

FORESEC - Europe's evolving security: drivers, trends and scenarios

Project summary – version 3, April 2008

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1 Background

The characteristics of the current security risks and challenges as laid out in the EU Security Strategy of 2003 are asymmetry, anonymity, the inability to limit them geographically, the connectedness of the threats, and the fact that they are blurring the boundaries between internal and external security. Geography has lost its function as security provider. High levels of interdependence imply that the impact of contemporary threats cannot be geographically contained. At the same time, the spread of information technology has greatly reduced the cost of exchanging information while increasing the access to available knowledge. Furthermore, the threats to European security are closely linked to one another. Internal and external security is overlapping to an increasing degree. For example, terrorists are both targeting EU member states and their interests within and beyond the borders of the union. At the same time, they use some EU countries as a base to plan operations throughout the world.

Global trends and threats have direct impact on European societies through, for example, illegal immigration, regional instability that spills across borders, or energy shortages causing economic vulnerability and instability, that can lead to radicalisation or social marginalisation. Unless these issues and their root causes are understood in a holistic manner it will be impossible for the EU and member state governments to properly address them with targeted policies.

Although the international security environment has diversified, the characteristics of the threats to European security should lead to a convergent response from EU member states as adaptation pressures for cooperation mount. In essence, asymmetry, anonymity, de-territorialisation, and inter-connectedness *could* be translated as meaning that all EU member states are affected by the contemporary threats to European security in more or less the same way. States are becoming increasingly unable to provide security on a national basis because of the nature of the threats and challenges they face, and the degree to which they find themselves inextricably bound with each other.

These developments underline the need to intensify co-operation between different sectors of national administrations and between different EU institutions and Directorate-Generals (DGs) within the European Commission. Traditionally security policy has been the prerogative of Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence but today justice and legal issues, environment, development co-operation, immigration etc. also play a strong role in the security field.

2 Objectives

The objective of FORESEC is to tie together the multiple threads of existing work on the future of European security in an attempt to provide a more cogent guidance, orientation and structure to all future security related research activities. It aims to enhance the common understanding of the complex global and societal nature of European security in order to pre-empt novel threats and capture technological opportunities. The project will, through a participatory foresight process, enhance the shared vision and facilitate the emergence of a coherent and holistic approach to current and future threats and challenges for European security. In particular, it will identify security responses in which there is particular added-value and shared interest to work at the European level. FORESEC builds a pan-European network around the European security foresight processes and helps foster a societal debate on European security and security research.

FORESEC will achieve this through the following specific means. It will:

- Establish the new norm for the field of forward looking assessments of European security issues,
- Create a systematic, participatory, medium-to-long-term vision-building process,
- Analyse the political contexts, trends and drivers for European security issues,
- Initiate a public debate on security research and its implications,
- Identify potential future threats and technological opportunities,
- Identify and examine ethical issues presented by security technologies,
- Formulate and evaluate holistic scenarios on particular threats, linking human rights, cultural and ethical aspects with the security technologies utilized to confront them,
- Prioritise what issues future efforts should concentrate upon,
- Recommend a new holistic concept of European security that is inclusive of state, societal and human strands,
- Link this work to other European and national security foresight projects and other security research projects,
- Make recommendations on further action in the context of European Security Research.

FORESEC will deepen the dialogue with society on security issues and nurture broad pan-European participation by including partners from both non-governmental organisations, but also new member states. The participatory process will involve representatives from European institutions, member states governments and administrations, NGOs and think tanks, public users, the private sector including SMEs as well as research institutes and universities.

FORESEC is targeted at providing critical policy support and advice for security researchers and decision-makers, including the forthcoming European Security Research and Innovation Forum (ESRIF), with view to providing recommendations in the medium- to long-term timeframe rather than the scanning of very distant horizons. Due to the nature of the support action it also produces results relevant for the broader security policy community and policy makers.

3 Methods

FORESEC will use participatory foresight methodology apt for the attainment of these goals and will engage in the systematic assessment of the information generated by the process to support this end. The foresight process will include:

- Scanning, with a view to exploiting relevant elements, previous pertinent work,
- Participatory methods: an e-platform for exchange and interaction among stakeholders and experts in between face-to-face meetings, Delphi studies and focus groups where expert and non-expert opinions on a specific issue are collected and analysed,
- Scenario analysis: the development of descriptions of possible future crisis situations in order to anticipate and prepare for potential future scenarios,
- Technology assessment: the analysis of technological opportunities on the horizon with a view to analysing their impact for use in policy-making contexts.

The project will analyse European security both in its global context and at societal level in European countries. Conventional wisdom suggests that the security environment is becoming increasingly complex and threats are becoming increasingly diffuse, a conclusion that leads to the view that cooperation will therefore become harder since as the environment evolves, the approaches to deal with this environment evolve as well. However, the opposite dynamic would seem to be at play when one considers the highly complex nature of the cross-border security challenges that exponentially increase the pressure to cooperate.

4 Results

The project delivers results that contribute to reducing security gaps by identifying knowledge gaps and uncertainties which remain to be addressed by scientific and socio-economic research and technological development.

The project contributes to improvements in security through impact and advice for policy makers in security policy, security research programme and researchers.

The products of FORESEC are:

- Reports (global and country reports, Delphi report, trend-assessment reports, drivers and threats, scenario descriptions and analysis, technological opportunities, and a final summary report),
- Interactive electronic web site,
- Vision-building and dissemination events,
- Increased interaction and involvement of the public as a stakeholder in the process.

These outcomes will be the result of a systematic process of reasoning concerning future developments that involves a large number of people from different sectors of society. These products can be widely disseminated and used as a source for decision making and strategy building by national and EU policy organisations.

Intangible outcomes that will emerge over the course of the foresight process are the following:

- Networking, i.e. creating, expanding and maintaining networks of people and organisations from different sectors working with security issues across Europe,
- The development of a consensus and a shared vision regarding the definition of European security and the major threats and challenges and how to respond to them by people from different sectors and institutions,
- Development of a foresight culture on European security by key people and organisations,
- Integration of Foresight results into the European Security Research Programme, policy programmes and the projects of national authorities, regional organisations and companies.

5 Consortium

The members of the consortium have a proven expertise and capability to initiate and sustain a European security related foresight process and manage multi-stakeholder policy processes. The consortium members have in-depth knowledge of foresight methodologies and European security as well as the European Security Research Programme; its aims and challenges and are therefore well-placed to facilitate a wider participatory foresight process aimed at bringing a broad societal perspective.

They key strengths of the consortium are:

- Experience and expertise in national, sectorial and regional foresight processes
- Thorough knowledge of European external and internal security and European and national security strategies
- Capacity to involve participants from governments, European institutions, civil society, private sector, academia through existing networks

The FORESEC consortium consists of six organisations from six European countries: Crisis Management Initiative (Finland), Austrian Research Centers System Research (Austria), the International Institute for Strategic Studies (the United Kingdom), the Swedish Defence Research Agency (Sweden), the Centre for Liberal Strategies (Bulgaria) and the Joint Research Centre (Italy). The project is funded by the European Commission under the 7th Framework Program.

6 Timeline

FORESEC is funded by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Programme. The timeline for the project is 22 months, with the starting date in February 2008.

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