16. Muddling through: how the EU is countering new threats to the homeland

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I. Introduction

The European Union has always been characterized by a diversity of views, objectives and priorities. Atlanticism and Europeanism, activism and reticence, supra-nationalism and nationalism have coexisted in the area of security policy since the idea of a common European security and defence policy first emerged, in the 1950s. When France and the United Kingdom launched the European Security and Defence Policy in 1998, the minefield of divergent European world views was avoided by focusing on the pragmatic goal of upgrading Europe's military capabilities. The questions of where, with whom and for what Europe intended to use its military capabilities were left open. Thus, the ESDP can be said to have thrived on a deliberate ambiguity as to strategic questions and the final goal of the process.[1]

The emerging area of EU cooperation in enhancing societal security and countering new transnational threats, described in chapter 15 by Magnus Ekengren, is similarly characterized by ambiguity as to strategic goals, priorities and methods. Recognizing that the Union has a crucial role to play in this area, policy makers have launched a number of initiatives, spanning judicial and legal cooperation, intelligence cooperation, and cooperation to enhance transportation security, maritime and port security, health, food security and civil protection. Documents listing the numerous initiatives exist and the EU's Plan of Action on Combating Terrorism outlines seven so-called strategic priorities ranging from combating factors leading to radicalization via strengthening the international consensus in the effort against terrorism to improving the security of international transportation systems.[2] Yet, none of the many documents spells out the goal of the Union's effort, setting clear priorities and relating means to ends. In other words, there is no overarching strategy to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the EU's efforts to protect its citizens against new risks and threats within Europe's borders.[3]

[1] Howorth, J., 'European integration and defence: the ultimate challenge', Chaillot Paper no. 43, Institute for Security Studies, Western European Union, Paris, Nov. 2000, URL <http://www.iss-eu.org/>.

[2] Council of the European Union, 'EU Plan of Action on Combating Terrorism: update', Brussels, 29 Nov. 2004, URL <http://register.consilium.eu.int/pdf/en/04/st14/st14330-re01.en04.pdf>.

[3] For an explanation and overview of European and US homeland security policies see Dalgaard-Nielsen, A., 'Homeland security: American and European responses to September 11th', ed. J. Pilegaard, *The Politics of European Security* (Danish Institute for International Studies: Copenhagen, 2004), URL <http://www.diis.dk/>, pp. 159–78.

Modern societies have countless points of vulnerability and face a diverse range of threats and risks. Without a clear strategy to guide the efforts, scarce resources are likely to be wasted. Therefore, this chapter argues, the bottom-up processes described by Ekengren—where emerging practices define the field of EU societal security—need to be complemented with a deliberate top-down effort to formulate goals and set priorities. Based on lessons from the Nordic countries, this chapter discusses the challenges in formulating an EU strategy for societal security and suggests how the EU could nevertheless proceed.

While there is no consensus on how to define a strategy, two key elements appear in most definitions: any strategy should contain a description of its goal and a plan to reach that goal in a cost-effective way.[4] Table 16.1 identifies three essential components of a European strategy for societal security and indicates some of the major challenges entailed in formulating such a strategy. Sections II–IV study the three components identified. Section V considers Europe's need to take responsibility for its own societal security and section VI contains the conclusions.

II. Formulating goals, setting priorities

Any effective strategy requires that the goal of the effort be defined in a clear and realistic way. This is the case when it comes to traditional notions of military and national security, and it is no less the case for the emerging area of societal security.[5] Considering the multiplicity of vulnerabilities, the interdependence between countries and sectors, and the long list of potential targets and attack or accident scenarios, it becomes obvious that there can be no such thing as absolute security. Modern societies face a variety of risks, including terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and associated materials, organized crime, environmental and natural disasters, extreme weather, epidemics, man-made accidents and breakdowns in critical infrastructure. It is necessary to determine which risks have an acceptably low probability of occurrence and which do not, and to prioritize preventive and protective efforts accordingly, taking into account the potential scope of the damage associated with the different risks.

Leaders of the EU should consider carefully who and what the Union should be able to protect its citizens against. Logically, the EU should take responsibility for EU-wide threats and risks that cannot be handled effectively by any one country in isolation, as well as for new risks that result from the EU integration process and the internal market. Prevention and protection against

[4] Baylis, J. et al., *Strategy in the Contemporary World: An Introduction to Strategic Studies* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2002), p. 4.

[5] For a US attempt to develop such a strategy see Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction, 'Forging America's new normalcy', 5th Annual Report, RAND Corporation, National Security Research Division, Washington, DC, Dec. 2003, URL <http://www.rand.org/nsrd/terrpanel/>.

Table 16.1. Components of a strategy for societal security and major challenges in formulating such a strategy for the EU

Components of a strategy for societal security	Challenges in formulating an EU strategy for societal security
Formulating goals, setting priorities	
What and whom should the EU protect and against what?	There is no overview of EU-level vulnerabilities. It is politically tricky to set priorities.
Competence and capabilities	
Does the EU have the instruments and capabilities to realize the goal?	There is no overview of capabilities at local, national and EU level. There is limited interoperability and an absence of common standards.
Implementation	
How can means and ends be connected in the most effective and efficient way?	It is necessary to effectively coordinate a multiplicity of stakeholders. The use of risk assessment and regular evaluation of societal security programmes is necessary.

WMD incidents would belong to the first category; border protection would be an example from the latter category.

In order to set priorities, however, it is crucial to have an overview of EU-level vulnerabilities. Those risks and attack scenarios that will require an EU-level response should be identified so that they can be averted or handled effectively, and they should be ranked according to a combination of their relative probability and the potential consequences. No such overview or ranking exists today. One possible way to fill this gap would be to appoint an EU vulnerability commission along the lines of the national vulnerability commissions of the Nordic countries. These commissions have undertaken comprehensive analyses of the vulnerabilities in different sectors of society as well as the interdependence between the sectors.[6]

An overview of the EU's vulnerabilities would provide a factual basis for defining EU homeland security goals, for prioritizing the numerous possible initiatives and for allocating scarce resources in a way that ensures the maximum improvement in security and resilience. Even based on such an overview, however, it would remain politically difficult to set clear priorities. Defining who and what the EU is dedicated to protect entails simultaneously making

[6] Norwegian State Administration Service, *Et sårbart samfunn* [A vulnerable society], Norges Offentlige Utredninger 2000:24 (Statens forvaltningstjeneste: Oslo, 2000), URL <http://odin.dep.no/>; Swedish Commission on Vulnerability and Security, *Säkerhet i en ny tid* [Security in a new era], Statens Offentliga Utredningar 2001:41 (Fritzes: Stockholm, 2001), URL <http://www.regeringen.se/>; and Danish Committee for National Vulnerability Assessment, *National Sårbarhedsudredning* [National vulnerability report] (Beredskabsstyrelsen: Birkerød, 2004), URL <http://www.brs.dk/info/rapport/>.

clear who and what it will not be able to protect. Decision makers would probably prefer not to have to make such distinctions. Moreover, for such decisions to be legitimate it would probably be necessary to allow for public debate and the involvement of civil society in the priority-setting process—things that are notoriously difficult to obtain at the EU level. Terrorism experts might also counsel that being excessively specific and public about defensive priorities is tactically unwise, as it could provide terrorists with a roadmap for target selection, albeit a rudimentary one. Yet, for the sake of democratic legitimacy, it is still preferable to set the priorities by design, rather than by default, and openly, rather than implicitly. Although the European Parliament does not have within its purview all the sectors that an EU strategy for societal or homeland security ought to cover, it might still provide a useful and open forum for a comprehensive debate about goals and priorities.

III. Competence and capabilities

Once the goal of the strategy has been formulated, the next set of challenges is to determine whether the EU has the competence and capabilities required to reach that goal. The EU does already have competence in some of the relevant policy areas, such as transportation, food safety and nuclear safety. However, key areas such as policing, intelligence, defence and civil protection remain member state competences. Depending on the homeland security goals that the EU sets itself, it might be necessary for the member states to grant the EU competence to coordinate or to promulgate standards in additional areas, for example, in the area of civil protection against non-conventional threats and risks.

It would also appear logical to extend the area of EU competence when it comes to new potential security concerns arising from the EU integration process itself. The EU's internal market, for example, has created competitive pressure on operators of power grids and telecommunication networks that could conceivably have a negative effect on safety and security standards. If national authorities are reluctant to impose costly security requirements on national providers operating in a highly competitive EU market, the lowest common denominator in security will end up predominating in the entire EU area. In such circumstances, it is worth considering whether the EU should be authorized to issue common and binding standards for all companies operating in the EU in order to avoid a downward spiral. A similar logic is at play when it comes to protection of dangerous materials, which could be stolen and used in a terrorist attack anywhere in a Europe with no internal border controls. The EU might need to be able to issue common security standards to ensure that a borderless Europe does not become a less secure Europe. One framework for this would be a common EU approach to the implementation of United Nations

Security Council Resolution 1540 on WMD transfer and trafficking,[7] although there might be other 'dangerous materials' that this would not cover.

As mentioned above, policing, intelligence, defence and civil protection remain areas of member state competence. Whereas in the wake of 11 September 2001 the EU strengthened its legal and judicial cooperation and created common analytical capabilities within Europol and Eurojust,[8] there has been relatively little focus on creating common civil protection capabilities. A common database covering member state capabilities exists, but equipment and standards currently vary widely between member states, compromising interoperability between national services.

In the wake of the terrorist attacks on Madrid on 11 March 2004, EU leaders pledged with the so-called 'Solidarity Clause' to come to each others' aid in case of a terrorist attack or natural disaster, with all available civil and military means.[9] If policy makers are serious about the Solidarity Clause, it would be logical to move towards common EU standards and procedures for civil protection and emergency response in order to ensure interoperability between national services. In that way, solidarity would be more than just a political signal: it would have practical value for 'first responders' on the ground and for citizens in a disaster area. Naturally, strong national economic interests would complicate a move towards common standards, emphasizing again the need for political courage in order to improve the security of EU citizens against new threats.

Standardization would in itself provide a tremendous boost to common EU civil protection capabilities. However, specialized capabilities—for example, to prevent and protect against WMD incidents—might be in short supply. In addition to charting and ranking EU vulnerabilities, an EU vulnerability commission could also formulate headline goals for societal security, assuming that the commission concludes that current capabilities are not sufficient to meet EU societal security needs.

IV. Implementation

Societal security spans a broad field. If the effort to maintain societal security is to be effective, numerous agencies, different levels of government, private companies and the public need to be persuaded to play a part.

Table 16.2 lists some of the major functions included in the emerging area of societal security. Using Denmark as an example, the table illustrates the number

[7] United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, 28 Apr. 2004, URL <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/>.

[8] Europol was established by the EU in 1995 with the objective of improving police cooperation between the member states in order to combat terrorism, illicit traffic in drugs and other serious forms of international crime. Eurojust was established in 2002 by the EU with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness of member states' authorities in dealing with the investigation and prosecution of serious cross-border and organized crime.

[9] Council of the European Union, 'Declaration on combating terrorism', Brussels, 24 Mar. 2004, URL <http://ue.eu.int/>. See also the Introduction to this volume.

of actors involved in providing security on the member state level. The right-hand column lists the additional actors involved at the EU level.

The long list of stakeholders indicates the difficulty of ensuring effective cross-governmental coordination. The Danish experience indicates that even at the national level it can be extremely difficult to persuade governmental agencies and companies that do not have security as their primary mission to give priority to vulnerability reduction and emergency planning.[10] If this is the case even in a small country where homeland security is among the top priorities of the government, where most top bureaucrats know each other and where most ministries are located within walking distance of each other, coordination and prioritization of homeland security in the EU will not be an easy task. Persuasion and voluntary coordination might not suffice when it comes to motivating and coordinating a large number of less than enthusiastic actors.

As shown in table 16.2, responsibility for protective and preventive initiatives in the EU is divided between the Council of the European Union and the European Commission, between several different directorates-general, between authorities at the EU and national levels, and between different organizations and levels of government within the EU member states. After the March 2004 terrorist attacks on Madrid, EU leaders appointed an anti-terrorism coordinator to coordinate the work of the Council and to 'maintain an overview' of all EU instruments for the prevention of and protection against terrorism.[11] Yet, lacking line management authority over most of the actors listed in table 16.2, the EU anti-terrorism coordinator has to rely on the power of persuasion—an inadequate instrument judging from the Danish experience. Arguably, if Europe is to forge an effective societal security policy, a stronger anti-terrorism coordinator with a staff and budget will be needed. Such a person, armed with discretionary funds that could be distributed in order to promote the upgrading and standardization of member state capabilities, could also be charged with following up on the implementation of societal security headline goals, should the EU decide that current capabilities are insufficient.

The final elements of the effective and efficient implementation of a strategy for societal security are instruments for regular evaluation. The ultimate measure of success in the large area of societal security, at least in terms of prevention and of improvement of resilience (as distinct from emergency response), is the absence of events. This obviously complicates programme evaluation. An EU vulnerability commission would thus also have to consider what proxy variables the EU could monitor to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the effort. It also remains important to monitor programmes and initiatives for unintended side effects. Raising security in one area—for example, around one category of potential terrorist targets—might compromise security in other sectors or geographical locations. Security measures involving the

[10] Danish Emergency Management Agency, 'Samlet evalueringsrapport: krisestyringsøvelse 2003 (KRISØV 2003)' [Joint evaluation report: crisis control exercise 2003 (KRISØV 2003)], Beredskabsstyrelsens: Copenhagen, Nov. 2004, URL <http://www.brs.dk/info/rapport/kriseoevelse2003/>, pp. 7, 12.

[11] Council of the European Union (note 9).

Table 16.2. Functions and actors in homeland security at the national level in Denmark and at the EU level

Homeland security functions	Actors in Danish homeland security	Actors in European Union homeland security
Intelligence and warning Border- and transportation security Domestic counter-terrorism Protect critical infrastructure Prevent and defend against chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear attack Emergency preparedness and response	Forsvarets Efterretnings-tjeneste (defence intelligence service) Politiets Efterretningstjeneste (Danish Security Intelligence Service) Ministries of: Defence, including Beredskabsstyrelsens (Danish Emergency Management Agency) Foreign Affairs Interior and Health Justice Transportation Environment Knowledge, Technology, and Education Commerce Counties and municipalities, the private sector and the population	Council of the European Union European Commission Directorate-General for: Justice and Home Affairs Environment Energy and Transportation Health and Consumer Protection Research, Development, Technology and Innovation Europol Eurojust Police Chiefs' Task Force European Judicial Network Counter-Terrorism Group Terrorism Working Group Working Party on Terrorism External Borders Agency National governments National agencies Local governments Private business, voluntary organizations and the population

screening, profiling, detention and search of potential terrorist suspects may not only compromise civil liberties and the right to privacy, but also alienate segments of the population whose cooperation is crucial in the counter-terrorism and societal security effort. In some areas—for example, aviation security—security measures may have a negative impact on safety; this was the argument of a number of European pilots' associations when the USA requested that armed air marshals be placed on board certain transatlantic flights. Finally, the economic costs of security measures imposed on private companies need to be taken into account when attempting to strike a balance between security and other EU priorities, such as growth and freedom of movement.

In sum, there are a number of political and practical challenges when it comes to forging a European strategy for societal security. However, the alternative is that European citizens will not enjoy the protection at home that they should and could with a more focused EU effort; and that the EU will not allocate the

money that it does spend on societal security to the areas where the need is highest and the payback greatest.

V. Europe's responsibility

After World War II, Western Europe grew strong under the sheltering wing of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Through NATO's collective defence clause, the USA in effect guaranteed Europe's territorial security against the threat of a Soviet attack. Throughout the 1990s, the USA continued to prove willing, albeit at times belatedly, to engage in the management of threats to Europe's security emanating from the wars in the former Yugoslavia. In the area of societal security, in contrast, there is no external actor to take responsibility.

Today, both the threats to security and the USA's willingness to manage them on Europe's behalf are changing. The USA is neither willing nor able to protect the European homeland against risks such as infrastructure breakdowns, epidemics, organized crime and terrorist attacks. On the contrary, when it comes to terrorism, instead of contributing directly and positively to EU security, the USA is currently—although indirectly and inadvertently—increasing the threat to Europe's homeland. At least in the short and medium terms the US-led military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq have spurred strong anti-Western feelings in the Muslim world and enhanced the recruitment opportunities of terrorist organizations and cells, including among minorities in Europe—witness the bombings in Madrid in March 2004 and in London in July 2005.[12] At the same time, US homeland security efforts, while in no way foolproof, have made it more difficult to strike the USA proper, thus conceivably redirecting some attacks towards US targets in Europe or towards European targets.

In sum, when coping with new threats to the European homeland, no one but the Europeans themselves can take responsibility. In this respect the stakes of European security cooperation have increased. Although many of the new risks and threats, barring the prospect of terrorists coming into possession of WMD, are certainly less existential than the threat of a Soviet attack, they do threaten European lives.

VI. Conclusions: difficult, not impossible

Forging an EU strategy for societal security is fraught with practical and political difficulties. Threat perceptions vary between member states; jealously guarded national competences will be at stake; institutional set-ups, procedures

[12] Brumberg, D., Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 'Arab public opinion and U.S. foreign policy: a complex encounter', Testimony to the US Congress, 8 Oct. 2002, URL <http://www.ceip.org/>, pp. 3–4; and Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 'A year after Iraq War: mistrust of America in Europe ever higher, Muslim anger persists', Survey report, 16 Mar. 2004, URL <http://people-press.org/reports/>.

and equipment differ; and large numbers of actors have to be persuaded to play their part. To some extent, homeland security will have to be an exercise in muddling through: it will have to continue to be based on bottom-up processes.

A common European domestic intelligence service, a European police force and a seamless judicial system might still be a distant, and arguably undesirable, prospect.[13] However, this is not the case for other areas of societal security cooperation. Reinforced European cooperation on protecting critical infrastructure and services, securing dangerous materials and protecting civil populations against unconventional threats do not, like traditional areas of security policy, threaten the core pillars of national sovereignty and identity. Clearly, political will and courage are required, but the obstacles to cooperation ought to be less formidable than the obstacles that for so long prevented the formulation of a common European security strategy for external security.

Considering the strides that have been made towards a common European external security strategy—in December 2003 EU leaders for the first time managed to agree on an EU strategy that outlines threats and international strategic goals in a broad way[14]—it becomes even more difficult to argue that formulating a common strategy for societal security is not politically feasible. Effective protection of the citizens of EU countries against new risks and threats calls for close EU cooperation guided by a clear strategy. Formulating such a strategy, agreeing common standards and implementing them will prove difficult, but it should not be impossible. With high-level political commitment and courage, Europe has the opportunity to forge a common strategy and enhance societal security before instead of after a major disaster with signifycant cross-border repercussions hits.

The Nordic countries have, since the end of the cold war, converged around a concept of comprehensive security, encompassing security and safety in the face of a broad range of risks and threats. All the Nordic countries have, as pointed out above, completed extensive societal vulnerability analyses and are currently working towards expanded civil–military cooperation in providing security for their respective homelands. In the Öresund region, around the Danish capital Copenhagen and the Swedish city Malmö, emergency management cooperation is also being expanded. Arguably, a stronger EU role when it comes to dealing with trans-border threats to societal security ought to be both compatible with Nordic security concepts and a necessary complement to current national and regional efforts.

[13] For a more elaborate discussion of the potential negative impact of enhanced internal EU security measures on civil liberties see Dalgaard-Nielsen, A., 'Civil liberties and counter-terrorism: a European point of view', Cooperative Security Program Opinions Series, Center for Transatlantic Relations, Johns Hopkins University, School of Advanced International Studies, Washington, DC, Feb. 2004, URL <http://transatlantic.sais-jhu.edu/>.

[14] Council of the European Union, 'A secure Europe in a better world: European Security Strategy', Brussels, 12 Dec. 2003, URL <http://ue.eu.int/cms3_fo/showPage.ASP?id=266>.