

The Crisisification of Policy-making in the European Union*

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Abstract

In recent years a subtle change has taken place in the policy-making machinery shaping European integration. The traditional methods for producing collective European Union (EU) policies, typified by the extensive analysis of a problem, extended phases of consultation with stakeholders, the deliberate cultivation of support for proposals, occasional decision-making moments and their long-term implementation, now share space with what is best described as crisis-oriented methods for arriving at collective decisions. These methods prioritize the early identification of the next crisis, specific kinds of actors and technologies, abbreviated decision-making procedures and new narratives on the *raison d'être* of European integration. This article treats this development as a kind of crisisification of EU policy-making – a change in the processes by which collective decisions are made – and explores its implications for practice and research by drawing on both classical EU studies approaches and insights from critical security studies.

Keywords: institutional politics; European integration theory; European crises; legitimacy; internal security

Introduction

A key characteristic of European Union (EU) studies over the past decade has been attention to crises. From the debt and financial and economic crises to the migration crisis and Brexit, scholars have turned their attention to the sources, trajectories and effects of what seems to be a never-ending set of challenges (Dinan *et al.*, 2017; Hooghe *et al.*, 2018). For students of the EU accustomed to the narrative of the EU surviving and even thriving through crises, the sequence and seriousness of recent crises seems to herald something altogether different. Research agendas have shifted towards rather fundamental questions of integration and cooperation (Börzel and Risse, 2018; Jones *et al.*, 2016; De Wilde and Zürn, 2012; Marks and Hooghe, 2009; Schimmelfennig, 2014) and how crises have shaped the very nature of how the EU functions (Becker *et al.*, 2016; Ioannou *et al.*, 2015; Kreuder-Sonnen, 2018; Puetter, 2014).

This article follows a similar vein of inquiry to show how a succession of crises – and a concern that there may be future crises – has had a deep-seated impact on the EU. It argues that the traditional methods of producing collective EU decisions, typified by the extensive analysis of a particular problem, long phases of consultation with key stakeholders, the deliberate cultivation of support for proposals, episodic decision-making moments and a focus on long-term implementation, now share space with crisis-oriented

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methods present in everyday policy-making. Virtually all EU policy domains feature tools and procedures for scanning the horizon for potential disturbances, early-warning systems for possible threats and risks, special protocols for alerting political actors when a threat emerges and decision-making via abbreviated procedures. Officials prioritize policy speed and a concern to protect both individuals and infrastructure as an important *raison d'être* of what they do.

These changes amount to a kind of crisisification of European policy-making – a change in the nature of the processes by which collective decisions are made – and have significant implications for how we understand those processes and European cooperation more generally. To capture those implications, the traditional public policy literature in EU studies is helpful and will be applied below. But the effects of crisisification are wider than specific policy outcomes. They concern the very nature of how European integration takes place, the sources of its legitimacy and the motivations of its driving actors. More critically oriented approaches to understanding how security-based logics shape decision-making beyond the field of security per se are useful in this regard. They remind us of how an overarching concern with insecurity, urgency and crisis can become the norm rather than an exception to normal ways of working (Huysmans, 2006; Neal, 2010). The analysis here thus marries the traditional EU literature on policy-making dynamics with critical security studies to shed extra analytical light on these developments. This article thus responds to calls for ‘polyphonic engagement in EU studies’ to help us understand the EU in a crisis-ridden world (Manners and Whitman, 2016).

The article proceeds in three steps. It first describes what crisisification looks like empirically before outlining its drivers, some of which conform to traditional explanations of European integration while others reflect more security-related dynamics. It then explores implications for three topics of interest to European integration scholars. The first is the setting of the European agenda. It is argued that traditional agenda-setting processes now share space with both pre-emptive and reactive forms of agenda-setting, thanks to the increased focus on potential and actual crises. The second is collective decision-making per se. Crisisification seems to be changing both the pace and the participants involved in how issues are deliberated and decided upon in the EU. The third implication is the legitimacy upon which European integration rests. Crisisification carries with it a different set of legitimacy premises from those studied by EU scholars. The final section points the way towards further study.

I. What Does Crisisification Look like?

Crisisification involves changes to collective policy-making processes in the EU which emphasize: finding the next urgent event, prioritizing speed in decision-making, ushering in new constellations of concerned actors and emphasizing new narratives of what matters in European governance. It reflects crisis-oriented modes of thinking, typically articulated in terms of preventing, preparing for, responding to and recovering from critical events in everyday policy-making. Policy-making is a full range of decision activities: from agenda-setting to policy initiation and from decision-making to implementation (Peters, 1987). Crises are intersubjective, usually defined as threats to core values or essential societal structures, such as a grave predicament requiring urgent action under conditions of uncertainty (Rosenthal *et al.*, 1989). This section outlines the empirical contours of crisisification in the EU, a trend captured less by high-level political agreements

or strategic documents and more by everyday activities and seemingly mundane administrative procedures. The data collection effort took place in sequential research projects focused on uncovering EU efforts to manage crises: crises of various sorts, defined by national and supranational officials across the EU's policy domains. Using semi-structured interviews, text analysis and database trawling, a host of data was collected on the prevention, preparation, response and recovery from events deemed a danger to the European population at home or abroad.¹

For example, research uncovered roughly 40 horizon-scanning systems in different institutional directorates of the EU, including the rapid alert system for biological and chemical attacks and threats (to spot biological threats) in the Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (DG Santé), the European radiological data exchange platform (to scan the environment for excessive radiology) in the Commission's Directorate-General for Energy (DG Energy), Tarîqa (to identify emerging conflicts in the EU neighbourhood) in the European External Action Service, LISFLOOD (to monitor flood plains across Europe to anticipate disasters) in the EU's Joint Research Centre and the common integrated risk analysis model (a risk analysis application) used by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency to analyse data and spot outlying trends. These systems cast an anticipatory eye on events or situations likely to justify a European response. In addition, there appeared a high number of early warning and rapid alert systems in place to communicate actual crises unfolding. Numbering almost 30, these include the Early Warning and Response System (for communicating disease outbreaks), the animal disease notification system (for emerging animal health problems), the EU urgent radiological information exchange (for communicating urgent information in the event of a nuclear emergency), and the computer security incident response team (for notifying incidents of cyber-attacks) in the European Commission. And they have grown of late: research shows a steep rise in both horizon scanning and early warning systems, which together grew from less than 10 in 2000 to more than 70 in 2015 (Backman and Rhinard, 2017).

These various systems link policy-specific authorities in each Member State (and sometimes authorities outside of the EU, too) via a common platform and particular threat definitions. Some horizon scanning systems include only an early warning function, while other systems also provide a rapid response role. Some observers may argue that these networks are simply banal communication systems. Yet research shows that the rapid response function includes not only the communication of actions taken (or to be taken) but also the coordination of decisions. The early warning and response system for health crises, for instance, was used by Member States to notify each other what measures were being taken during the acute phase of the highly pathogenic Asian avian influenza virus (H5N1) crisis; that information was then used to inform national decision-making and to shape collective decision-making (Bengtsson *et al.*, 2018). During the evacuation of Libya the consular online cooperation network was used by national governments to notify one another of extraction sorties. That led Member States to ask for air assistance from other Member States via the network (Boin *et al.*, 2014). These systems thus

¹The research projects were funded by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (grants from 2006-9; 2010-13 and 2014-17) along with the EU Horizon 2020 project 'Trancrisis' (grant 649484; 2015-18) and the Nordforsk project 'NordSTEVA' (2014-19). Additional data can be found in Backman and Rhinard, 2017 and Boin *et al.*, 2013. Altogether 42 interviews were conducted in four stages, during 2008, 2013, 2015 and 2017. Much of the data can be viewed online at www.societalsecurity.eu.

facilitate policy coordination and operational activities via networks that are ostensibly information-sharing only.

Many of these networks are linked to bricks-and-mortar structures; another indication of the process of crisisification in the EU. No fashionable directorate-general in the Commission is without its own purpose-built, highly secure centre for information exchange, data analysis and crisis coordination. The previous statement is a slight exaggeration: there are eight crisis rooms, ranging from the Directorate-General of Migration and Home Affairs' strategic analysis and response centre (STAR), the Directorate-General of European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations' European response coordination centre (ERCC), the European External Action Service's situation room, the European Maritime Safety Agency's maritime support service centre, the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety's health emergency operations facility (HEOF), the European Border and Coast Guard Agency's situation centre, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control's Epidemic Intelligence Unit, and Europol's European Cybercrime Centre. The latter three organizations illustrate the broad institutional reach of crisisification. They are tasked with consolidating pertinent information, drawing up digestible reports for policy-makers and coordinating with their counterparts in national capitals, Brussels and, in some cases, other international organizations. They range from rooms that are barely used (the Strategic Analysis and Response Centre) to centres that have three rooms for handling simultaneous crises, and which are staffed 24 hours a day (the European Response Coordination Centre).

The phenomenon of the crisis room in Brussels turns our attention to the crisisification of decision-making. Perhaps the most intriguing trend is the adoption of special procedures for crisis situations – and the practice of these procedures in EU-wide exercises. Most directorates-general (especially those with crisis experience) have procedures for abbreviated decision-making. These include the directorates-general for Transport, for Energy, DG Health and Food Safety (Sante), for Agriculture and the Environment, for the European Community Humanitarian Aid Office, for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Migration and Home Affairs and the European External Action Service. Procedures vary, but they generally stipulate the steps to be taken in the event of an unexpected, urgent event that requires the DG to respond quickly. This response may include close monitoring of a situation if it implicates European infrastructures (as for the Directorate-General for Transport during the Icelandic ash cloud incident), or it may include taking critical decisions (as for the Directorate-General for Agriculture's quarantine decisions made during the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak).

An EU-wide set of crisis decision procedures, stretching across all EU institutions was initiated in 2005 by the then-Dutch Presidency. Initially titled ICMA (integrated crisis management arrangements), when fully implemented the procedures were called the crisis coordination arrangements (CCA). The crisis coordination arrangements had a set of procedures requiring heads of permanent representatives to assemble in Brussels (within a 2-hour time-frame) to hear integrated assessments constructed by officials from different institutions and to take operative decisions on behalf of their Member States when required (Olsson, 2009). The complex arrangements included a crisis support team of experts to advise officials, who in turn advised the political level. The crisis coordination arrangements were run from a secure facility in the Council Secretariat, even though the Commission's Directorates-General participated. The crisis coordination arrangements

were renamed the integrated political crisis response arrangements in 2013 and continues to be exercised on a regular basis. Exercise scenarios include a cruise ship hijacking of national politicians (2009), severe weather destroying European energy hubs on the Mediterranean coast (2011) and a hybrid, cyber event paralysing various EU government infrastructures (2017). The EU's committee of permanent representatives lead the exercises, supported by officials from the Commission and Council, with national governments responding to events via secured links from national capitals.

What are all these measures meant to protect? Officials in one policy programme struggled for months to answer that question. The European Programme for Critical Infrastructure Protection was adopted in 2008 only after much deliberation on the definition of a European infrastructure and how many countries that entailed. Other policies are focused on sectors, such as the Transport Network Protection programme (2009) or the Energy Infrastructures Protection Programme (2012). The Directorate-General of the European Community Humanitarian Aid Office is responsible for civil protection policies (led politically by a commissioner with the portfolio for international cooperation and crisis response), including the development of a mechanism that obliges Member States to pre-designate supplies to be shared within Europe in the event of a disaster, terror attack, pandemic or other crisis affecting the continent. DG Santé developed new laws on health security intended to ramp up the EU's role in coordinating a response to a major health threat.

The list of other policies emanating from other areas of the EU and setting policy guidelines for crisis-related cooperation in the EU is too lengthy to review here but includes financial resources such as a solidarity fund and billions of euro for risk prevention (for more, see Backman and Rhinard, 2017; Boin *et al.*, 2013). Admittedly, it is difficult to assess the volume of these activities in comparison with the overall set of activities in which the EU is already engaged. Even without relative statistics, however, it is difficult to ignore the growth of this substantial area of EU cooperation, much of it taking place under the radar. A few EU scholars have taken note of the broad march of developments (Leite, 2015; Morsut, 2014; Versluis, 2016) but, for the most part, what might be called these 'little security nothings' (Huysmans, 2011) have escaped attention.

II. How Did We Get Here?

What has been driving the crisisification of EU policy-making? Public policy approaches and European integration theories provide a ready answer for some of it. Much starts from crises themselves, which serve as the familiar external shock or precipitating event (Kingdon, 1995) that shakes the status quo and enables new issues to enter the agenda. These shocks seem to be arriving more frequently and, even if new threats are perceived as much as they are real, they are said to be more complicated of late. Whether we speak of the mass movement of migrants, cyber-attacks, pandemics or climate change-related disasters, crises are becoming more complex by the way they travel through globalized societies, highly technical infrastructures and tightly linked supply chains. Actual events – the Eurocrisis, the Icelandic ash cloud, media disinformation campaigns and the H5N1/H1N1 outbreaks, to name just a few – seem to reveal the impotence of nation-states to protect their citizens in a globalized world and to justify increased action at the supranational level (Barrett, 2007).

Following actual crises, two sets of dynamics normally unfold in Brussels, each reflecting various versions of spillover associated with neofunctionalism. The first

dynamic is political in nature. As the crisis management literature tells us, the exigency of a real-life crisis demands answers from politicians especially in the hours following the event, before attention fades (Kuipers and 't Hart, 2014). During that window, political symbolism becomes paramount: leaders must be seen to be doing something and Brussels-level initiatives become important. After September 11, several national leaders pushed for a statement to declare their solidarity with the US and to encourage new security measures in Europe. After the Madrid bombings in March 2003 a solidarity declaration was adopted at the behest of the Spanish government, demanding additional early warning, intelligence cooperation and deradicalization efforts. After the London bombings in June 2005 the UK government led the adoption of an EU counter-terrorism strategy (Bossong, 2012). Following the Icelandic ash cloud in 2010, when European publics demanded answers as to 'who's in charge' regarding major disruption of European air spaces (Nohrstedt, 2013), Member States gathered in Brussels to commit to more action. Furthermore, Council voting dynamics mean that, even if some countries have weak preferences in advancing the EU's role in crises, they are unlikely to obstruct motivated Member States seeking symbolic action (Aspinwall and Schneider, 2001). In short, asking the EU to 'do more' has become part of national governments' reactions to actual crises, a variation of the political variant of spillover commonly used to understand integration developments in EU studies (Niemann and Schmitter, 2009). During treaty revisions these demands may even make their way into new legal bases. Thus, the solidarity declaration was transformed into a solidarity clause in the Lisbon Treaty (Article 222, Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union) stating that Member States had an obligation to help one another in crises. This move was one of many representing a cycle by which crises are followed by political and strategic declarations by heads of state and government in Brussels.

The crisis-political declaration cycle intersects with a second kind of cycle: the use of political declarations by the Commission to advance policy goals. As Peterson and Bomberg (1999) argued years ago, this pattern is broadly familiar in European integration: Member States issue broad commitments (whether in communiqués, Council conclusions, or treaty agreements) and the Commission works to first consolidate and then to expand cooperation incrementally. Political statements, Council conclusions, or initiatives like the solidarity clause usually lead to action plans that summarize what is to be done (much of it already underway), by whom and by when. The Council of Ministers' conclusions normally endorse them and encourage the Commission to move forward still. This can be seen in the health security action plan (first mooted in 2006), the counter terrorism action plan (2006), the solidarity clause action plan (2012), and the migration crisis action plan (2013). The Commission and agencies use these plans and their periodic endorsement by the Council to build momentum towards policy change, including the many tools, procedures, programmes and resource allocations described in the section below. This dynamic reflects a mix of policy entrepreneurship (Kingdon, 1995) and the cultivated version of spillover, by which sufficiently strategic actors exploit opportunities to further policy goals.

Yet crisis-driven dynamics should not overshadow other important explanations for the crisisification of the EU. One stems from the fact that much of the cooperation activity described in this article does not require political blessing or a clear legal basis. The Commission is allowed to implement administrative reforms largely on its own volition

if it relates to administrative activities and the improvement of the functioning of the Commission. Thus, in many cases the Commission can create an early warning system or a set of special crisis decision procedures through administrative edicts rather than legislation.² And they do so in often predictable ways, using systems, tools and procedures from one policy domain in another, reflecting classical patterns of policy diffusion (Radaelli, 2000).

Agencies display a similar dynamic, especially when they have close links to the Commission (Groenleer, 2006). These actions of the Commission represent a significant increase in executive authority in the EU (Brandsma and Blom-Hansen, 2017). Even where the Commission briefs the Council on its crisis-related initiatives, in virtually any policy area the Council tends to nod its approval, partly because of the urgency related to crisis dynamics. Since the EU's normal legislative procedure takes, on average, 24 months from initiation to adoption (Nugent, 2010), arguments made in the interest of speed and urgency tend to soften up any opposition that might occur.

The drivers mentioned above – facilitating events, political and cultivated spillover, policy entrepreneurship and executive ambition – are sufficiently captured by traditional approaches in EU studies. Moreover, it has been long recognized that much of where the action driving European integration occurs at the bureaucratic, subterranean levels of Brussels (Christiansen and Kirchner, 2000). Yet the sheer breadth of the developments recorded in this research – beyond the individual policy level – demand ways to understand the spread of crisis-oriented behaviour. Our interviews revealed policy-makers' concern for 'proving the EU's value in today's world' (Interview 9b), with 'making Europe safer' (Interview 19), and 'considering the safety and security implications of what we do' (Interview 2). Critical security studies approaches warn of the inexorable search for security that tends to characterize modern bureaucracies (Aradau and Van Munster, 2007) and what happens when risk logics take their place alongside traditional policy logics (Hagmann and Caveltly, 2012). Evidence for such logics – an obsession with making people safe – can be found in officials' personal reflections but also in strategies like the use of 'flanking measures' in the accumulation of crisis-related capacity in the EU. Armstrong and Bulmer (1998) once argued that many initiatives in the EU are measures taken at the edges of a much broader policy instrument, justified to ensure the smooth functioning of that instrument. Those authors examined the single market and the measures adopted to support it, and many of the crisis tools and procedures mentioned above have a similar provenance. They can be traced back to efforts to make safe broad EU policy projects, such as the Schengen zone, European energy grids, the single European sky, or trans-European transport networks. The evidence collected here suggests that such thinking appears throughout the EU institutions and tends to drive – often implicitly – crisisification.

Another insight provided by critical security studies is the role of available technology as a driver. EU scholars have noted the increased use of technology within EU initiatives of late, arguing that technological solutions can depoliticize contentious issues under a guise of 'leaving it to the software to figure it out' (Bossong and Carrapiço, 2016). This

²A minor but amusing anecdote is the reaction of then-Commissioner for Freedom, Security and Justice during 2004–9, Franco Frattini, to news that other sections of the Commission were building crisis rooms. He demanded one of his own – albeit with nicer equipment (Interview 2).

trend does not surprise scholars interested in the technologies of security, who show how the availability of technologies can drive policy developments – often irrespective of an objective problem or need (Amicelle *et al.*, 2015; Bigo and Tsoukala, 2008; Huysmans, 2006). The relatively inexpensive availability of networking technology, satellite imagery, information filtering software, situation assessment algorithms and communication technologies has been a boon to the Commission as it expands its crisis-related capacities and seeks to demonstrate added-value to Member States. Indeed, the EU's Joint Research Centre has been keen to sell crisis platforms, including integrated web crawlers, early alert systems and communication modules linking national capitals, to any Commission directorate-general with resources for it.

III. Broader Implications

With the empirical range of crisisification and its key drivers set out, the article now highlights three specific aspects worthy of deeper analytical and theoretical attention: how crisisification has affected EU agenda-setting, decision-making and understandings of legitimacy. Not unintentionally, these aspects relate to three long-standing research questions in the field of EU studies.

The European Agenda

What issues arrive on the European agenda, through which routes, and how do national governments formulate their preferences on those issues? Those questions dominated the early decades of theorizing about European integration, with some authors arguing that national governments exercise strict control on what issues are (or are not) delegated to the European level after preference formation processes shaped by national politics (Moravcsik, 1993). Other scholars show that European agenda-setting is a more complex process driven collaboratively by societal interest groups, supranational institutions and national governments working in issue-specific constellations (Stone-Sweet *et al.*, 2001). Most scholars would agree, though, that agenda-setting and preference formation processes are at least shaped by newfound issue salience (such as an unexpected crisis), policy entrepreneurs (such as an activist network), and access to sufficiently influential public officials (such as national governments or supranational actors). The effects of crisisification on the European agenda call into question whether such explanations are sufficient.

Our empirics suggest that the types of issues considered to be European – that is, relevant to supranational decision-making – is subtly expanding. Even in non-security related sectors, normal issues are sharing the agenda with crisis issues. To some extent this is also true for national governments, which find themselves faced with what seem to be increasingly urgent questions (Newman and Head, 2017). The effects of climate change, social upheaval, hybrid threats and extreme politics – as Brexit highlights – all generate perturbations in society that governments are pressed to address. The EU is no exception: crises land on its doorstep more frequently than before. Yet there is an endogenous dimension to the increasing focus on crises in Europe, too. The crisisification of the EU means that a greater number of events are identified internally as EU-relevant from among a wider universe of possible problems. For instance, the array of early warning systems

discussed above regularly ‘flag up’, or ‘ping’, in the words of one technician monitoring these systems (Interview 31), issues that might potentially warrant a European solution.

What demands a European solution is of course entirely intersubjective. The point here is that these systems identify, more readily and clearly than ever before, a broader universe of problems that are ripe for construction into an emerging crisis. Talking to some of the operators of these systems reveals an assumption that the mere appearance of a red flag in one of these systems (or in one of these rooms) denotes a potential European problem. To use a seemingly banal example, the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries’ detection systems uncovered the arrival of lethal lionfish in the Mediterranean in the summer of 2016, which prompted inter-service consultation on whether or how to respond. Moreover, if a crisis has taken place previously, more intensive monitoring subsequently follows. Both the 2010 ash cloud incident and the 2009 red sludge chemical spill in Hungary prompted more intensive monitoring of volcanoes and chemical storage facilities, respectively. Following the mass migration into Europe starting around 2013, it should come as no surprise that extra efforts are being made to monitor the unplanned movements of people in the Middle East and North Africa to anticipate the next surge.

How well can European integration theories explain these trends? Transactionalists would point to cross-border community building amongst actors with a shared view of security and a common identity (Deutsch, 1957; Mitrany, 1966). And indeed, a focus on practices, broadly within that same theoretical orientation, helps to illuminate community-building dynamics that others neglect (Adler and Pouliot, 2011). Scholars in public administration or public policy studies may identify the entrepreneurs pushing certain issues to the supranational level. But such approaches assume that public policy-making works along conventional lines: long periods of normal policy-making, punctuated by occasional crises that reshape the political agenda (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993). Of course, traditional processes still do take place – and may even remain dominant. But other dynamics are influencing the agenda, not only because of a European agenda driven by sequential crises. It is also the *search* for crises that crisisification reveals.

On this point, two security-related bodies of literature are relevant. The first is on reflexive modernity, associated with Beck, who argues we are now in a ‘second modernity’ in which society becomes ‘increasingly occupied with debating, preventing and managing risks that it itself has produced’ (Beck, 2006, p. 332). There is a ‘constant feedback of information as society monitors itself while generating novel technologies’ (Corry, 2012, p. 8) hence producing ‘manufactured risks’ (Giddens, 2002). Security logics change under these conditions as ever more effort is made to control and monitor the risks that society creates for itself. The EU findings here show that much of the effort to detect problems, warn national capitals and alert decision-makers are focused on protecting some of the EU’s own systems – many related to (and justified in terms of) preserving efficiency in those systems. Neil explains this in terms of government reaching a point of ‘permanent exceptionalism’: when security-based or crisis-based thinking becomes part of the everyday policy logic that guides behaviour (2010).

The second relevant body of literature shines light on an ever-extending security agenda driven by discoveries of new risks as anticipatory action. De Goede documents how pre-emptive security now manifests itself in everyday life by using various technologies on a daily basis to anticipate as-yet unproven problems (Amoore, 2013; De Goede,

2008). Huysmans similarly argues that modern security policy is becoming increasingly biopolitical, understood as ‘a practice of identifying and monitoring irregular developments that may endanger an optimum regularity’ (Huysmans, 2006, pp. 100–1). The shift to pre-emptive security is one of the consistent aspects of crisisification in the EU, with normative connotations. The regular search for new crises crowds out policy space for issues that could have been arrived at through processes of deeper, democratic deliberation. More bluntly, it is a shift from proactive policy measures to reactive ones. Member States are asked to formulate preferences on issues that have not been generated through public deliberation or public advocacy processes but through technical systems engaged in constantly scanning the horizon. On a similarly critical note, De Goede *et al.* argue that pre-emptive security ‘reorients and thwarts spaces for politics and critiques of contemporary security’. Crisisification, the authors are likely to agree, ‘has the capacity to generate its own benchmarks’ (De Goede *et al.*, 2014, p. 419) of what matters for the European agenda and what does not. For scholars of EU public policy-making, such trends have gone unnoticed as they do not conform to more traditional modes of interest mobilization and agenda setting.

The Nature of Decision-Making

Crisisification also seems to be changing the way in which decisions are made in the EU. For European integration scholars, how decisions are made – and by whom – are central concerns. The increasing prevalence of crises may require us to reconsider how we view and study EU decision-making, by examining changing decision modes, participation patterns and legitimacy claims.

Decision Modes

Debates over how decisions are made in the EU pit one set of arguments against another. On one side, decision-making is seen to be akin to classical intergovernmental bargaining, with preference maximizing governments weighing potential gains and adjusting strategies for their attainment, during negotiation sessions (Thomson *et al.*, 2006). Such sessions reflect hard bargaining amongst sovereignty-sensitive governments. This intergovernmental perspective is contrasted with arguments over deliberative modes of decision-making. Scholars here argue that, uniquely, decision-making in Brussels is more akin to thoughtful problem solving in which arguments and perspectives are aired, considered, debated and in some cases transformed (Joerges and Neyer, 2006). This deliberative supranationalism served a variety of purposes: one was to upgrade the community interest rather than fall towards the lowest common denominator of outcomes. Another was to inject a kind of democratic quality to the processes of decision-making, since different perspectives could be presented and fairly considered, at least in principle. Temporally speaking, the hard-nosed bargaining versus thoughtful deliberation approach had different time horizons. The former suggested there were key moments of decision-making while the latter suggested implicitly that longer time horizons were required to conclude meaningful decision moments. Of course, these debates were stylized – European decision-making reflected different modes depending on the time and the issue (Peterson and Bomberg, 1999) – but they nevertheless pointed to the importance of understanding the nature of decision-making processes to understand more profound aspects of European integration.

This suggests that we need to consider the implications of crisisification on the quality of decision-making. One clear shift is in the pace of policy-making – a logic of urgency rather than bargaining or deliberation creeps into decision-making arenas. Insights from the literature on crisis management can help us to understand EU decision-making under these circumstances. Decisions on crisis management have four traits (Boin *et al.*, 2016, pp. 43–4). First, choices must be made quickly, without reasoned deliberation: ‘There is time pressure – regardless of whether it is real, perceived, or self-imposed – which means that some of the tried-and-tested methods of preparing, delaying, and political anchoring difficult decisions cannot be applied’. Second, decisions involve very real choices with high consequences: ‘they affect core values and interests of communities’ and the cost of decisions can be very high ‘in socially, politically, economically and in human terms’. Third, they do not allow for weighing up facts, since the facts are often absent: ‘they present leaders with major uncertainties about the nature of the issues, the likelihood of future developments, and the possible impact of various policy options’. Finally, crisis decision-making situations are more likely than non-crisis situations to contain genuine dilemmas that can be resolved only through trade-off choices, or “tragic choices”, where all the options open to the decision maker entail net losses’.

Crisis decision-making in the EU seems to reflect similar dynamics, whether we speak of the behavioural effects of urgency in the Eurocrisis or migration crisis (Kamkhaji and Radaelli, 2017; White, 2015), speed over deliberation in new European External Action Service crisis management procedures (Mattelaer, 2013), limited information leading to paralysis in the Icelandic ash cloud crisis (Nohrstedt, 2013) or suboptimal decision-making in the mad cow crisis (Grönvall, 2001). The focus on speed is not unlike the concern about decisionism in critical approaches to studying modern security. Aradau and van Munster show that the emergence of problems that require urgent action ‘privileges a politics of speed based on the sovereign decision of dangerousness’ (2007, p.107). They use a Foucauldian governmentality framework to show how a politics of immediacy not only privileges certain actors (see below) but also certain skill sets: technological know-how or horizon-spotting credentials, which translate into authority in decision situations. In short, the nature of decision-making in the EU may be taking a new shape based on the way urgency has become a key aspect of decision situations. While scholars explored the temporal aspects of European decision-making and its effects (Ekengren, 2002), there is little current research on this topic taking place in EU studies (but see Kreuder-Sonnen, 2018 for a trenchant discussion of the rise of ‘decisionist authority structures’ in the EU).

Participation

Another aspect of how decisions are made in the EU concerns participation. Understanding who is involved in policy-making – and thus, which interests are represented and shape outcomes – has long been a central question of EU studies. The role of the Commission, the influence of Member States via the Council, the rising role of the European Parliament: these are all issues prioritized in the study of who gets what, when and how in European integration (Wallace, 1996). Those classic questions can be seen in new light in an era of crisisification – but more fundamental changes to the actors involved in policy-making may also be at stake.

Traditional questions of inter-institutional relations and influence on decision-making amongst the EU institutions are thrown into sharp relief when considering the empirical developments discussed above. First, it is predominantly the Commission that creates and manages many of the crisis tools discussed above. The Commission engages, for instance, in the almost constant task of early warning as part of the 70 or so early warning and rapid alert systems it maintains. It is also involved in the enrichment of threat and risk information flowing into its organization – via situation assessments and other reports detailing potentially suspicious trends and behaviour. Second, these warnings, assessments and reports about potential risks are reported to networks of national actors outside the EU's institutional structures. In other words, the Commission draws information from, and sends reports to, networks of national officials with a risk-specific focus rather than national representatives in the Council. While there is nothing new about the Commission building networks of national officials, traditional networks (such as advisory groups and comitology) were a known part of the EU policy process. The networks formed to help avoid and mitigate potential crises are not clearly linked to the EU process. Third, the Council has its own procedures for managing impending crises when those crises are seen to be requiring European action. The integrated political crisis response arrangements discussed above comprise a special set of decision-making arrangements overseen by the Council General-Secretariat. They are designed to put national permanent representatives on a crisis footing when triggered. A special set of support bodies – to feed timely information and decision recommendations into the process – were created outside the normal Council institutional infrastructure. The Commission is expected to liaise closely but on an ad hoc basis, together with designated experts useful for identifying decision options 'in the heat of the moment' (Interview 8). Thus, crisisification has brought new forms and types of networks, and special arrangements for crisis decision-making.

Studies of actual EU-level crisis decision-making reveal interesting – and often exclusionary – dynamics. In the case of food disease outbreaks, certain kinds of experts are preferred by the Commission (Grönvall, 2001) and in the Eurozone crisis the Council involved only some kinds of epistemic communities, thereby hampering a coherent response (Kamkhaji and Radaelli, 2017). Other studies on the Eurozone crisis show that larger states tend to take over, leaving supranational actors and smaller states to wait for outcomes (cf. Becker *et al.*, 2016). Research suggests other crises, such as the Icelandic ash cloud and the migration crisis, allowed for greater degrees of supranational influence (see Nohrstedt, 2013 and Buonanno, 2017, respectively). Are these just different kinds of inter-institutional politics playing out, a topic beloved by EU studies scholars? Patterns do seem evident: the Council rises in influence when a crisis strikes ('Germany pays, so Germany says', as one interviewee said [Interview 23]); the Commission enjoys a boost of executive privileges (Becker *et al.*, 2016); new organizations emerge (Bickerton *et al.*, 2014) and the European Parliament takes a back seat (Ripoll-Servent, 2017). But crisis decision-making generates changes of a different order, too. Special procedures for crisis response, in areas ranging from agriculture to external crisis management, are inherently restrictive: they seek to shortcut politics and draw in particular experts for crisis assessment (Boin *et al.*, 2013; Mattelaer, 2013). In short, crisisification seems to have ushered in a new set of actors, participation patterns and decision dynamics that departs from traditional decision-making methods and actor constellations in the EU.

Here, critical security scholars shed light on the deleterious effects that many of the trends associated with crisisification may have. Viewing security not as a policy sector but as a social field, scholars using the lens of governmentality focus on practitioners and institutions of security (Amoore and De Goede, 2008; Aradau and Van Munster, 2007). Such scholars would no doubt view the trend of crisisification as yet another attempt at bringing new spheres of human life under governmental control. Crisis-oriented thinking becomes a tool, of sorts, used by officials at various levels (political and bureaucratic) as a mode of governmentality – to exercise influence over outcomes. Bigo and Tsoukala (2008) suggest that EU bureaucratic actors with no political or formal role in policy processes nevertheless have skill sets – database operators or early warning experts – that under crisisification become a ticket to enter decision-making venues. Such insights are both consistent with traditional EU studies explanations of participation (Christiansen and Kirchner, 2000) and allow us to shine a critical light on how combinations of actors (for instance, technology specialists and border guards) facilitate one another's entry to new policy areas.

Legitimacy

The last theme worth delving into more deeply, against the backdrop of crisisification, is legitimacy. The question of legitimacy for supranational governance in Europe is a long-standing one in EU studies but it has been gaining greater attention in an era of growing Euroscepticism (Crespy, 2014). For EU studies scholars the literature is broadly familiar. The 'no demos' argument states that, without being based on a European body politic, the EU will never enjoy the direct democratic legitimacy that can be seen in national settings (Weiler, 1997). Other scholars show that some sources of legitimacy can nevertheless underpin supranational governance in Europe, including input legitimacy, such as that derived from direct elections of the European Parliament, throughput legitimacy, including decision-making machinery guided by transparency and the rule of law, and output legitimacy, such as effective, problem-solving policy decisions (Schmidt, 2013). A slate of recent studies aims to go deeper into the debate by assessing whether the EU's efforts to legitimize its activities have any bearing on changes in public beliefs – or empirical legitimacy (see Dellmuth and Tallberg, 2015).

For EU scholars, the rise of crises in Europe is the challenge *par excellence* for the continued legitimacy of European integration in two respects. One is the perception that integration itself has been the cause of recent crises (banking crisis, migration) in terms of either incomplete contracting or ineffective economic policies (Dinan *et al.*, 2017). The other way in which recent crises threaten EU legitimacy is usually articulated by the popular press and some sectors of academia. Here the argument is that, irrespective of the source of crises, if the EU cannot manage to solve a number of pressing, complex crises, the European project itself is doomed to fail (Zielonka, 2014).

One finding in the crisisification data presented in this article is that most policy-makers, too, believe that effective crisis management is a way out of the EU's problems of public support. In line with the output-oriented legitimacy argument above, practitioners generally believe that the EU must become better at detecting and responding to crises wherever and whenever they occur. This explains why the language of value-added has become so prevalent in EU discourses today as rationale for new initiatives (Bossong

and Rhinard, 2016). Continuous recourse to arguments on the transboundary nature of modern threats, the need for ‘all hazards’ monitoring, and the importance of all-of-government responses is commonplace amongst the practitioners we interviewed and documents we analysed. There was even a sense amongst some practitioners involved in EU-wide crisis coordination procedures, for instance, that their tasks were more essential than normal policy-making (Interview 12).

Is crisisification a plausible mechanism for legitimizing European integration? Two bodies of literature shed light on this question. Crisis management literature, which tends to be either socio-psychological or functional-political, is sceptical towards the ability of public officials to be effective crisis managers. The organization of government and the uncertainties associated with the contemporary unexpected event make crisis management an ‘impossible job’ (Boin and ‘t Hart, 2003). Crisis management case studies feature much more failure than success, which bodes ill for legitimization through crisis management – particular in an era of Euroscepticism. From a different angle, both ontologically and epistemologically, scholars inspired by Bourdieu and Foucault argue that crisisification is a rationality of government that works to legitimize government encroachment into new areas of social and public life (Amoore and De Goede, 2008; see also White, 2015). As Bigo has written, increasing attention to risks is a tool used purposively by certain actors ‘as a mode of governmentality by diverse institutions to play with the unease, or to encourage it if it does not yet exist, so as to affirm their role as providers of protection and security’ (Bigo, 2002, p. 65). Corry argues that society is being (over-) controlled by cumulative security practices following a ‘riskification’ dynamic, which in turn is used as ‘a major tool and strategy of legitimation’ (Corry, 2012, p. 244). For critical security scholars this is a normatively unpleasant trajectory and not a plausible strategy for legitimation.

Thus, from both crisis management studies and critical security studies perspectives, crisisification does not bode well for the enhanced legitimacy of the EU. European studies scholars, who have identified many sources of legitimacy, can treat crisisification only in terms of an output-based strategy for legitimation, which is not particularly realistic considering the lessons gleaned from the other two bodies of literature.

Conclusion

Collective policy-making dynamics in the EU have undergone a process of crisisification of late: a determined focus on finding the next urgent event, a prioritization of speed in decision-making, new perceptions of which actors matter, and new narratives on the role and purpose of the EU. Importantly, these trends cross sectoral boundaries and incorporate crises of various types. While crisisification does not supplant traditional forms of policy-making in the EU it now stands alongside them. This article presented new evidence to that effect (section one) and drew upon both European integration literature and critical security approaches to explain why these dynamics have emerged (section two) and what their implications are (section three).

The broad goal here was to alert EU studies scholars to a rich area of empirical material and to developments that may require fresh theoretical perspectives in order to grasp the depth of the changes taking place. As Manners and Whitman argued in a special issue of this journal, the predominance of crises as a central feature in EU governance requires

‘different questions and answers to argue that another Europe is possible – one that challenges predominant ideas about both the field of EU studies and the EU itself’ (Manners and Whitman, 2016, p. 14). This analysis not only sought to introduce unconventional ways of studying EU policy-making (namely, using the contributions of critical security studies) but also pointed to normatively questionable policy, authority, and legitimation dynamics generated by crisisification. The hope is that future research will continue the analysis and uncover ways in which another Europe may be possible.

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