



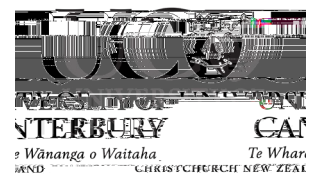
RESEARCH COLLECTION

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# TO THE RESCUE: DISASTER RESPONSE AS A DRIVER FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

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# TO THE RESCUE? DISASTER RESPONSE AS A DRIVER FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

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area. States are aware that disasters know no borders and are, by definition, only limited by geographic range rather than political boundaries. In addition, even when the specifics of the disaster may not impact upon the territory of a state, the economic and social consequences (collapse of markets, population movements and so on) have consequences far beyond the territory where the disaster occurs. To add to this, the cross-border nature of DRM, few (if any) states can afford to have the response capacity necessary with such events lying fallow, ready for the day they are needed. Yet, despite these obvious functional drivers favouring cooperation, personal security is seen as the most national of responsibilities, at the very heart of the Westphalian state.

This began to change at the global level with the UN's declaration of the 1990s as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, as states became increasingly concerned by the impact of disasters, particularly upon developing economies. These culminated in the 2005 Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015).<sup>3</sup> The focus has expanded in the wake of disaster events in developed states which also overwhelmed domestic capacity (Hurricane Katrina 2005, The Tohoku Earthquake 2011 and Canterbury Earthquake Sequence 2010/2011) and the HFA has now been superseded by the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030).<sup>4</sup> These now provide a global legal framework for cooperation in the field which provides specifically (if rather vaguely) for regional organisations to provide a role in the global field.<sup>5</sup>

At the regional level, things have moved more slowly and although there are some examples of regional DRM agreements dating back to the 1970s (both ASEAN and Pacific Island States developed some agreements in this area during this time), regional cooperation

<sup>1</sup> This can be most seen most clearly in the use of the term "Civil Defence" (still used in some states) which emerged in the immediate post-war period. This saw disaster management as part of wider conception of

in the field has been limited until much more recently. The EU in particular has come late to the DRM party.

In the 1980s, this European reluctance to cooperate began to change. The pace of this increased rapidly at the turn of the century, driven by an increase in the frequency and ferocity of disasters across the EU. While Member States also began to experience novel hazards that they have not traditionally faced. This led to increased pressure on domestic capacity to respond and as a result Member States turned more frequently to the EU for assistance. As a direct result of these pressures and a weakening of Member State opposition to the EU involvement in this most domestic of fields, the EU has, in the form of a revamped European Union Civil Protection Mechanism, developed a national capacity in the field, far beyond that originally envisaged and at trm nhe0.68 -1.i13.2(0.Tc 0.15a48. (e)3.9

created a limited European disaster management framework. These mechanisms focussed on sharing of information in the areas of disaster response, with the purpose being to facilitate operational cooperation among Member States<sup>9</sup>

It took over a decade for these tentative steps towards European cooperation in DRM to become formalised through as a result of the 1997 Community Action Program in the field of civil protection. This led to the formal establishment of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (EUCPM) in 2001.<sup>10</sup> This mechanism still focussed upon the promotion of cooperation amongst Member States rather than the development of a truly European approach to DRM. It also established the principle that DRM within the territory of the EU external to it would be managed as a single competence and limited the scope of EUCP 12 (d Tw 29T9o)]TJ 0

protecting against natural or manmade disasters.<sup>15</sup> This power remains limited as it is a so





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development of EU capacity which has the practical impact of shifting the EU's competences from a "supporting" role, into something more substantial, at least within the territory of the EU. The new legislative framework provides the EU with the authority to develop this EU DRM capacity by a variety of means, including acquisition, or perhaps more likely, buying, rental or leasing.<sup>30</sup> The exact means by which the rescEU reserve will be developed and the resources to be acquired is largely a Commission responsibility. The original proposal envisaged that the Commission could own these assets directly but this proved a step too far for Member States. Instead, ownership will remain with Member States but resources will be subject to written contracts around the use that Member States can make of the resources.<sup>31</sup> Tactical control of these units will also remain with Member States but, importantly, the capacity will remain separate from national capacities, with decisions on deployment in the hands of the Commission:<sup>32</sup>

The decision on their deployment and demobilisation, and any decision in the event of conflicting requests, shall be taken by the Commission in close coordination with the requesting Member State and the Member State owning, renting or leasing the capacity, in accordance with operational contracts.

The reference to "close coordination" reflects a compromise with Member States that was added to the original Commission proposal. However, although the hosting Member State is to be part of the decision, the deployment decision of the rescEU asset lies with the EU level, no matter the specific role of an individual Member State in the ownership of the resource. This places the EU, for the first time, at the heart of decisions around DRM in the EU and places final decisions for the deployment of rescEU with the Commission.

<sup>18</sup> Delegated authority is also provided to the Commission to develop a new legislative framework to implement the new EUCPM and rescEU capacity that underpins it. In the transitional period (until 2025), however, the Commission is







*V RescEU and the Future of European Regional Integration*

That this has been achieved with the almost unanimous support of the (remaining) Member States marks a remarkable shift in attitude and provides a welcome good news story for a European level that has struggled with its association with liberalism and austerity. It is also notable that the EU's advances in this area are an exception, as although many other regions have attempted to increase-co