
European integration tends to move forward in times of crisis. In the realm of security, the wars in the Balkans, the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the rift over the 2003 invasion of Iraq have pushed further integration of European security and defence. Meanwhile, the current austerity crisis, the United States’ reorientation towards the Asia–Pacific region and the recent changes in the EU’s southern neighbourhood provide new pressures for a more integrated and effective Europe. Although prodded by crises, European security integration should not be seen as ad hoc, but rather as a continuous process of small steps alternating with larger strides. With the European Council of 2013 discussing security and defence policy for the first time in years, one can wonder who ‘holds the compass’ and guides these steps.

*Security Integration in Europe*, by Mai’a K. Davis Cross, provides insight into the roles played by Brussels-based networks of diplomatic and military professionals in shaping European security integration. The book is a study of the less-known world of the EU’s governing bodies on internal and external security. Looking at the processes of the expert groups that influence policy outcomes called ‘epistemic communities’, Cross goes deeply into the day-to-day workings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER), the Political and Security Committee (PSC) and the EU Military Committee (EUMC), and gives a vivid account of how European security integration is advanced through these bodies. Her study into these bodies is structured through a theoretical approach towards epistemic communities, inspired by the work of Peter Haas. In this way, the development of European integration in the field of internal and external security is not examined from the perspective of its member states, but from the perspective of the communities of experts that make authoritative claims based on their professional expertise and thereby influence and guide the policy decisions of the member states and the EU. Haas’s concept of epistemic communities focused on academic debates and resulting publications. Cross, however, applies it to the communities of diplomats and military professionals in COREPER, the PSC and the EUMC, and their deliberations and policy outcomes. The proceedings of these meetings are not made public, so the book mostly relies on interviews to establish how various outcomes emerged. Cross found an impressive number of representatives who were willing to share their insights, and many of them even allowed themselves to be quoted.

Cross’s research shows that the three bodies generally share common modes of operation that diverge from classical thought on international relations. For instance, it shows that the biggest and most powerful member states are not...
dictating European security integration and that outcomes are often more than the sum of the member states’ positions. Although the capitals still have considerable influence, the epistemic communities’ professional expertise and vantage point over the complex Brussels dynamic give them considerable leverage to interpret, renegotiate, or even diverge from their capitals’ positions. Cross reports that a strong common desire exists within the communities to advance European integration through deliberation and compromise beyond the lowest common denominator of national interests.

Earlier studies have also indicated the existence of socialization processes (‘going native’) and consensus-seeking styles of operation, but Cross structurally addresses the underlying reasons for this kind of agency through the cohesiveness of epistemic communities. The cohesiveness of these communities is measured by variables that are dealt with consistently throughout the book’s chapters: commonality in selection and training; the frequency and quality of meetings and the existence of shared professional norms; and the degree to which a common culture among the members is present. Cohesiveness, Cross argues, creates agency and the ability to persuade capitals of shared norms and policy goals, as is demonstrated in a number of examples. The cases of the counter-terrorism strategy on radicalization and recruitment and the European Defence Agency’s long-term vision are described in detail.

The last chapter of the book discusses two loose and nascent epistemic communities. The Group of Personalities in the Field of Security Research (GofP) influenced the direction of EU security research in 2004-2006, but it lacked the cohesiveness and staying power to be considered a full epistemic community. The Civilian Crisis Management Committee (Civcom) has been able to push cooperation and shows the potential to become an epistemic community, according to Cross, but for now is lacking in informal meetings, common experience and culture. In both cases, the relationship between cohesiveness and the influence on outcomes diverges from the theoretical model, indicating that there may be other variables or explanations to be considered. Another reason for amending the theoretical framework would be to facilitate the inclusion of think tanks into the research. Cross discards think tanks as epistemic communities, arguing that they do not share close ties and do not advance shared policy goals. Contrary to Cross’s view, one can note that think-tank experts often do interact in networks and

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