actors involved in, and affected by, security issues makes it harder to identify security dimensions. The political, economic, environmental and other security dimensions are interconnected and form a complex system of inter- and intra- dependent networks. Understanding these complexities will aid policy makers in formulating measures that influence an evolving European concept of security.

Keywords: security dimensions, European Union, case study.

1 INTRODUCTION

'Security' is a complex concept that is becoming nebulous, as it is prone to multiple interpretations both across and within different societies and cultures, domains of human activity, academic disciplines and so on. Security can be associated with the national security of states mainly buttressed by military power; at the same time, it is inextricably tied up with notions of the safety of individuals grounded in the fulfilment of basic Maslowian needs; and for yet others human values and fundamental rights issues are crucial elements of security. This is clearly demonstrated in Europe: despite

being under one political umbrella - the European Union - various European member states adopt various concepts of security, making them event and space specific.

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the complexity of the concept of security using two European case study regions: North-West Europe (NWE) and South-East Europe (SEE) provide a sense of the complex interconnectivity of the debates that have shaped / are shaping the security discourse, as well as the disconnected dimensions that could be considered under this nebulous and politically charged term.

The approach to security employed in this paper (discussed in Section 2) and its perception are in many aspects similar to the capability approach to social problems as theorised by Sen [1] and later expanded [2]. Where the capability approach defines a certain set of functioning and opportunity freedom, the case study regions discussed in this paper look at different types of security perceptions in different fields (e.g. territorial security as opposed to physical security). The capability approach thus represents one possibility to complement this approach by looking at possibilities to improve people's capabilities in order to heighten their security.

2 METHODOLOGY

Based on the methodology developed for the EvoCS project,[1] this paper employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods and datasets that have been combined to identify the dimensions of security over time for the two discussed regions. Whilst four regions have been analysed during the project, only two will be discussed in this paper:

- North-Western EU (United Kingdom, Netherlands, France)
- South-Eastern Europe (Serbia, Bulgaria, Turkey).

These regions have been chosen due to their historical differences and the roles they are playing in the EU: the NWE region is seen as the core (financial and political), whereas the SEE region is a relatively new member of the EU with some of the countries still not being a part of the Union. In addition, the threats and challenges these regions are facing differ quite dramatically, which emphasises the challenge the EU is facing in developing a singular security strategy.

A comprehensive coding of approximately 2,300 relevant documents was also conducted using an analytical framework [3].

A concept of security consists of five dimensions: the *core values* which refer to the different aspects of life that actors seek to secure including physical safety and security, territorial integrity and security, environmental and ecological security, social stability and security, cultural identity and security, political stability and security, economic prosperity and security and information and cyber security*;* the types of *security challenges* that affect these core values which can be either risks, threats or hazards*;* the *levels* at which security needs to be protected which may include the local, subnational, international, transnational and global level; the *actors* that are involved including – but not limited to – national or local government, the private sector, civil society or the individual citizen; and the *ethical and human rights issues* which manifest themselves in this process.

Different beholders prioritise different core values and perceive different security challenges; they prefer these to be addressed by different actors at different levels, and consider different ethical and human rights issues to be a problem. In order to assess these differences empirically, the research process was divided into two stages.

[1] More information about the Evolving Concept of Security (EvoCS) project can be found at: http://www.evocs-project.eu/

In the first stage, currently prevailing security concepts in their respective countries across six principal security discourses (government, parliament, academia, media, the private sector and the NGO sector) were assessed. For each discourse in each country, a similar set of documents was retrieved based on a set of predefined criteria and a set of detailed retrieval instructions. The documents were then manually coded; this process relied on a uniform coding scheme in order to elicit various concepts of security. The results were then recorded in a centrally managed online data repository to which all country team researchers had access.

In stage two the findings were further analysed through a series of workshops held around Europe in early 2015 and desk-based research. The principal purpose was to get a more granular understanding based on in-depth qualitative analysis of the findings unearthed in stage one. The evolution of countries' and regions' concepts of security over the past decade was also described qualitatively to get a better grip on the recent historical context in which it emerged.

3 CASE STUDIES

3.1 North-Western Europe region

In the period after the Second World War, NWE region has been relatively stable from the political and economic perspectives. Nevertheless, a number of threats (such as terrorism and natural hazards) have been affecting the region. NWE region plays a key role in EU security policy due to the historic and financial role of the countries that compose this region. In particular, the main roles are played by the UK, France and Germany: they can still rely on their own political weight to influence developments and are less dependent on multilateral institutions; they are part of several institutional frameworks (e.g. NATO) in which they can operate, with the EU being just one these frameworks; they are involved in shaping policies on various levels and across a much wider range than other states. At the same time, the region has differences within itself which can affect the future of the EU security: France has a desire to play a leading role in the EU, whereas the UK is not sure whether it really belongs in the union at all and whether or not to remain in it. The role of the Netherlands however should not be underestimated as it is an important player in developing cooperation within the region.

Physical safety and security is by far the most salient core value in the NWE region, with social stability and security (in particular in France, where the issue of immigration is very prominent), information and cyber security, and economic prosperity and security also being widely discussed. The two latter core values are extremely intertwined, particularly when it comes to the context of cyber-crime. Within the most prominent core values, the most salient threats for the NWE region are cybercrime and terrorism. Other threats that are discussed in the NWE's popular discourse include immigration (including illegal immigration), natural hazards, climate change, and energy and food supply.

The UK, France and the Netherlands security strategies were written in approximately the same time in the late 2000s as they – and a region as a whole – were trying to redefine their approach to national security in light of changes in NATO and expansion of the EU. The national security strategies of the region share a similar way of adopting a risk-based 'all hazards' and 'all of society' approach as the new security direction. One of the most prominent similarities is the focus on the same security issues. Terrorism is a regional issue which, however, is mainly discussed at a national level; the discourse of terrorism includes not the terrorist attack but also the issues of radicalisation and polarisation. Supply-related threats (particularly energy supply) provide another good example: despite searching for new energy sources (e.g. fracking) and investing in renewable energy sources (e.g. solar and wind in Germany),

the NWE region is highly dependent on the fossil fuels supply from politically unstable regions (such as Russia). The main focus of the security discourse is on the national level, with national actors playing the most prominent role across the region. At the same time, general public which is perceived as the main object of threats hardly plays any role in this discourse.

There are however some differences in the way security issues are addressed. For example, the Netherlands is very outward looking, with large focus on the international state (it has even implemented an International Security Strategy [5]). Both national and international strategies overlap, but it is the only country that explicitly states the role that international affairs play in its security discourse. At the same time France and the UK acknowledge the role of the international actors yet mainly discuss the issues at a national level. Another example is the perception of the roles within the EU: the UK sees EU as mainly a trade partner (as many of its security deals are with the USA), whereas the Netherlands and France are more reliant on the EU in terms of security cooperation. The 2008 Financial crisis is admitted as a security issue in the region, however the discussion of its implications for the security in the UK is largely absent, whereas in Netherlands and France it further reinforced the inward shift, with socio-economic dimensions (such as unemployment; health; security of the elderly; and pensions) attaining greater salience.

The roles NWE region countries play in the EU is another interesting aspect that can influence the future developments in the security on the EU level. NWE is the largest (in terms of the population and the wealth) in the EU. Whilst all three analysed countries acknowledge that the EU is critical for their security and prosperity, their roles within the EU security agenda differ. The EU acts as a bloc with all 28 member states discussing issues and unanimously making decisions, but many argue that behind the scenes lies a tacit agreement that the Big Three - France, Germany, and the UK- take the lead on foreign policy, including security matters. UK and France continue to play important roles in the EU security (particularly in NATO), but they are also very protective of their sovereignty [6]. The Netherlands on the other hand prioritises integration with EU to also pursue defence cooperation within Europe, both multilaterally and bilaterally [7].

Overall, the NWE region shares similarities as well as having very specific differences, however security is at the top of the agenda in the region, which is demonstrated by the existence of the National Security Strategies in analysed countries as well as specific security strategies for particular threats.

3.2 South-Eastern Europe region

The SEE region constitutes an area that stands out in a number of striking ways. Not all countries in this region are part of the EU (e.g. Albania or Macedonia), some of them are in NATO (Bulgaria), while some have declared neutrality (Serbia). In the western part of SEE - the territory of former Yugoslavia - the worst military conflicts after World War II took place, with ethnic tensions still taking place (e.g. Macedonia in early 2015). Serbia was a major party during the Yugoslav civil war, therefore Serbian society was embedded in the broader context of socialist Yugoslavia, and in the last two decades have been having to adjust to a new political and economic system. It does not have NATO or EU membership but is a candidate country for the latter, and has strong ties with Russia. Serbia has an ongoing territorial conflict with one of its (former[2]) provinces: Kosovo and Metohia. Serbia's direct neighbour - Bulgaria - is an EU, and a NATO member. Bulgaria also has traditional ties with Russia and was part of the Eastern bloc, which is why Bulgaria still struggles with economic and societal transformation

[2] Kosovo has been recognized by over 100 states. However, for EvoCS, Kosovo was treated as an internal province of Serbia in accordance with UNSCR 1244 and to include Kosovo in the national case study.

processes. The Republic of Turkey has been a candidate country for the EU for almost a decade and is a NATO member. Its population is mostly Muslim; it has a common border with crisis-stricken states like Syria or Iraq. Along with similar security discourses as in the other countries of the region, Turkey faces a couple of unique internal (e.g. the Gulen movement) and external (e.g. groups fighting in the Syrian civil war) challenges. Together, these three national case studies represent a good sample of the diversity of the security discourse in SEE. Each of these countries has a number of unique security challenges and some that are common to all of them.

In recent history, the countries of SEE have been part of three different blocs, i.e. the western and eastern bloc and the movement of non-aligned countries. All this changed with the end of the Cold War, when countries such as Bulgaria or Romania started the transformation of their societies and economies towards the West. Such history was clearly reflected in the coding results.

Case study countries from this region have different foci. Physical safety and security is an often discussed core value in Serbia and in Turkey (where territorial integrity and security is also salient), but it is less prominent in Bulgaria, which mainly focuses on political stability and security. What the three studied countries do have in common is the fact that the environmental and ecological security and information and cyber security are the least salient.

SWE is also diverse in the security challenges the countries face, even though certain common issues can be identified. For instance, Serbia still observes the conflict with Kosovo and Metohia as an important security issue, although its focus has changed. While it was (and to a certain but much weaker degree still is) an issue of territorial integrity and security, current discussions concentrate on the situation of the Serbian community in Kosovo and their well-being [8]. Turkey faces a similar issue with its Kurdish minority (which has also weakened in recent years due to an on-going peace process). Serbia and Bulgaria are both struggling with the integration of their Roma communities, even though both countries have adopted national strategies for this [9].

There are also aspects that all three of the studied countries have in common: the security discourse predominantly takes place on a national level; and the main addressor of the security discourse in all three countries is the national government. In Bulgaria, the case is particularly interesting, since, according to the EvoCS coding findings, the addressor is the national government, while, according to [10] the people of Bulgaria in general seem to distrust their governing bodies (such trends can often be found in other countries of the region).

Similarly to NWE, security is an important aspect in the SEE public discourse and is addressed in the various national security strategies. In Serbia, the security challenges found in the coding exercise are mostly addressed in the national security strategy, while in Bulgaria the findings from the Bulgarian governmental annual report on Defence and Armed Forces are quite different from the findings of the project [11]. But one also has to keep in mind that the region is very different from NWE in many aspects like its historical background, salience of different core values and the existence of other security challenges [12].

4 DISCUSSION

The security policies of the European Union need to be effective (in protecting our societies), efficient (in the way these policies are executed), representative (for the security interests of different societies in the Union), in compliance with the EU legal and fundamental rights framework, and perceived as legitimate (by its citizens), and reflect national concerns and priorities as well as European ones. These are revealed in the four dimensions through which security is discussed in this paper (the first dimension - core values - is presented across the remaining four dimensions).

4.1 Actors

A variety of actors are involved in the popular discourse of security in NWE and SEE, however the most prominent addressor in both regions is national government, with its role being particularly noticeable when it comes to addressing the issues relevant to physical security and safety. The role of the private sector as an addressor increases dramatically in the context of cybersecurity, which is not surprising as they are perceived to also be an object of this threat. The actors which are addressed on the security issues are also diverse. Again, national government plays the largest role as an addressee, however the private sector – particularly in the case of cybersecurity in NWE - is also perceived to be an actor that should listen to what addressors have to say. In both regions, foreign government acts as an addressee in the context of terrorism: this may be explained by the efforts of all six governments to find the root of the terrorism problem and reduce its impacts. Whilst being by far the largest object of the majority of the threats in the both regions, general public at the same time they play a very little role (if any) as addressors or addressee.

Overall in both regions, national governments and parliament have the largest say and are the largest recipients of the information. In the NWE however whilst mostly talking to themselves, governments are also trying to connect with the private sector, which is a core of a region's economies. At the same time there is very little contact with local and regional governments, which are in charge of implementing security-related policies on the ground. Similarly, the general public who is perceived to be the largest object of threats is hardly being communicated to, thus it is unclear whether the general public should fully rely on governments' decisions when it comes to security matters.

4.2 Sources

Physical safety and security - the most salient core value in both regions - is discussed in most of the sources all sources, with government, parliament and newspaper publications covering this core value most. The exception is academic publications, which only seldom discuss physical safety and security in both regions (and when it does it solely focuses on terrorism (UK) and Kosovo war (Serbia)). Economic prosperity and security is also discussed in all the sources (except for academia in SEE), and in particular by private sector in NWE.

Terrorism and cyber-crime get wide coverage by a diverse set of sources in the NWE, with the national government publications playing the largest role when it comes to the discussion of terrorism. Newspapers also largely cover terrorism: this could be explained by the fact that terrorism-related stories attract more audience attention, as a terrorist attack would potentially have a large impact. Parliament and government publications have a more balanced coverage focusing on both issues, however slightly more attention is paid to terrorism. There is a sense that the issue of cyber-crime is being left to private businesses to resolve on its own, with only very few guidance from the government. NGOs are not discussing the most salient threats in the region; their main focus is on food supply, social stability and climate change, which is not surprising: as NGOs often address the importance of these issues. SWE differs slightly: main security challenges discussed are organised crime and corruption, but challenges such as violence against women, natural hazards, traffic security and a major influx of refugees (Serbia and Turkey) or the integration of the Roma minority and control of the security intelligence services (Serbia and Bulgaria) are also covered. Government policy documents and parliamentary debates tend to discuss all core values, sources from the private sector focus on economic prosperity and security, and the NGOs (among other core values) on social stability and security.

4.3 Levels

The main level at which security is discussed in both regions is national, however the discussed threats differ: such, at the national level the NWE region mainly focuses on terrorism and cyber-crime (with these issues also being touched upon at an international level), whereas in SWE it is organized crime and corruption. Global level is very rarely a part of the security discourse in the context of the analysed threats. In both regions, larger attention is paid to security at the national level. With an exception of Serbia which focuses on subnational level in the context of on-going Kosovo conflict, it is surprising that very little discussion is taking place at subnational and local levels, as some of the most salient threats (such as terrorism, cyber-crime or natural hazards) could have a large impact on a local scale. In addition, the main object of these threats being general public and private sector, both operating at local level, are thus largely ignored.

Different publications focus on different levels when it comes to specific threats. For example, government publications cover various levels, and whilst national level is prominent in the NWE region, both terrorism and cyber-crime are discussed in the context of international and transnational levels, but hardly touch upon local level. In SEE, some of the local discussions tend to focus on traffic security issues (for instance in Serbia). But this is probably due to a law being passed in the period under scrutiny.

4.4 Human rights and ethical issues

When it comes to the most salient threats discussed here, human rights and ethical issues are not very often touched upon. NWE region demonstrates some concern (although human rights are seen as a ‘mentioned’ rather than ‘main’ topic, as has already been discussed in the UK profile), but only briefly related to these issues when it comes to terrorism and cyber-crime, mainly in NGO reports, parliament publications and newspaper. Overall in the NWE region human rights are most prominently discussed under the physical safety and security and social stability and security core values. In SEE, human rights and ethical issues are discussed more often, with issues like discriminations against minorities, women and/or the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community or the rights of refugees found in the security discourse.

5 CONCLUSION

This paper demonstrated a kaleidoscopic, but at the same time comprehensive, overview of the key elements of security perceptions in two regions, which at first glance seem very different.

Indeed, the historical situation and political context in which these regions have developed impact the perception of security. The NWE region, whilst addressing the traditional areas of security, is also shifting its focus on newly emerging threats such as cybercrime and terrorism, as well as encouraging the securitisation of threats that have not been covered by the security discourse previously (e.g. climate change). In the SEE region, the security discourse is dominated by more “traditional” security challenges like organised crime and corruption on the one hand and on historical problems that are still important like the Kosovo conflict in Serbia, the relations with Russia in Bulgaria or the internal threats (e.g. the Gulen movement) in Turkey. The difference between the regions lies in the historical context: ethnic struggles are mostly (with an exception of the Northern Ireland) a thing of the past in NWE, and the security discussions have moved onwards to modern “non-traditional” challenges.

However two regions also have quite a lot in common. For instance, although the EU promotes cooperation among the member states as well as with third country partners, both regions – and the countries within the regions - whilst mentioning cooperation -

focus largely on their own efforts, capacities and capabilities in addressing various threats. The most prominent security discourse happens at the national level emphasising a strong focus on the internal situation and not so much on the regional or European. The roles various actors play in the security discourse – with the government being the most prominent actor – are also very similar.

In conclusion, the two European regions are in many ways surprisingly similar, considering the many specific historical and political differences between them. These findings are important because they will feed into the policymaking process by establishing the representativeness and legitimacy of European security policies and their ability to account for the geo-political contexts and stakeholder perspectives across which they must navigate. From a European point of view, this might be seen as an opportunity since future European Security Strategies can better address shared security problems of both EU and (possible future) non-EU members.

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