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ARTICLE

Protecting the Union: Analysing an Emerging Policy Space

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ABSTRACT Recent organizational, institutional and policy developments signal a new type of co-operative policy activity at the European level and suggest the emergence of a new policy space in the European Union. What binds together the activities in that space is a common concern for the protection of the EU citizen. This new policy space crosses sectoral boundaries, draws in a number of governmental and societal actors, and comprises a variety of institutional venues. Moreover, its dimensions span the internal and external divide in EU policies. This article serves as an introduction to a special issue on the topic of the EU's emerging protection policy space. It first discusses the empirical parameters of this emerging space, before outlining a set of research questions and surveying the theoretical landscape for addressing these questions. It concludes by introducing the articles that comprise the special issue.

KEY WORDS: European Union, international organizations, civil protection, national security, crisis management, food safety, justice and home affairs, security and defence

Introduction

The history of European integration can be interpreted, in many respects, as a series of efforts to protect people from harm. In the early 1950s, the integration of coal and steel production took place with an eye towards stamping out inter-state violence on the continent. In the late 1950s, the creation of a common agricultural policy aimed at revitalizing a declining sector and safeguarding food supplies. The 1960s bore witness to a customs union and common market, intended to preserve and promote economic prosperity. Further integration in the 1980s and 1990s sought to stabilize and ensure

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vital resource–delivery systems, such as electricity provision, food supplies and water, while expanding the EU’s role in workplace safety, social equality and environmental accidents. Such efforts gave the EU a major, if implicit, role in protecting Europeans from risk and harm.

Today’s EU has turned its attention explicitly to such matters. Member states co–operate closely on public health threats, such as flu pandemics, and on the related issues of animal health and food safety. Disaster response co–operation followed in the wake of European forest fires and floods during the 1990s, leading to a ‘Community mechanism’ for co–ordination and resource sharing in 2001. Terrorist attacks prompted further efforts amongst EU member states to put in place counter–terrorism policies. Such policies range from critical infrastructure protection, to intelligence co–operation, to biological threat reduction. Protection policies also address threats that find their origins outside EU territory. The EU sends peacekeeping missions to foreign hotspots through the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), civil protection teams via the Community Mechanism, and leverages its humanitarian and economic policies to stabilize the ‘near abroad’. Complementing policy capacity with political commitment, the Solidarity Declaration pledges that member states will assist one another in the event of a terrorist attack, natural disaster or human–made catastrophe.

Viewed collectively, these developments signal a new type of co–operative policy activity at the European level and suggest the emergence of a new policy space in the EU. What binds together the activities in that space is a common concern with protecting Europeans from harm. The new space crosses sectoral boundaries, draws in a number of governmental and societal actors, and comprises a variety of institutional venues. Moreover, its dimensions span the internal and external divide in EU policies.

This newly emerging policy space reflects a qualitative change in the trajectory of European co–operation, with implications for practitioners and scholars alike. National officials responding to new threat environments, and heightened public expectations, must now engage with the benefits and challenges that European co–operation entails. Scholars must explain, characterize and assess the EU’s evolution in this area, which may require them to reconsider their theories.

The goal of this special issue is to explore the parameters of that emerging space, including the new sets of actors, rules and practices that comprise it. We are interested in the drivers behind the emergence of the space, its policy and structural characteristics, and the political and social dynamics that animate activities within it.

Three types of questions appear of particular interest and relevance. First, what does the emergence of this protection space mean for the basic identity of the EU? Secondly, how is this space organized? Thirdly, what are the effects or outcomes of this new policy space? The key question is, of course, whether Europeans feel safer as a result of this emerging protection policy space. All these questions speak to intriguing conceptual, organizational and practical debates that should attract a wide number of EU scholars.

Considering that this space is largely unexplored territory, a group of scholars have been invited to analyse developments from their respective areas of expertise. The contributions range from an overview of the complexity of modern threats (Antonio Missioli), to analyses of civil protection cooperation (Magnus Ekengren, Nina Matzén, Mark Rhinard and Monica Svantesson), civilian crisis management in the ESDP (Simon Duke and Hanna Ojanen), food and health safety (Javier Lezaun and Martijn Groenleer) and justice and home affairs policies (Jörg Monar). The concluding article extracts the common insights from these contributions and considers the theoretical implications of the findings.

This introductory article sets the context for the contributions that follow. The next section characterizes the defining features of that space and provides a brief overview of its empirical contours. The three major questions that structure our enquiry are then elaborated upon. The next section turns to a variety of theoretical perspectives that, put together, provide an analytical toolbox for better understanding this emerging space. The article concludes by introducing the chapters that make up this special issue.

Exploring a New Policy Space

A policy space is defined as an institutional field of actors, rules and practices associated with governmental efforts to address a particular category of social issues and problems (cf. Bourdieu 1990; Alink *et al.* 2001; Ekengren 2002). The concept of the policy space enables us to make an analytical distinction that can transcend the narrow, sectoral divisions typically imposed by government authorities for political or bureaucratic reasons.

The policy space under investigation here encompasses all the actors, rules and practices that relate to EU efforts to protect European citizens.¹ Protection can be defined as the endeavour to preserve human life in the face of both direct and indirect threats. Direct threats are exemplified by terrorist attacks, deadly diseases and extreme weather. Indirect threats represent a risk to the vital systems that sustain human life, such as water supplies, electricity provision, health systems and police service. The starting assumption is that activities taking place within the EU protection policy space are aimed mainly at so-called transboundary threats (those which outstrip national coping capacity). Empirical analysis may require reassessment of this assumption.

It is the focus on ‘protection’ — whether expressed in official utterances or not — that binds the actors, rules and practices in this space together and allows us to delimit them from other ‘social issues and problems’ upon which the EU focuses. This analytical approach prevents us from becoming trapped in a single sector; instead, it forces us to analyse EU activities across sectors.

The protection label also allows us to transcend the confusing terminologies used to describe different policies in day-to-day EU policy making. Some EU policies aim to improve ‘safety’, a term conventionally used to describe domestic questions about technological accidents, natural disasters

and other immediate threats to the well-being of citizens. Other EU policies seek greater 'security' for citizens, a term that traditionally related to territorial defence using military means. These concepts are blurring in both theory and practice (Sundelius 2005), thus proving less useful as descriptors of analytical boundaries. The terms 'crisis' and 'crisis management' would serve our analytical purposes well. In the EU, however, these terms are reserved for use in relation only to ESDP missions abroad.

The following subsection demonstrates the types of activities that fit into the emerging protection policy space. This overview is far from exhaustive, but affords the reader some indication of the parameters of this space. The subsequent articles in this special issue go into significantly more detail in specific areas.²

Protection Activities in the European Union

The earliest move towards an explicit policy focus took place within the field of civil protection. During the 1980s, a series of Italian forest fires raised the prospect of resource sharing through supranational mechanisms in case a disaster would outstrip the capacities of individual EU states. The Commission's Directorate-General for Environment, then headed by an Italian Commissioner, secured a Council Resolution in 1991 to begin working towards this goal (Council, July 1991).

The Maastricht Treaty (ArtsaQ 3, 152) marked a further shift as the role for the EU in public health matters, such as pandemics, was expanded. The EU's health strategy aims to provide 'added value' on issues such as cross-border health threats (Commission 2006), particularly in the area of influenzas. The rapid alert system for communicable diseases, which also functions as a quasi-decision platform, now ranks among the most developed protection initiatives in the EU (UK Health Protection Agency 2006).

After the 11 September 2001 attacks in the USA, the EU's civil protection capacities were strengthened, resulting in an enhanced mechanism for resource sharing and a broader perspective on what constitutes a threat to the Union and its citizens (adding terrorist attacks). A Monitoring and Information Center (MIC) was put on-line seven days a week to scan for and report on potential troubles. These resources are now envisaged for use inside and outside of Europe. During the past year, the EU has assisted citizens hit by the Asian tsunami, supported US authorities during the Katrina hurricane, co-ordinated forest-fire fighting efforts in Southern Europe and assisted flood-stricken towns in Central Europe and Algeria. Monitoring for potentially disastrous cross-border weather effects takes place at the EU's Joint Research Centre and EU Satellite Centre.

The US terror attacks, combined with the Madrid train bombings and London attacks, had another effect: internal threats rocketed up the EU agenda. Member states agreed to a joint arrest warrant, common rules regarding jurisdiction and prosecution, and an anti-terror unit. In addition, the role of Europol and Eurojust was expanded. A move is currently afoot to create a trans-European critical infrastructure protection programme to

safeguard vital services, such as energy, transport, information and food supplies. European leaders agreed to a 'Solidarity Fund', which aims to support recovery in EU countries that suffer from a disaster.

European experience with terror attacks and natural disasters prompted a convergence in how EU states approach mutual assistance. A major indication of this convergence is the 'solidarity declaration', agreed by member states in the aftermath of the Madrid terror bombings. Governments pledged to act jointly in the event of an attack, including the mobilization of civilian and military means to protect 'democratic institutions' and the 'civilian population' (Council, 2004a). The solidarity clause, which featured in the draft Constitutional Treaty, extended the solidarity approach to include not just terrorist attacks but also natural disasters (Art. 42). Moreover, it is hard to find conclusions of a European Council meeting, or a Commission response, without some call to make use of the "wide ranging instruments available" to improve security (Council, 2004b), for instance, or to encourage "a common response to emergency situations of different origins in an efficient and coordinated way" (Commission of the European Communities, April 2005).

The ESDP is also orientated towards 'protection', albeit from indirect and seemingly distant threats. Following conflagrations in the Balkans, the member states launched several initiatives — the EU's 'Petersburg Tasks' (1992), 'Headline Goals' (1999) and the 'Battle Groups' concept (2000) ranking among the most prominent — to facilitate joint military missions to global hotspots. Those capacities were soon complemented by civilian crisis management initiatives, focused on the need to deploy civil protection experts, police authorities, judicial advisors and civil administration officials to stabilize post-conflict or disaster situations abroad (Duke 2002). Humanitarian tools should also be considered here, as the EU is one of the world's largest donors of aid to developing and war-torn countries.

An incipient philosophy for these external security developments is found in the European Security Strategy (ESS) that was formulated in 2003. The ESS describes the envisaged role for the EU in enhancing global security. It spells out the EU's commitment to developing a range of tools needed to combat a variety of security threats in the world today, including failed states, terrorism and even global warming and disasters. Like the Solidarity Clause, the ESS explicitly links internal and external threats, civilian and military capacities, and natural and human-made disasters.

The commonality between all of these protection policies is underlined by institutional efforts to bring them together. A central network for rapid alert and communication — named ARGUS — is currently in place, while plans are underway for a Crisis Steering Group that will bring EU leaders together during crises. Greater attention is being placed on making the EU's multiple crisis units (currently dispersed through the EU's institutions) fully interoperable. The Commission's Secretariat-General, once the repository of fairly banal administrative responsibilities, looks set to take a stronger role in protection issues in the future.

The focus on protection captures a wide number of formal and informal activities with a 'dual use' character. Civil protection, for instance, is housed

in the environmental directorate of the Commission, but can be mobilized in the case of terrorist attacks either inside or outside the Union. Health security questions are divided between public health units and terrorism units. Civilian Response Teams are being proposed for external deployment abroad, yet contain some of the same personnel that member states use for internal disasters. This means that using traditional sectoral categories to study these developments is increasingly outmoded and nonsensical, which helps to explain why sector-orientated scholars have missed the emergence of this new policy space.

Key Questions

The emergence of a new policy space at the EU level should pique interest from a wide swath of the EU studies community. Some scholars will be interested in how these developments relate to prevailing concepts used to study the EU, while others may ask about the organizational aspects of this emerging space. Still others will want to investigate the policy implications of this new space and what it means for European citizens. Below are outlined three major questions that typify these general lines of enquiry.

The first question relates to the fundamental implications of this emerging policy space for the basic role of the EU, its identity as a multilateral governance community in Europe and the theoretical apparatus commonly applied to address this type of question. The empirics presented in this special issue speak to (and possibly challenge) prevailing concepts related to theorizing European integration and European security communities. Security theorists wrestle over how to conceptualize 'European security' and what role the EU plays in new forms of security. By exploring this emerging policy space, security theorists gain insights into what the EU deems worthy of protecting, with what means and under what rationale.

The second question asks how this emerging policy space is organized at the European level, viewed from a political and institutional perspective. Why does this space 'look' the way that it does? How is this space cross-cut by the institutions that structure European governance? What explains why some policy competences in this emerging space are supranational, while others remain the preserve of national responsibility? How does the EU's institutional pillar structure influence policy making? Does the role of the European Commission, as a key actor in policy making, matter to policy outcomes? How does policy expansion take place at all, considering the restrained pace that characterizes policy change within institutional constraints? What are the prospects for institutional change within this space? Such questions emphasize the institutional basis of what is taking place in this space and how such institutions influence the origin, policy developments and politics within this space.

The third question assesses whether the emergence of EU activities in this policy space will actually make people (feel) safer. In many respects, protection policy is a high-stakes game. The EU's movement into this area of policy (one in which it has been explicitly involved only recently) should be assessed

not only for capacity but also to understand the role the EU can, and should, play. In the same vein, another question is whether the EU is designed to participate effectively in protection activities. The question matters not only for Europeans struck by disasters and crises, but also for the general legitimacy of the EU as viewed in the eyes of the public.

These questions are not mutually exclusive. The EU's capacities to protect people from harm, for instance, surely impact upon its role as a security actor. Correspondingly, the institutional constraints within this emerging space not only influence the EU's capacities but also the direction the EU's identity might evolve in the future. Nor are these questions exhaustive. The ones brought up here are a mere selection of interesting, and indeed critical, lines of enquiry that that can be pursued through this rich vein of empirical evidence.

Theoretical Perspectives

A variety of theoretical perspectives can help begin answering the aforementioned questions. Three are selected here: one from the discipline of security studies, one regarding institutionalist analysis, and one related to crisis management. While each theoretical perspective brings more to bear on a particular type of question, each can also help to illuminate answers to other questions as well. In this respect, these perspectives complement one other, providing an analytical toolbox for making sense of what is taking place in this emerging policy space.

Security Studies

Scholars working in the field of security studies bring a select set of theoretical tools to the discussion. New concepts of what security means in today's world, and how it is 'practised' by governments, offer fresh perspectives on what is taking place in the EU.

Examining whether and how the EU's basic role and identity may be shifting requires an understanding of the shift in security thinking over the past two decades. The shift towards 'new' security thinking is based on a broadening of the definition of security along two dimensions. First, the number of perceived threats has broadened. External military aggression no longer seems the most pressing, or even the most dangerous, source of insecurity. Terrorism, infrastructure failure, extreme weather, intercultural strife, economic destitution, even computer viruses, have moved up the list of real dangers with potential to wreak havoc (Ullman 1983; Nye 1989; Buzan 1991; Waever *et al.* 1993). Secondly, the object requiring security broadened from the state and its national borders to include individuals, societies, or the critical systems that sustain life (McSweeney 1999; Buzan & Waever 2003; Sundelius 2005; Huysmans *et al.* 2006). New security theorists resurrected a classic (but neglected) definition of security, one that describes it simply and broadly as "the absence of threats to acquired values" (Wolfers 1952 in Baldwin 1997).

This broadening of the security definition implies that those responsible for securing societies have their work cut out for them. A host of policies, public and private actors, and a mix of military and civilian means must be brought to bear to ensure peoples' security. Traditional security communities, created on the basis of the mutual assurance that inter-state conflicts will be solved by peaceful means, serve a purpose but no longer cover the full range of threats. Nor can they mobilize the necessary capacities to protect individuals from harm.

Seen against this theoretical backdrop, the EU protection policy space reflects new security thinking in practice. The EU has shifted from an implicit to an explicit provider of security on the European continent (Ekengren 2007). Such thinking moves the EU from the periphery to the centre of security questions in Europe. Conventional approaches to security overlooked the EU because it was not a security organization *per se*, along the lines of NATO or the OSCE. Yet, the emergence of this new protection role in practice suggests a reconceptualization of the EU's security role on the continent.

Various theorists have already moved in this direction. For instance, Waeber (2000, 264) argued that the EU is "the most important security institution" in Europe because it serves as a peaceful integrating force and has prevented war. Adler & Barnett (1998) suggested that increasing transactions on security issues presage the development of a new type of security community in Europe. Kirchner (2006) has introduced the concept of EU security governance to capture the unique way the Union co-ordinates, manages and regulates key security functions (albeit only in their external manifestations). Ekengren (2007) thought that we might be witnessing a shift from a European security community to a "secure European community" based on expectations of mutual assistance in the protection of democratic institutions and the civilian population.

What these groundbreaking approaches to studying the EU as a security actor still lack, however, is robust empirics to give strength to their claims. This focus on the parameters of the emerging protection space can serve that purpose. New empirics reveal the actual practices that comprise the effort to secure society, across sectors and spanning the internal-external divide. As far back as the Chernobyl disaster, the local security implications of far-away disasters became painfully clear. Recent experiences in the Balkans in the 1990s, of the Madrid and London bombings in 2004 and 2005, respectively, and of failed states abroad, further emphasized that internal security is often dependent on external security and vice versa (Ekengren 2006). Reality, therefore, indicates a blurring of long-standing divisions and the increasing irrelevance of security concepts built on those divisions. This special issue can be used to confirm, or challenge, the realities of existing security theorizing.

Another way in which security perspectives can help make sense of this space is with a set of epistemological tools. One of the basic, still-debated questions in new security theory is how to delineate empirically between what is, and what is not, security as practised by modern governments. The question is hardly prosaic, because how security is defined has a great impact

on where and how one ‘searches’ for security threats and government responses.

One answer comes from the so-called Copenhagen School (Buzan *et al.* 1998; Buzan & Wæver 2003). This approach suggests that security is defined largely by what policy makers say it is; that is, how ‘subjectivist facts’ about threats drive discourses about fear and the need to take extraordinary action to combat those threats. According to this perspective, the existence of a security issue cannot be defined by the researcher deductively, before conducting empirical research on the ‘speech acts’ of political elites. Another answer, and one that is followed in studying the EU’s protection policy space, is to proceed by using both an objective definition (protection is defined as a key element of security) and subjectivist facts (what is taking place in practice and rhetoric is observed empirically). This strategy offers a middle-way approach, allowing adjustment and revision of the objective definition based on what empirical research reveals is taking place in this space. It also enables bridging of the objectivist–subjectivist divide that currently splits research approaches within security studies (see also Bigo 2000; Ekengren 2002; Huysmans *et al.* 2006).

A security studies perspective also sheds light on the organizational make-up of the EU’s protection policy space and illuminates the political processes by which certain issues and prioritized threats make it onto public agendas (Buzan *et al.* 1998). Modern security takes place in a variety of forums and at several different levels. Kirchner (2006), for instance, argued that international bodies, national authorities and even private firms make up a type of “security web” in Europe. Contacts within that web are not between hierarchical heads of organizations but in the form of horizontal, functional contacts taking place through networks. This suggests a research agenda of examining how the EU links to other levels, and other security organizations in Europe and beyond. Security theorists working in this vein would be quick to point out that co-ordination questions, institutional fragmentation and political manoeuvring all factor into the organization of security governance in Europe.

Finally, questions about the capacities of the EU to make Europe safer can be addressed with the insights from security studies. The new security approach not only warns of the variety of capacities required to secure societies, but also suggests the variety of means needed to deliver them (Sundelius 2005). Therefore, one should investigate a variety of administrative and policy locations within the EU to understand, and to assess, the full range of protection activities taking place that help to ‘secure’ Europe.

Institutionalism

Institutionalism, as a general approach to studying politics, can be subdivided into any number of variants, and includes many different concepts used to explain stability and change (Peters 1999; Pollack 2003). The common premise binding all approaches together is that political activities take place within an institutional context that shapes behaviour and

outcomes. Institutional perspectives tend to focus on the constraining features of political systems and policy processes; yet they also consider ways that actors pursue their interests under such constraints, and the way institutions might change.

Institutionalists can explain why new roles emerge for the EU, and through what mechanisms. For instance, the protection policies identified above can be attributed partly to the effect of external ‘shocks’ on institutional arrangements. Events such as terrorist attacks and extreme weather weaken political resistance to change, which can then lead to institutional change and new EU competences. Internal dynamics also play a role in this perspective. Institutionalists have built on the notion of ‘spillover’ to explain change. That is the logic by which integration in one sector leads to externalities, which, in turn, require further integration of another sector. The effect is an incremental build up of policy competences that may have not been expected or planned (Rosamond 2000). Institutionalists do acknowledge the potential of individuals to bring about change; they recognize that so-called policy or institutional ‘entrepreneurs’ can take advantage of their institutional position to maximize their influence.

Institutionalists can, perhaps, shed the most light on the organizational questions surrounding the EU’s role in protection. They offer a number of insights into why the EU’s protection policy space is organized in the way it is and how its structuring institutions influence outcomes. At the most abstract level, those insights stem from a general observation about the structure of the EU political system: it is a hybrid organization displaying features somewhere between an international organization and a state-like government. While the organization of politics in the EU flows from that basic feature, several more organizational aspects are emphasized by institutionalist scholars.

One such aspect is the relationship between supranational and national levels on issues of protection. The emergence of EU actor networks, rules and practices takes place against the backdrop of long-established national customs and domestic organizational structures. Institutionalists have examined processes of ‘Europeanization’, during which both the EU and national levels must react and adjust to policy developments on either side (Green Cowles *et al.* 2001; Featherstone & Radaelli 2003). On the one hand, ambitious EU initiatives, even in areas where European competences are extensive, can be blocked by domestic factors at the national level. Such factors include a lack of administrative capacity, bureaucratic politics, or perhaps an explicit desire to resist European encroachment. On the other hand, convergence in national policies related to protection can play into the hands of European initiatives, making it easier to co-ordinate and work as a co-operative whole (Mörth & Britz 2005).

Formal institutions at the European level play an additional constraining role on the emergence of a protection policy space. Even in policy areas into which EU legal competence extends, it does so to different degrees of depth. In agriculture, competition and external trade policies, the EU holds exclusive competences. Member states have agreed to ‘cast their lot’ with one

another, to adopt co-operative policies only and to give the Commission a strong role. In social policy, taxation and defence questions, supranational policy making takes place but is largely of a non-binding nature and the Commission is seen as a facilitator rather than a driver. This helps to explain why the emergence of the EU's activities in the protection policy space varies between sectors, with some policies highly developed and operational while others remain as partially formed ideas about what co-operation might entail.

The reluctance of member states to delegate a full range of competences to the EU level is reflected in the pillar structure of the EU governance system. In Pillar I, which contains internal market and other economic co-operation competences, the 'Community Method' of policy making predominates. The Commission initiates legislation, builds administrative capacity to manage programmes and oversees implementation. In Pillars II (comprising foreign and security policies) and III (including justice and home affairs issues), EU governments discuss matters co-operatively but in an intergovernmental fashion, retaining national vetos and excluding the Commission from participating fully. Each pillar has its own policy-making procedures and dynamics, making cross-pillar co-ordination difficult. The fact that the protection policies under examination in this special issue fall across legal divisions explains the fragmentation in this space and illustrates why widespread recognition of the policy space has been slow to emerge.

A focus on formal and informal institutions at the EU level serves to highlight that policy change is likely to follow a slow, constrained path. The question thus arises as to how this protection policy space could emerge at all. Institutionalists allude to external drivers that weaken institutional obstacles, but they also study the role of the Commission as an institutional entrepreneur (Cram 1993). The Commission leverages its role as an 'honest broker': compiling information and expertise, highlighting externalities and finding areas of mutual agreement amongst national governments that might otherwise reach deadlock. Moreover, the Commission uses its right of initiative on some policies to promote policy change.

The contribution of the EU to the safety of Europe may well depend on how European-level capacities are organized. An institutional perspective addresses questions regarding policy coherence, operational co-ordination and even implementation problems that typically bedevil European policies. Moreover, without understanding the unique structure of European governance, divided between national and supranational competences, assessment of the EU's role in protection would probably lack accuracy and nuance.

Crisis Management Research

Rarely have the insights of crisis research been applied to the EU. Conventionally, crisis research focuses on national-level administrations, firms and the media to examine the ways in which authorities manage urgent, mostly unexpected threats to social groups and the critical systems that sustain them. The emergence of protection policies at the EU level, however, suggests

the utility of a crisis management perspective on events taking place at the supranational level (Boin *et al.* 2005).

Crisis researchers focus on the complexity of modern societies and the tight interlinkages between the many critical systems, which make it virtually impossible to prevent every small breakdown from escalating through the system. While it is certainly possible, even required one might argue, to fix known error paths, this perspective helps in understanding that new error paths will continue to arise (in some cases as a direct consequence of these prevention efforts) (Perrow 1999).

Crisis researchers have much to say about the EU's role in fostering growing interdependencies and, in effect, growing risks. The Single Market Program, for instance, has contributed to tying Europe together in a number of ways: through more efficient transportation, through increased trade and through common regulations on utilities. Policy makers recognize the 'negative externalities' that accompany such efforts and have attempted to address those concerns. This begins to explain why the EU has moved into these types of policies, but it also explains how they are organized. Crisis researchers point out the potential risks within a diverse number of different sectors, ranging from agriculture to currency union. Almost every sector in the EU now addresses risks related to the activities in that area, thus adding to the build up of protection capacity across the EU's policy competences.

To explore whether the EU's protection policies are contributing to making Europe safer, crisis research offers a variety of tools. Crisis researchers have learned much about the capacities of governments to deal with crises by studying patterns and pathologies of crisis management (Rosenthal *et al.* 2001). From that research, an analytical framework has emerged that is useful for assessing government capacities in any system. This framework assesses the policies and activities that together comprise crisis management along four dimensions.

Prevention refers to those activities that aim to identify and stop disturbances and disruptions before they escalate into a full-blown crisis. Policies linked to monitoring trends and deviations, along with the capacity to make sense of emerging problems and communicate early warnings promptly and authoritatively, are critical here. As recent crises have demonstrated once again, this is incredibly hard to accomplish (even if it seems rather simple in hindsight). For a wide variety of reasons, governmental bureaucracies often seem unable to interpret signals of impending disasters correctly; they appear equally ineffective when it comes to transmitting these warnings in a timely fashion to the right people (Parker & Stern 2002).

Preparation refers to the efforts aimed at mobilizing society to think about and make plans for a possible crisis. Reacting quickly, and effectively, to a threat can mean the difference between an 'event' and a 'disaster'. Preparation relies heavily on the type of governance system in operation, its ability to bring key actors together, to direct officials towards a common task and to instil an understanding of the difficulties crisis may bring. That includes configuring authority structures for a time of crisis, identifying key threats and vulnerabilities across society and, in discussions that bring up fundamental value

questions, deciding what is worthy of being ‘secured’ in society. A key issue remains the impossibility of predicting the next crisis: governments must prepare for the unknown, which does not come easily for bureaucratic organizations designed to address routine problems.

The **response** phase tends to attract most critical attention, as it is commonly assumed that crisis decisions and crisis decision makers can and should make a difference once a crisis has materialized. The research into real-life crises does not validate this premise. In fact, the findings demonstrate that the many pitfalls and constraints operating on crisis managers render their efforts much less effective than one would like to think. Crisis managers wrestle with long chains of command, the impossibilities of network co-ordination, the frustrations of communication and the perennial difficulties of gleaning information from raw data. The crisis research community often ends up praising the resilience of individuals, local societies and grass root networks — but how these findings should be translated into practice is not always clear.

When it comes to the **aftermath** of crisis, three types of activities are relevant. First, governments generally seek to restore a sense of order. Secondly, government leaders typically become subject to politically charged accountability processes (Brändström & Kuipers 2003). Thirdly, governments may seek to learn lessons from the incident, which can inform prevention efforts. Each of these activities is hideously complex, transforming aftermath management in something akin to an “impossible job” (Boin & ‘t Hart 2003).

These four dimensions structure efforts aimed at assessing whether the EU’s emerging protection space is, indeed, making Europe safer. Yet it also reveals the extent to which the EU is involved in certain ways and even suggests what role the EU could, and should, play in European-wide protection activities. A crisis management perspective reminds us that government responses to crises, and how those responses are communicated to the public, have a strong bearing on the perceived legitimacy of governance systems.

Conclusions

This special issue studies the emerging EU policy space related to the protection of European citizens and the critical systems that sustain them. The aim is to sketch out its empirical parameters, explain its developments and underlying political dynamics and assess its theoretical implications. To this end, a variety of literatures is employed, including those found in security studies, crisis management and institutionalism. The findings should inform debates taking place in each of these literatures while shedding new light on the opportunities and challenges of protection policies within the EU’s boundaries. In addition, they should stoke the growing debate about the role of the EU in protecting its citizens.

The articles that follow take up these issues and provide a first pass through what is, to a large extent, new terrain. Given the exploratory nature of this endeavour, methods have not been dictated nor has there been insistence on coverage of all the theoretical angles. The choice has been made to

set out in this introductory article an ambitious agenda in order to abet future research, while allowing the articles in this issue to explore various dimensions of safety and security in ways that contribute to intellectual foundation building. The special issue thus represents a beginning rather than a conclusion of a fruitful research agenda.

Contributions

The contribution by Missiroli places the threats to individuals, European and otherwise, into historical context. He reminds us that many of the threats identified with the modern age — environmental disasters, overpopulation and pandemics — have long afflicted societies around the globe. Over the centuries, governments have responded in different ways and with different degrees of success. Missiroli argues that the threats faced today require collective action, given their scale and potential devastation. This has prompted the EU into action, Missiroli shows, since the need for ‘solidarity’ arises so dramatically when disaster hits. Whether or not solidarity — as expression of both shared values and shared interests — will drive an EU role forward requires further study.

Lezaun & Groenleer move towards the analysis of a particular competence in the EU’s protection policy space: food safety. The EU’s role in this area is linked directly to the creation of the Single Market. Animal-borne diseases and food safety issues in one country can no longer be isolated in ways they once were. The authors examine how the EU institutions responded to three food safety emergencies: the BSE crisis of 1996, the dioxin contamination scandal of 1999 and the unauthorized release of a genetically modified organism in 2005. All three cases reveal how the EU bolstered its role in protection through institutional ‘learning’, but show that the EU’s practical ability to monitor and control risks throughout its territory is limited fundamentally.

The EU’s civil protection capacities are the focus of the article by Ekengren, Matzén, Rhinard & Svantesson. Following virtually every major crisis involving the EU, the civil protection role of the EU has expanded, as has its more general commitment to co-operation through such agreements as the ‘solidarity declaration’. This article examines two uses of the civil protection mechanism: the 2002 flooding in Central Europe and the 2005 Asian Tsunami. Each case provides a window into the EU’s protection role in practice and offers, as the authors argue, indications of an enduring tension between sovereignty and solidarity in civil protection co-operation.

Duke & Ojanen examine a much-heralded role for the EU in crises abroad: the ability to intervene in disasters and post-conflict situations through the ESDP. The rapid build up of civilian crisis management tools for use abroad, for instance, has been held up as a success of the EU. At the same time, the development of internal capacities for ‘domestic’ crises has been slower and more contested by governments. Duke & Ojanen thus use ESDP as an entry point for asking an intriguing question: what is the potential for convergence between the EU’s external and internal crisis management

capacities? After examining the strong forces of divergence against such a proposition, the authors identify several areas in which lessons from ESDP might apply to internal matters.

Monar analyses recent developments in 'Justice and Home Affairs', an issue area that occupies a central place in the EU's emerging protection policy space. After documenting the rapid pace of developments, and the rhetorical creation of an 'Area of Freedom, Justice, and Security' in recent years, Monar identifies a number of obstacles to further EU co-operation in this area. Such obstacles include conceptual confusion over the goal of co-operation, complications over information sharing and the incremental nature of policy making. Those obstacles, according to the author, explain why co-operation in this area consists largely of communication co-operation and information exchange, rather than the building of shared governance structures. Not only does this trajectory say much about the role and identity of the EU in these matters, but also how the protection space will remain organized in the years to come.

The editors conclude the special issue by extracting the insights of the contributions and presenting preliminary answers to the questions posed in the introduction. They then sketch out a research agenda not only for conducting further empirical research, but also for reassessing some of the predominant concepts used to characterize the EU in several domains. The special issue thus concludes with a call for a more concerted effort to uncover new empirics, to ask new questions and to bring theories to bear in new and unique ways on this emerging policy space.

Notes

1. The use of the term 'European citizen' serves an analytical purpose and in no way reflects a normative position. Indeed, non-nationals in Europe may be the most vulnerable to threats; they often suffer from poorer socio-economic conditions and lack access to public services. The European citizen term includes those individuals living on the European continent, as well as Europeans residing in various parts of the world. The nuance of this definition is reflected in the actual crises that have implicated the EU: the terror attacks impacting upon the immigrant population in Madrid, as well as the Asian tsunami killing European vacationers abroad. In short, 'European citizen' is used as the referent object of protection in order to avoid an overly expansive definition. Further empirical research may reveal that this definition is, in fact, too narrow and requires revising.
2. It is appreciated that the parameters of this space may shift, expand or even contract, on the basis of further empirical research. For this reason, an overly strict definition of the space is not enforced, but a mixture of continuous observation and decoding is encouraged. This helps balance a deductive and inductive research design. For a similar approach, see Jørgensen (1997) and Mörth (2003).

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