Introduction to Configuration Management challenges inside microservices

So, what is this new challenge that we may face while building microservices?

This challenge is about configuration management inside the microservices.

So, to understand more about this challenge, let me try to pose some questions to you.

The very first question that I have for you is, inside microservices, how we are going to separate the

configurations or properties from your business logic, because without separating the configurations

and properties from your microservices business logic, you cannot reuse the same Docker image across multiple environments.

If you club all your business logic and configurations together, then for each environment you need

to create a separate Docker image along with the relevant properties or configurations.

Since it is not a recommended approach like generating the Docker image again and again for each environment, we need to make sure we are using the same Docker image for all type of environments, including the production.

With such requirements, how are we going to separate the configurations from the business logic?

So, this is the very first question that I have, in the similar lines how we are going to inject the configurations or properties at runtime that are needed by our microservices during the startup of the service, some of the sensitive properties like credentials, we cannot mention them inside any configurations or inside any business logic, such sensitive properties, or configurations.

We need to make sure we are injecting them into microservices during the startup of the service.

In the very similar lines, whenever we are dealing with the configurations or properties, we need

to make sure we are maintaining all these configurations or properties in a centralized repository along with the versioning of them.

Because inside monolithic applications you will be having only 1 or 2 applications and it is very easy

to maintain all your configurations wherever you want, whereas with hundreds of microservices it is

going to be super complex to maintain all the properties of all the microservices manually.

That is why when we are trying to build microservices, we need to make sure we are maintaining all the properties in a centralized repository along with the versioning of them.

So how we are going to achieve that?

So, we have all these challenges in terms of configuration management in microservices.

I will reveal the options that we have to overcome these challenges, for the configuration management in microservices, we have multiple solutions available inside the spring boot ecosystem, and these solutions are like right from very basic first approach, which is configuring Spring Boot itself with the relevant properties and the required profiles.

And the second approach is applying external configuration with the spring boot.

And the third approach is implementing a separate configuration server with the spring cloud config

server project.

So, these are the options that we have.

How Configurations work in Spring Boot

First let us try to understand what are the options that Spring boot framework is providing to handle

the challenge of configuration management in microservices.

The main problem that right now we have is, we want to externalize the properties for our microservices.

So that the same immutable code artifact can be used across different, different environments.

So, to handle these kinds of scenarios, we are trying to learn how to separate the configurations and

codebase and how to externalize the configurations from the codebase.

So, let us see if the Spring Boot is going to help us in externalizing our application properties.

Spring Boot lets you externalize your configuration so that you can work with the same application code in different, different environments.

You do not have to rebuild your application again and again.

There are different approaches that Spring Boot lets you follow to externalize the configuration sources, and these approaches include with the help of property files and Yaml files where you can define all the required configurations and properties that your application or microservice need during the startup of the service.

Apart from these property files and Yaml files, we can also inject the configurations or properties

during the startup of the service with the help of environment variables and command line arguments.

So, there are many approaches, so let us try to understand in detail about them.

By default, your spring boot application is going to look for the configurations or the properties

that you have mentioned inside the application.properties or inside the application.yaml file.

We are already using these inside our accounts, loans, and cards microservice where we have defined various properties inside the application.yml file and we place that inside the classpath location.

Apart from these default name, we can also have other property file names and we can make our spring boot to read from them during the startup of the application.

But if you try to mention the properties or configurations inside your property file, you are clubbing

everything along with the source code.

So, this approach may not work to a great extent.

That is why Spring Boot also supports other ways to override the default values that you have defined inside the application.properties file.

Maybe for development environment, you might have mentioned that default database credentials, but at runtime inside your QA deployment or production deployment, we want to override the default values like username, password, url details of database during the startup of the application.

That is why to overcome this challenge we can always override the properties with the other approaches like command line arguments, environment variables.

So here you may have a question like if I mention the same property in multiple locations, will there

be any preference or the priority that Spring Boot follows?

You can see here these are all the most used approaches to provide the configurations inside

your spring boot applications.

The very first one is you can mention your properties inside the files like application.properties or

application.yml.

So, whatever you mentioned inside these files, they will have the lowest priority or the lowest preference if the same property is mentioned with the help of operating system environmental variables, then the previous value which is mentioned inside the application.properties will be override and whatever value you have mentioned inside the environmental variables will be considered by the spring boot framework.

And very similarly, you can also mention the configurations or properties with the approaches like

Java System Properties, JNDI attributes servlet config, init parameters and command line arguments.

The way the priority works is, the lower items will be overriding the earlier ones, which means command line arguments is going to have highest priority.

Whereas the properties that you have mentioned inside the application.properties is going to have the lowest priority.

So please remember this priority and the order followed by the spring boot framework and this is going to be helpful for you inside your real projects.

Now we understand Spring Boot allows us to externalize our configurations by following all these approaches right from basic approach with the help of application.properties or Yaml file to command line arguments.

The next question that you may have here is, the properties are defined in some location or with some approach how to read those properties inside my business logic.

So, let us try to understand the same here again in Spring Boot.

To read the properties, there are multiple approaches.

I will try to present three commonly used approaches inside this course.

The very first approach is with the help of @Value annotation.

So, whenever you want to read a particular property, you can define a Java field inside your business

logic.

On top of that Java field, you can mention an annotation @Value along with the what is a

property key name.

Once you mention what is a property key name with the format like you can see on the screen, during the startup of your application, Spring Boot is going to look for this property inside all the places like application.properties environmental variables and command line arguments.

So, if the same property is defined in multiple places, then definitely it will follow the order of

priority and accordingly it will populate the property value inside this field.

Once we have the property value populated inside this field, you can use that anywhere inside your

methods or inside your business logic.

The next approach that we have is with the help of environment interface.

Many times, in real projects, many properties like sensitive information or sensitive credentials,

they will be configured with the help of environmental variables.

So, the server admins, they will create these operating system environmental variables during the creation of the server very first time.

Or they might have created some scripts which will create the environmental variables during the creation of the server.

So, the same scripts they will follow for all the servers.

This way any server that is coming inside your microservice network or the cloud native applications,

they will make sure all of them they have the same set of environmental variables along with the required values.

So, to read such environmental variables inside spring boots, there is an interface which is environment interface.

So, inside this environment interface it provides many methods to access properties from the applications environment, where your application is running.

So, wherever your application is running inside that server, if there are any environment properties

define those values you can access with the help of these environment interface.

So, wherever you want to read these environment properties inside your code, first you need to

autowire this environment interface to your class.

Post that inside any method where you want to read the property you can use getProperty() method available inside this interface and to this method you need to pass, what is the environment variable property name.

The next approach that we have is, with the help of @Configuration properties.

So, if you see the very first and second approach, there are two drawbacks.

The very first one is you are going to hardcode your property key name inside your Value annotation

or inside your Environment.getProperty() method and these methods there are only useful to read a

single property at a time.

If you have multiple properties, then you need to define multiple Java fields with the help @Value.

And similarly you need to invoke this getProperty() methods inside environment interface multiple times.

So, these one and two approaches we should use only if we have very few properties that we want to use.

But if you have many properties configured for your application, then using these third approach is

the most recommended approaches.

This way, using this approach, you can avoid hardcoding the property keys.

So, this approach is, with the help of the annotation at @Configuration properties.

How this approach is going to work is you need to define all your properties inside your property file

with a prefix value.

So, once we define all your properties with the same prefix value you need to use @Configuration

properties annotation on top of a Java class along with the what is a prefix value.

Once we mention this annotation on top of a class inside the class, you can create any number of fields along with the getters and setters, but please note that the field names and their return type has to be matched with what you have configured inside your application.property file or in any other location.

Reading configurations using @Value annotation

Reading configurations using Environment interface

Reading configurations using @ConfigurationProperties

Introduction to Spring Boot profiles

Demo of Spring Boot profiles inside accounts microservice

Externalizing configurations using command-line JVM & environment options

Activating the profile using command-line, JVM and environment options

Assignment to make Spring Boot profile changes inside loans & cards microservices

Demo of Spring Boot profile changes inside loans and cards microservices

Drawbacks of externalized configurations using Spring Boot alone

Introduction to Spring Cloud Config

Building Config Server using Spring Cloud Config

Reading configurations from the class path location of Config Server

Updating Accounts Microservice to read properties from Config Server

Updating Loans & Cards Microservice to read properties from Config Server

Reading configurations from a file systems location

Reading configurations from a GitHub repository

Encryption and Decryption of properties inside Config server

Refresh configurations at runtime using Spring Cloud Bus

Refresh config at runtime using Spring Cloud Bus & Spring Cloud Config monitor

Updating Docker compose file to adapt Config Server changes – Part 1

Introduction to Liveness and Readiness probes

Updating Docker compose file to adapt Config Server changes – Part 2

Optimizing Docker Compose file

Generating Docker images and pushing them into Docker Hub

Testing Config Server changes end to end using Docker compose & default profile

Preparing Docker Compose files for QA & prod profiles