The European Union's Emerging Protection Space: Next Steps for Research and Practice

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The European Union's Emerging Protection Space: Next Steps for Research and Practice

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ABSTRACT The European Union is making explicit moves towards protecting European citizens from threats. Those threats are no longer just military in nature, nor do they stem from well–defined sources. Today's threat environment includes terrorist networks, new pathogens, critical infrastructure breakdowns, extreme weather and illegal immigration, to name only a few. Just as importantly, those threats cross sectors and countries without difficulty. The EU's role in helping to combat those threats — and protecting European citizens from harm — is clear and growing. This concluding article of the special issue discusses the implications of this new policy space for theory and practice and highlights several areas in which future research can further enlighten understanding of European cooperation in this critical area.

KEY WORDS: European Union, international organizations, protection, security, crisis management, European Union countries

Introduction

Many motives drove European integration efforts in the 1950s, but few were advocated as passionately as the desire to prevent inter–state bloodshed. Even the toughest of early negotiations could be softened by stirring sentiment about the importance of protecting European citizens from the ravages of war (Noel 1971). The success of the 'European project' in subsequent years satisfied that fundamental goal, but it also meant that protecting citizens was downplayed as a central rationale for European cooperation.

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Recent policy developments, however, suggest that protecting European citizens is back on the EU's agenda. Cooperation in health security, counter–terrorism, disaster management, food safety, external security missions and infrastructure protection reveals a renewed concern for the well–being of European citizens. European leaders regularly refer to 'solidarity' in the face of new dangers and threats, and many see the EU as instrumental to a safer Europe. The EU seems to have found a new enthusiasm for pursuing a classic goal of European cooperation.

This article concludes a special issue in which contributors were invited to explore this development. Antonio Missiroli examined the historical trend of disasters in Europe and the wider world. Javier Lezaun & Martijn Groenleer explored the EU's role in food safety and its ability to manage such risks throughout its territory. Magnus Ekengren, Nina Matzén, Mark Rhinard & Monica Svantesson assessed the tension between solidarity and sovereignty concerns in the EU's civil protection cooperation. Simon Duke & Hanna Ojanen explored the link between internal and external security as manifest in the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Jörg Monar outlined critical challenges to recent developments in the EU's "area of freedom, justice, and security".

In the introductory article of this special issue, it was argued that these activities comprise an emerging 'protection policy space' in the EU. Within that space, new sets of actors, rules and practices are bound together by a common concern with preserving human life in the face of direct and indirect threats. The emergence of that space throws up a number of intriguing questions, three of which were addressed in this special issue. What does this new space mean for the basic role and identity of the Union? How is that new space organized and to what effect? What does the emergence of this space say about the EU's ability to make Europeans safer in both perception and reality?

Returning to these questions, this article not only offers some preliminary answers but also assesses what those answers imply for theory and practice. It begins by evaluating the argument about an emerging protection policy space in light of the empirical insights provided by the contributors to this special issue (section two). The main questions raised in the introduction are then addressed and their implications for ongoing work in each of the three literatures is discussed (sections three, four and five). The final section outlines a future agenda for what is hoped will become a promising area of scholarship in European integration studies and beyond (section six).

New Evidence of a New Policy Space

The argument for an emerging policy space at the European level is provocative, not least because it seems incongruous with recent events. Many observers feel that the 'European project' has suffered a number of setbacks, from the failed Constitutional Treaty referenda in France and The Netherlands to the deep divisions amongst EU members over the invasion of Iraq. Worries over institutional problems caused by expanded membership and

the uncertainties over future enlargement contrast with the heady days of the early 1990s when one cooperative project seemed to spill over into another.

Some of the most interesting developments in integration, however, may occur during times when it is least expected (Caporaso & Keeler 1995). Through good times and bad, the European policy machinery continues to function. National officials still engage in the process, the Commission continues to elaborate new proposals, and real–life 'shocks' (in this case, attacks, crises and disasters) push even the most reluctant European governments into cooperative discussions in new policy areas.[1]

This drawing of a new policy space at the EU level reveals just such a development. By using 'protection' as a category to investigate policy activities, light is shed on the commonalities amongst activities taking place in dispersed locations across the EU's legal pillars and bureaucracy. Establishing a new category of European policy making allows removal of the narrow blinkers that often obscure the view of the interconnections and full range of EU policy activities.

The contributions within this special issue suggest that the idea of an emerging 'protection' policy space has empirical validity. Across the sectors, policies focused on protecting individuals feature highly on day–to–day work agendas. Civil protection is one such area. Ekengren *et al.* show that Commission administrators explicitly focus on building operational capacity to protect people, property and the environment. In that area, the ideal of 'solidarity' increasingly forms a rationale for further cooperation. In food safety and human health, new rapid alert systems join existing regulatory frameworks for improving citizens' access to safe foods and for preventing the outbreak of diseases such as BSE and avian influenza. Such initiatives take place alongside efforts to facilitate coordination of national capabilities, which include prevention activities and preparedness efforts. As Lezaun & Groenleer point out, the EU plays a coordinating role as much as, or even more than, a legislative role. In the area of justice and home affairs, policies similarly focus on protecting people from such threats as cross–border crime, illegal immigration, weapons of mass destruction, bioterrorism and dangerous explosives.

Even in European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), the focus on protection is apparent. ESDP missions, both military and civilian, are cloaked in rhetoric regarding the "external dimension of internal security". Duke & Ojanen show that not only European citizens are better protected by EU capacities to deploy missions; third–country nationals also benefit from the stabilizing, peacemaking and rebuilding capabilities that ESDP seeks to provide. Whereas conventional approaches to ESDP treat it as 'something different' from the rest of Community policy making, there are indeed bridges between the external dimension of ESDP and the internal goals of protection. One such bridge is ideational: the European Security Strategy (ESS) sets out a number of threats for the EU (which span the internal and external divide) and calls for a comprehensive approach to making Europeans more secure. The Council's Joint Situation Centre (Sit–Cen) is now responsible for external and internal intelligence and crisis management responsibilities.

Two other findings from the contributions suggest that the argument regarding this emerging space is consistent with empirical trends. First, European officials are concerned increasingly with how to draw together capacities across the sectors. The perceived need to create procedures for urgent decision making at the European level explains the recently adopted Emergency and Crisis Coordination Arrangements. The ARGUS system, similarly, aims to link the Commission's various early alert and crisis communication systems.

Secondly, a number of articles referred to an external trend with bearing on the validity of this space. The European public seems to expect an EU role in preparing for internal emergencies, external disasters and 'protecting' citizens in general. Monar suggests that public demands have helped to drive governments towards further cooperation and that protection activities in justice and home affairs are now seen as an important step in bringing the EU closer to its citizens. In other words, the EU's role in safeguarding citizens across its sectors may very well enhance its public legitimacy.

In sum, the contributions to this special issue largely confirm the premise of an emerging policy space at the European level. Now that the empirical terrain of that space has been illuminated, some thoughts on how to characterize this space are in order.

It has been argued that the 'EU citizen' is the core object of EU protection activities. Yet, the empirical evidence reveals a number of additional 'referent objects'. The individual, property, the environment, democratic institutions, core values and critical infrastructure all feature as referent objects in various declarations and policy objectives of the EU. Moreover, the number of perceived threats appears to be quite broad, from toxic food products to cross–border crime, failed states and terrorism.

Sundelius (2005) thus argued that "societal functions" is a good characterization of modern society's security object. This concept comprises a society's ability to govern (the preservation of democratic values and accountability) and to function (the preservation of critical systems). This issue will be revisited in future research.

In the introduction to this special issue, a number of questions raised by the emerging protection policy space were outlined. Those questions were related to the role and identity of the EU, the organizational implications of this emerging space and the EU's ability to make Europe safer. We will now return to those questions and their implications for research and practice.

Implications for the EU's Identity

The articles in this special issue support the argument that the EU's role as a supranational organization is shifting. New threats have prompted a focus on protecting EU citizens and the systems that sustain them. Complex interlinkages in Europe — including economic relations, food systems and travel links — raise the importance of using new means to combat the threats exacerbated by those links. It is worth pointing out that the EU itself is precisely

one of those 'new means'. No longer is security and protection the sole preserve of purpose–built organizations such as NATO. Nor, from this perspective, is 'security' just about managing threats external to the EU's boundaries. Focusing on the protection space expands (and blurs) the boundaries of what has traditionally comprised security practice and policy in Europe. A number of implications follow from this approach.

First, the emerging space confirms the transformation of the EU from a passive to an active security actor. A standard approach of security scholars is to treat the EU as a 'partial' security provider. Kirchner (2006), for instance, shows the EU is moving towards an active role as an **external** security provider. The findings in this special issue show that this role extends to **internal** security matters, in the broader protection sense. Waever (2000) referred to an internal European security area but largely in reference to the EU's cessation of inter–state hostilities. He referred to the EU as perhaps the most important security organization in Europe, owing to its general role in ensuring peace. This special issue provides solid empirical evidence by which to evaluate the 'new' security identity of the European Union with more precision.

The epistemological balance struck in this special issue has implications for how one understands security in the EU context. Two approaches can guide the search for security issues and resources in any governance system. The first applies objectivist criteria by which to measure security and is used deductively to guide research. A second allows 'security' to materialize inductively, through observation of what practitioners say and do. A middle path was followed here, where the notion of protection becomes the guide by which EU activities can be measured empirically. 'Practices', i.e. actual policies and capacities, were focused on, rather than rhetoric and processes of politicization as indicators of security in the EU context. Future research on the EU could use a similar approach, one that reveals new 'social facts' without relying completely on subjectivist enquiry.

Secondly, the findings in this special issue inform the ongoing debate over the deepening of a 'European security community'. Several decades ago, Deutsch and his students predicted the emergence of a regional, state–based security order in Europe (Deutsch 1957; Adler & Barnett 1998). That order has not materialized, meaning that scholars have had to reconceptualize what security communities mean in modern times. The articles in this special issue provide evidence of a new transnational, or 'extra national', security community (Ekengren *et al*. 2006). Capacity has emerged not in response to known military threats, but to complex, transboundary threats hastened by the growing interconnectedness of societies. From terrorism to pandemics, the EU's activism places it in a new category of security community, which has been identified elsewhere as a "secure European community" (Ekengren 2007). The empirics in this special issue serve to elaborate that concept further and to provide indicators of the extent to which a new type of security community might be arising.

Thirdly, the way in which a European protection policy space is identified opens up new ways of understanding European security. Using 'protection'

as the research focus provides new categories and parameters for research that can span, rather than be 'trapped' in, official policy divisions. Conventional research on European security focuses on external issues only, namely those related to the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). A concern amongst some EU scholars is that CFSP studies tend to be empiricist, cataloguing policy and institutional developments. Many scholars are unsure which theories to apply to this particular sector: neither theories based on national defence nor foreign policy approaches seem to fit. The risk of theoretical incoherence has resulted in a call to "get out of the CFSP ghetto" by drawing upon other theoretical frameworks (Jørgensen 1999, 2004) and by linking EU security to other concepts. A motivation of this special issue was to bring new and different understandings of security into the study of the EU by drawing upon theories from adjacent fields. The next section outlines some additional theoretical candidates, which might help to conceptualize the EU in this respect.

Finally, the EU's activities in protection offer new insights into the scholarly question about whether the EU should be treated as an 'actor' or an 'arena' in the provision of security (Bretherton & Vogler 2006). In some policy areas, especially those related to external matters, the EU operates as an agent of its collective members. In other areas, the EU is an arena, or a platform, through which its members coordinate their own policies. The findings of this special issue suggest that the EU plays a dual role in regards to protection, sometimes acting as an actor (see article by Duke & Ojanen) while other times providing the arena (see articles by Monar and Lezaun & Groenleer). In the case of civil protection (see article by Ekengren *et al.*), both roles are apparent. This special issue has thus heightened the importance of finding theoretical frameworks for understanding the EU's identity that can account for both the 'EU as actor' and the 'EU as structure'. For the time being, however, the protection role of the EU appears to give the EU an active security role while not transforming it totally into a security actor.

The Organization of the Policy Space: Implications for Practice and Theory

In the EU's emerging protection policy space, competences are split unevenly between national and supranational levels. Actors, policies and practices are fragmented across the EU's bureaucracy and legal pillars. Policy activities are driven by different political dynamics, with member states playing a stronger role in some activities than others. Such findings serve as a sober warning to those reading too much into the EU's role as an 'autonomous' protection policy actor. The development of future capacities, as well the effectiveness of the EU to manage crises and protect citizens, will be affected by national–supranational tensions and bureaucratic fragmentation.

None of this will surprise scholars using institutionalist approaches to study the EU. The Union, described by former Commission President Jacques Delors as an "unidentifiable political object", is positioned halfway between a domestic–like policy–making system and a forum for transnational cooperation. In areas related to the internal market, EU member states have been

willing to cede authority to supranational bodies. In other areas, such as security and defence, EU states work together in European forums, but rarely delegate legislative authority to those same bodies. For the policy areas in between the two extremes, including health policy, infrastructure protection and civil protection, European–level competences fluctuate dramatically based on different legal bases.

This fluctuation breeds considerable uncertainty. There is, for instance, no consensus as to the EU's role in such areas as justice and home affairs. As Monar pointed out, immigration policies and police cooperation have followed a halting path owing to political disagreements. Some member states, together with the Commission, argue for greater European–level co-ordination. Other member states insist the EU should remain a forum for information exchange and rapid communication. As Ekengren *et al.* show in their study of civil protection, member states recognize the need to cooperate, but still reserve most operational powers for themselves. The overall effect is that the EU's role differs (and is often contested) across areas of the emerging policy space. This may not be apparent from a public perspective, however, meaning that calls for more comprehensive EU action must be reconciled with political and legal realities.

Institutional Constraints and Opportunities

The ability of the EU to make Europe safer may be constrained by these institutional uncertainties. Lezaun & Groenleer show that EU competences are extensive in food safety and animal welfare, although limited in public health. When potential threats conveniently stay within a particular sector, such a difference is not consequential. Yet when an animal disease threatens to mutate into a human pandemic, the EU finds itself in an awkward position. The intensity of European cooperation changes, certain instruments and policy tools become impossible to use and the balance of decision authority shifts between EU and national levels. Such changes could be beneficial, of course; the nature of some crises and disasters may require flexibility and responses at different levels. The point here, however, is that these changes are institutionally imposed irrespective of the needs of crisis management.

Several articles in the special issue highlighted the important role of the Commission in generating change. The Commission's position within the EU's institutional structure gives it leverage to use external events, for instance, to propose new policy changes. The September 11 attacks in the USA led EU member states to call for new policies to combat terrorism.[2] The Commission responded with a particular set of initiatives, many of which proposed an expansion of existing competences such as civil protection. The Commission has also campaigned, with the help of several Southern European member states, for additional resources for rapid reaction teams to combat natural disasters. These findings act as a reminder that the Commission serves as an important mediator between member state 'problems' and European 'answers'.

Several articles in this special issue highlight the role of terror attacks (such as September 11, Madrid and London), natural disasters (including heat waves, forest fires and the Asian tsunami) and the threat of pandemics as key drivers behind the increased EU activities. Such events smooth the path for policy change. Monar, together with Duke & Ojanen, illustrates the attention now placed on justice and home affairs cooperation and ESDP, respectively, owing to a changing security environment. These events can also provoke institutional change. For instance, the attacks on London in 2005 coincided with the UK Presidency of the EU. The UK government then lent its political weight to efforts to build a common decision platform for the EU during times of crisis, termed the Emergency and Crisis Coordination Arrangements. That resulted in a significant cross–sector institutional change that has gone largely unnoticed by scholars.

Adapting to 'Brussels'

Another finding common to several articles in this special issue is the importance of the link between European–level cooperation and national–level capacities. Member states can agree in Brussels to new actions and policies, but if national administrations are either unprepared or unwilling to follow through, cooperation in practice will suffer. This finding points to several preconditions for collective action; an important one is the institutional linkages between supranational and national agencies. EU policies often require (formally or informally) national administrations to make adjustments to European 'demands'. This is the premise of 'Europeanization' research: understanding the impact of the EU requires examining how national administrations change because of European politics and policies.

The EU's move into protection policy activities opens up a whole new area in which to study Europeanization. The contributions to this special issue provide intriguing insights about national reactions to 'Brussels'. In the area of food safety, the EU's ability to enforce compliance to European rules is limited. The Commission must encourage food safety reforms, administrative adjustments and peer pressure in lieu of sanctions. Lezaun & Groenleer demonstrate persuasively that this leads to a 'spotty' record of European influence on the ground. Efforts to ramp–up European food safety and public health measures will need to reconcile ambitions with this reality. Monar uncovers a similar finding: that for all the 'talk' about justice and home affairs cooperation, the ability and willingness of national governments to cooperate may hold back common policies. For ESDP, member state military organizations have been busy adjusting to new European command structures for external missions; Duke & Ojanen demonstrate the same holds for civilian crisis management missions, for which member states are unaccustomed to sending judicial or police personnel abroad.

Europeanization not only describes 'downward' influence, however. Several studies in this special issue show that national governments attempt to 'upload' their own preferred policies into supranational proposals. Such governments resist new EU initiatives if they portend difficult changes to

existing national programmes and rules, and instead band together to offer alternative solutions. Ekengren *et al*. show that in the area of civil protection, member states tend to reject Commission ideas about standing European forces in favour of national 'modules' of officials and equipment that can be deployed during a disaster. This suggests that 'Europeanization' can lead to policy and institutional change both at national and at supranational levels.

The organizational features of the EU clearly impact upon the emerging protection policy space; they explain why this new space is so fragmented, unevenly developed and driven by different political dynamics. At the same time, the contributions to this special issue show that the EU's participation in protection policies has forced a change in some of those same organizational features. Poor coordination in the civilian and military dimensions of ESDP missions led to new institutional bodies such as the Civilian–Military planning unit in the Council Secretariat (discussed in the article by Duke & Ojanen). The need to identify all of the EU's disaster and crisis management capacities has led to an operational 'handbook' for crises. And the need to make urgent, decisive decisions when a crisis hits has fuelled the creation of a crisis platform and steering group across the EU's fragmented pillars. This confirms that institutions shape policy change but can themselves be changed by certain pressures. The perceived need to manage complex, transboundary crises in a complicated institutional environment may very well be one of those pressures.

The contributions to this special issue reveal the effect of institutions on this emerging space (and vice versa). But what do they say about the 'staying power' of institutional change and the degree to which new rules, both formal and informal, will become institutionalized in the EU policy setting?[3] In general, there has rarely been a 'roll back' in European policy and practices. Yet the contributions of this special issue suggest that in many respects EU protection activities are only lightly institutionalized. For instance, cooperation occurs largely on a voluntary, rather than legal, basis. The organizational and bureaucratic sites of protection policy making in Brussels are fairly undeveloped, while policy activities are poorly funded. Such features hint at a lack of 'deeply rooted' institutions in the EU's protection policy space.

Implications for Protection

Whether or not Europe is 'safer' as the result of the EU's emerging protection policy space is a key question that bears most strongly on the EU's public legitimacy, not only in terms of its role as a 'protection actor' but also as a supranational governance system in general. Many of the concerns expressed above — whether the EU's identity is shifting or how institutions matter — will seem prosaic to the public in the aftermath of a wide–scale crisis that strikes the continent.

Nor would the argument that the EU is not designed to manage major threats or disasters hold much water if such an event were to come to pass. Major crises, disasters and transboundary breakdowns evoke a clamour for governmental assistance. In the USA, for instance, the slow reaction by the

federal government to Hurricane Katrina invited intense criticism from all sides. Arguments about legal competences and institutional divisions, used by officials to justify their inaction, seemed irrelevant in the face of public suffering. If a major catastrophe were to materialize in Europe, the absence of an EU response could evoke a similar backlash (Boin & Rhinard 2005). The criticism of the EU during the BSE outbreak and foot–and–mouth problem showed how intense the scrutiny can become when a crisis hits.

The articles in this special issue show that the EU possesses capacities to help member states address threats and protect their citizens. Member states have agreed to boost cooperative efforts in food safety, public health and civil protection, for instance. The same goes for counter–terrorism related policies, a 'growth area' since the 11 September attacks in the USA. The expansion of the ESDP, including civilian and military capacity building for joint missions, further demonstrates how member states have focused explicitly on protection policy goals in recent years.

In addition, the articles reveal more generic activities that may help to deal with increasingly complex threats. Earlier work argued that the EU possesses various "organizational capacities" that may enhance its role as a supranational player in domestic crisis management (Boin *et al*. 2006). This special issue supports that claim but also implies that such capacities are heavily constrained owing to the EU's unique governance structure. Five of these generic capacities are identified and some of their shortcomings discussed.

First, and most obviously, the EU has considerable capacity to coordinate the efforts of member states and to pool information at the European level. The areas of food safety and epidemiological surveillance are examples of this generic capacity. The Emergency and Crisis Coordination Arrangements were created in order to get the EU to act quickly, when emerging threats allow little time for extended negotiations and face–to–face meetings. A question remains, however, as to whether the EU's intricate coordination structures and complex procedures will function adequately under time pressure. Moreover, coordination at the EU level is not always matched at national levels. Lezaun & Groenleer show that, no matter how swift and effective decision making is at the European level, those decisions are not always carried out on the ground.

Secondly, the EU has long–term planning capacity. This quality sets the EU apart from national governments, which find their capacity to address long–term goals burdened by the highly politicized nature of the policy–making process. The often–noted technocratic character of EU policy making may be less suited to handling critical incidents and breakdowns, however. These events require immediate action and short–term results — something the EU is not particularly well designed to accomplish.

Thirdly, the EU, and the Commission in particular, has a well–developed capacity to monitor policy domains from a 'bird's eye' perspective. If orientated towards spotting emerging risks — sharp deviations in normal trends that might raise warning flags — such a capacity indeed could contribute to a safer Europe. One insight from the contributions in this special issue,

however, is that the Commission's 'eyes and ears' are sectorally focused. Yet, most threats do not respect policy domains and boundaries. As a result, indications of impending crises may not immediately appear on the Commission's radar screen (precisely because they are unexpected, administrative units are not likely to have developed means to look out for them).

Fourthly, the EU is well positioned as a forum for the creation of common rules and regulations. Common regulations could help to prevent threats from escalating into transboundary crises. This is a key finding in the article by Lezaun & Groenleer, who show that the EU's regulatory capacity has drawn it into food control emergency responsibilities. The EU displays several features that make it a proficient regulator: the strength of the European legal process, the expertise and machinery needed to promote technical cooperation and a distance from parliamentary influence so that technical, rather than political, approaches characterize problem solving. Of course, the features that assist efficiency do not always promote democracy. The EU has recently been criticized for using closed networks of technicians to make decisions with societal implications.

Finally, the EU has the capacity to organize expertise. During a crisis, policy makers often need experts to advise them (Rosenthal & 't Hart 1991). The EU institutions routinely build, and then call upon, broad networks of competent experts (Majone 1996; Rhinard 2002). Much of this has to do with the Commission's need to formulate high–quality proposals upon which most EU members can agree. All this means that EU institutions have a proven capacity to quickly assemble and access expert networks — something many national governments find hard to do during a crisis.

Towards an Agenda for the Future

This special issue explored the EU's move into a qualitatively different type of cooperative decision making. The growing focus on 'protection' at the supranational level raised a number of questions, many of which we sought to answer through empirical exploration and the use of various theoretical insights. Yet, the answers are preliminary. More research must take place to reveal the full implications and driving factors of EU protection activities.

Three related areas of research stand out. The first involves further exploration of the EU as a 'protection actor'. The second concerns understanding the full effects of the division between supranational and national competences in EU protection. The third area of research aims to formulate prescriptions for improved protection of EU citizens. The next sections elaborate upon those areas and suggest key research questions.

The EU's Role as a Protection Actor in Europe

The EU is taking on new protection tasks using innovative means, in ways that reveal how multilateral organizations tackle new threat challenges. In that respect, the EU offers a glimpse into what 'security communities' might look like in the twenty–first century. To explore further the EU's evolving

role as a community of nations concerned with security and protection, three research goals stand out.

First, more research is required to uncover the breadth and depth of the EU's protection tasks and capacities. Which policy sectors contain capacities that protect citizens from direct and indirect threats? Agriculture management, for instance, is one area not covered in this special issue. Another is critical infrastructure protection, an area into which the EU has taken some tentative steps since the publication of a green paper (Commission 2005). In the sectors explored in this special issue, too, new developments are proceeding rapidly. Keeping tabs on those developments, and their key drivers, is a research priority. In particular, the interplay between internal drivers (such as institutional entrepreneurship or functional 'spillover') and external drivers (including real–life disasters and terrorist threats) requires attention.

Secondly, further consideration of methodological questions is in order. We have struck a balance between deductive and inductive approaches to searching for protection activities in the EU. The way that protection was defined — activities related to safeguarding EU citizens from direct and indirect threats — served as an initial frame of reference. In light of new evidence, and new 'social facts', one can ask whether the label still holds. The value of the protection label is that it transcends the conventional dichotomy between safety and security policies. It also bridges the relationship between internal policies in the EU (many related to the Single Market) and external policies (associated with development or ESDP). 'Protection' offers a more comprehensive approach than 'homeland security', which is sometimes interpreted as predominantly a counter–terrorism endeavour. At the same time, protection implies a reactive approach to threats, projecting an image that building barriers to threats, rather than proactively addressing them, is the extent of the effort.[4] Further research should consider the nuance behind this terminology.

Thirdly, we need more evidence of the degree to which member states are really assisting each other in protection activities. A precondition for a "security community", first elaborated by Deutsch, is a feeling of solidarity amongst participating members. The EU uses solidarity, as least rhetorically, as a basis for an increasing number of policy initiatives. The extent to which this is really taking place 'on the ground' (or 'in the field') is an open question that demands further in–depth investigation. Such evidence would also indicate whether the EU is approximating the ideal type of a "secure European community" (Ekengren 2007).

Finally, new avenues for theoretical dialogue should be explored. The benefit of the protection approach is that it opens opportunities to bridge theoretical gaps. For instance, the evidence suggests that the EU's protection space resembles, in many regards, a domestic system of risk and crisis management. This provides the opportunity to use theories of system and societal vulnerability. There is a growing body of social theory literature on the consequences of major disturbances on society (i.e. system effects). Authors have analysed the international order in terms of its state–like properties (Jervis 1997) and its resemblance to a "civil global society" (Kaldor *et al*. 2003). Bringing together theoretical approaches to 'protection'

(and related issues such as risk, security and crisis management) at domestic and international levels will enable the EU to be treated not as a *sui generis* protection actor but as part of a similar endeavour by governance systems and organizations throughout the world.

The Supranational–National Interface

A central feature of the EU's protection space is the division between supranational and national levels, a direct consequence of the multilevel nature of governance in the European Union. The articles in this special issue confirm that the supranational–national balance varies between different protection policy activities, in turn altering the extent to which the influence of 'Europe' extends into national governance settings. The articles also demonstrate that no easy answers exist to the 'proper' division of competences within a multilevel governance system concerned with protecting citizens. From these insights, four research priorities follow.

First, the various links that connect the national to the supranational level (and vice versa) deserve to be fleshed out. Scholars sometimes begin by studying formal legislation as a main driver of increased supranational cooperation amongst EU member states. Attention to other drivers of cooperation and other factors that strengthen the link between national and supranational governance levels should be encouraged. Converging threat perceptions, for instance, or informal networks between national agencies could be examined to reveal important drivers behind increasing EU policy activity. Bilateral links in protection activities should not be ignored, either. The Nordic countries, for instance, have a well–established tradition of cooperating on civil protection issues that might provide lessons for the rest of the EU.

Secondly, the effect of EU activities on national administrations is a fertile area for future research. This topic mirrors the more general aims of 'Europeanization' research, which examines how 'Europe' drives changes in policies, politics and polities at the national level (Green Cowles *et al*. 2001). In the area of protection, there is a need to know how supranational coordination is influencing the actions, and more generally the organization, of national administrations and agencies. If organizational capacities are converging, this implies more potential for cooperative action at the European level. Of course, the influence of the EU is not only in one direction: member states aim to 'upload' their own particular approach to protection to the European level (Britz 2006). Research on crisis management arrangements within different EU member states would be a first step towards discovering how and whether EU member states are adapting to the emerging protection space in the EU.

Thirdly, a normative question arises in this area of research: what is the appropriate division between national and supranational competences in this policy space? There may very well be areas of protection in which the EU is not well suited to participate, while in other areas the EU can truly add value to national efforts. Here crisis research could provide some useful insights

into how to organize crisis management capacity in a multilevel, cross–border polity like the EU, although that field is only now beginning to tackle some of the challenges related to transnational crisis management. A first step should be to identify some principles of crisis management in a multi-level, cross–border polity, while a second step could inventory the EU's current capacities (something that has been initiated in this special issue and a previous work, see Boin *et al*. 2006). Identifying the EU's strengths, along with the demands of crisis management best addressed by national governments, can provide some indications useful for practitioners seeking an answer for where to 'draw the line' between national and supranational competences in the EU.

Finally, research could focus on new forms of cooperation that may not exist in the repertoire of EU methods. Considering the sovereignty issues brought up by 'protection' and the frequent appeal to 'subsidiarity' by sceptical member states, the traditional *communautization* method of delegating powers upwards may not be the most appropriate. New ways of cooperating, or approaches such as the Open Method of Coordination, could be explored as ways to ensure the benefits of cooperation while preserving national sovereignty (see, for instance, Ekengren 2006).

Prescriptions for a Safer Europe

In this special issue, the theoretical relevance of the EU's emerging protection policy space received much attention. Yet, it is crucial not to lose sight of the importance of linking such discussions to real–life implications of this emerging policy space. The protection of EU citizens is a relatively new policy activity for the EU; it is also a 'high stakes' game which has an immediate effect on the well–being of people. Academic insights should be translated into prescriptions for improvement in how the EU approaches this difficult task. Several important areas of future research can be foreseen.

The first concerns the need for the EU to articulate a strategy for the future development of its protection policies. This special issue revealed the need for strategic thinking at all EU levels about the purpose, aim and direction of such policies. An approach that rests on external drivers, including reactive responses to past crises, may not be the most effective strategy for protecting EU citizens. There is a need to treat issues of risk, threat and protection in a more holistic fashion that includes local, national and EU authorities. In short, the EU could use a consensually derived philosophy that sets out the EU's role in protection. The precedent is already there, in the form of the European Security Strategy. A next step might be a European Protection Strategy that offers threat assessments, identifies capacities and divides responsibilities. This would avoid inflated public expectations, while offering a 'road map' for proactive ventures. One is reminded here of the galvanizing influence of the 1988 Cecchini Report on the 'Costs of Non–Europe' regarding internal market issues. A similar report on the 'Insecurities of Non–Europe' could also be used to jumpstart a debate on the EU's role in protecting its citizens and through which methods.

A second issue requiring further research concerns institutional matters. EU capacities and activities in the area of protection are spread across its administrative infrastructure and legal pillars. This leads to overlap, along with gaps, between often poorly coordinated capacities. There are no easy answers to this challenge. Member states designed the Brussels legal framework and bureaucracy in this particular fashion. Moreover, major institutional reform issues are currently off the table as a result of the rejections of the Constitutional Treaty for Europe. Yet an effective response to trans-boundary threats and crises is unlikely in a political–administrative context in which the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing. Finding a way to link sectors together and to build on strengths seems appropriate. Some moves are already underway (including the Emergency and Crisis Coordination Arrangements and ARGUS) to address coordination challenges in an *ad hoc* fashion. Researchers can contribute to the debate by highlighting the political implications of these moves, their institutional design requirements and the 'unintended effects' of such moves.

Finally, EU protection activities take place within a broader, international context. One finding that comes through in this special issue is the relatively poor relationship between the EU and other international organizations. Developing effective, interlocking relationships with organizations such as NATO (which has considerable capacities in areas in which the EU is just now engaging) and states such as the USA is likely to bring benefits. During a crisis that spills across borders and organizational divisions, partners must work together under extreme conditions. Researchers can identify potential areas of synergy and conflict.

Moving Forward

The EU can now be described as an 'active' rather than a 'passive' provider of protection on the European continent. That role has implications for the EU's organization, i.e. how cooperation takes place and through what methods, and raises the question of whether traditional integration methods are suitable for cooperation in this new space. Scholars focused on the EU's institutional structures will also be keen to explore new cooperation strategies, along with analysing how the EU's current organization shapes its ability to be a protection actor in Europe. Finally, crisis researchers will turn to the emerging protection policy space as an indication of new capacities for crisis management in Europe. The EU's role in protection generates new questions regarding its contribution to protection, safety and security in Europe.

Most of those questions relate to the significant challenges facing EU efforts to protect citizens. Politically, the EU is moving into an activity that is fundamentally a national responsibility. Citizens expect their governments to safeguard them from threats and to manage crises effectively. When they do not, governments face stringent criticism. EU governments thus approach cooperation with no small degree of sensitivity regarding sovereignty. Organizationally, the EU has a peculiar type of politics mixed with legal fragmentation and bureaucratic tension. The incremental accumulation of

EU competences in the area of protection, usually in reaction to high profile threats or events, has led to a particular organization of EU activities that contrasts with one built by design. These central challenges invite scepticism and even confusion over the EU's contribution to protection in Europe.

Yet, one must not forget the opportunities represented by the EU's new role. The EU is an excellent example of an international organization coming to grips with the crisis challenges and threat complexities of modern society. It assists its members in working together, bringing diverse national systems together. The EU helps to build capacity in some countries, while spreading the 'best practices' of others. It is raising awareness, trying to bridge gaps in national preparations and capacity, and working towards an integration of military and civilian tools to tackle modern problems. All countries around the world, and all governance system at whatever level of aggregation, must deal with new threat realities. In this sense, the EU can be viewed as 'ahead of the curve' in bringing diverse states together, reconciling differences and bridging divisions. For scholars and practitioners studying this area of cooperation, the EU offers an excellent test case for understanding how regional organizations can build transnational protection capacity.

An ambitious agenda has been outlined here, not only to improve understanding of the EU's role in protection and the emerging policy space, but also, in whatever modest way, to help make Europe safer. The broader EU studies community are encouraged to join this effort.

Notes

1. This is not to suggest that policy expansion is inevitable, as the 'empty chair' crisis revealed in 1965 when the French government boycotted the Council of Ministers. Rather, the point serves to remind us of the importance of taking an occasional fresh look at policy activities at the European level.
2. After the anthrax attacks in Washington, DC in 2001, the Commission proposed to draw together a number of existing capacities, repackaged as a 'new' bioterrorism programme (Dekker & Rhinard 2005).
3. Institutionalization is a focus of study that helps to uncover whether the influence of supranational institutions will last well into the future, shaping behaviour and becoming embedded in standard operating procedures (Sandholtz & Stone Sweet 1998).
4. The authors thank Bengt Sundelius for this useful critique.

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