ASSESSING COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY APPROACHES IN ACTION: AN INTRODUCTION

The broadening, deepening and widening of the security concept has been well rehearsed over the past three decades, both inside and outside of academia. It requires no repetition here how notions such as human security and societal security have enriched academic as well as policy discourses that previously evolved around national security. Whether as a symptom or as a result of this development, European governments now identify a broad range of interests beyond territorial and physical security in their national security strategies. The inclusion of social, cultural, economic and environmental concerns is the rule rather than the exception. In this context, it is bon ton amongst policy actors to assert that the plethora of complex security challenges faced by our societies can only be addressed within comprehensive security approaches.

The European Commission, as one of these actors, describes for instance in its April 2015 communication on the European Security Agenda “a shared approach for the EU and its Member States that is comprehensive, results-oriented and realistic,” and continues to use the term four more times. At the European level, the term ‘comprehensive approach’ typically refers to closer coordination and collaboration between agencies and member states, and is applied both with respect to internal and external policies. Amongst individual member states there is general agreement that a comprehensive security approach refers to bringing a broad range of policy instruments to address challenges in a coordinated manner, even if differences remain with respect to its actual operationalisation. The comprehensive security approach has thus captured the imagination of policymakers across Europe for quite some time. More recently, the track record of comprehensive security policies has been garnering increasing attention. Much of the attention has been dedicated to the design as well as the implementation of the comprehensive approach in external security policies, which many observers find to be flawed on both counts.

The current special issue seeks to contribute to the debate about the further development of the comprehensive security approach by shifting the focus towards its appli-
cation in an internal European context. It starts out with a critical reflection on the utility of the comprehensive security concept for policymakers followed by an eclectic collection of critical analyses and case studies of various aspects of comprehensive security, drawn from numerous European countries, including Bulgaria, Italy, Serbia and Turkey.

The papers vary considerably both in topical focus and methodological approach (which only reflects the inherent breadth of the subject under investigation), while many of them also share a number of key premises, five of which are worth listing here in the introduction.

1. While the provision of security remains a key task of states, a comprehensive security approach needs to involve citizens, both for reasons of effectiveness and legitimacy. The first paper by Iztok Prezelj raises doubts about the utility of comprehensive security for policymaking partially because of obstacles to its implementation in practice. The involvement and education of citizens in its implementation—while certainly not a panacea—may help overcome some of these obstacles.

2. Security concerns are dynamic rather than static. The constant feedback loop between security challenges and security concerns therefore requires security policies that are adaptive by design. Antoniya Todorova’s analysis of the evolution of the Kurdish question in the Turkish security discourse can be read in this context, and so can Nikolic’s paper about Serbian security perceptions and citizens’ motivations to serve in the armed forces.

3. Comprehensive security policies need to be multilayered and multifaceted, targeting not only material realities but also perceptions. Matteo Bonfanti and Francesca Capone illuminate the importance of such a multi-track approach in a case study of CBRN crisis management practices in eleven European countries.

4. Comprehensive security policies need to consciously integrate soft and hard approaches. Valeri Ratchev, Vesselin Petkov and Todor Tagarev take a closer look at this aspect in the case of Bulgaria.

5. Comprehensive security policies acknowledge that ethical and moral issues are inextricably intertwined with security and cannot be seen in isolation from one another. The paper by Francesca Vietti and Roberto Franzini Tibaldeo highlights the ethical and moral dimensions in their case study of Syrian asylum seekers.

Of course, each of the papers in this issue elaborates one or more of these five premises more fully, and each paper in its own way provides relevant insights for the further development of the comprehensive security approach.
This special issue has been conceived in the framework of the *Evolving Concepts of Security* project (EvoCS) funded by the European Commission. At the heart of the EvoCS project lies the conviction that security policies need to be both effective and considered legitimate in the eyes of stakeholders they are intended to serve. Within EvoCS, a multinational consortium of researchers therefore executed twelve comparative and comprehensive country case studies of prevailing security concerns across four European regions. The case studies not only mapped the salient security concerns and security challenges as perceived by different national stakeholders, but also looked at the principal actors and the levels of action, as well as the key ethical and human rights issues identified in these security discourses. The findings of the case studies are intended to ensure representative input of European security concerns to the evolving security agenda of the European Commission.

In the final contribution to this special issue, Daniela Lieberz scrutinises the results of the EvoCS project in a series of quantitative tests. She analyses the coding results from five of the twelve country studies and ascertains their statistical consistency. She reaches similar conclusions, but goes beyond the qualitative analysis undertaken within the EvoCS project, to cluster the ‘core values’ in what she defines as three ‘basic principles’ in studying security perceptions: freedom from want (linked to economic and environmental aspects); freedom from instability (linked to political, social and territorial aspects), and freedom from fear (linked to physical safety), the last one seemingly the most critical at the moment.

The study by Dr. Lieberz demonstrates the richness and the value of the raw data generated by EvoCS. Our intention is to provide the project-generated data to researchers interested to validate—or disprove—our findings or re-use it for other purposes. The further exploration of the EvoCS data-set will enhance the common knowledge and understanding of the evolving concepts of security across Europe.

We hope that you enjoy reading this special issue.

*The guest editors*

Tim Sweijs & Milos Jovanovic

**Notes**


13 More information on the findings and the method can be found on the EvoCS website at http://evocs-project.eu/.

The forthcoming Deliverable D9.1 will be publically available at http://dx.doi.org/10.11610/evocs.91 and interested readers will be able to compare findings as a result of qualitative and quantitative analysis.

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