



Emotions and the making of protective policies

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About PROTEMO

PROTEMO investigates the emotional connection between the state and individuals. The focus is on protective policies and their consequences for individuals, groups of citizens and non-citizens as well as for democracy, political participation, and mobilisation. www.protemo.eu

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List of Abbreviations

AIT	Affective Intelligence Theory
MSF	Multiple Streams Framework
WP	Work Package

Executive Summary

The literature review presented here examines research on protective policies and on emotions related to policymaking, political communication and politics in general, synthesising the findings of 430 academic articles and book chapters drawing mainly from policy studies and political psychology while also including works from related disciplines. On protective policies, the analysis shows that the concept itself has not been used widely hitherto, whereas protection is mentioned repeatedly in articles related to specific policy areas, such as social protection, environmental protection or health protection. On emotions in the realm of politics, the review illustrates that scholars have extensively investigated the affective dimensions of political behaviour and political communication. However, with some exceptions, extensive empirical studies on the concrete role of emotion in the process of policy-making are missing from the academic literature.

Drawing together the results of these two parts, the review yields several important insights about possible interlinkages, namely on the target groups of protection, the origin of protection, the assessment of the need of protection, providers of protection, policy instruments providing protection, drivers of protection and the time horizon related to protection. These findings not only highlight gaps in extant research but also lead to an enhanced understanding of the cross-cuttingness of protection. This literature review served as an input for the internal workshop on the theoretical and conceptual foundations (T1.4) of the PROTEMO project. It can furthermore inform a theoretical conceptualization of protective policies as well as design empirical methodologies for the studies in the project and guide the development of hypotheses on how emotions affect the process of protective policy-making and vice versa.

Introduction and Key Concepts

This literature review is part of work package (WP) 1 *Theoretical and conceptual framework* of the PROTEMO project. The WP1's objective is to consolidate the interdisciplinary theoretical framework that guides the project's work. Key elements addressed in this review comprise the concept of protective policy, emotions in politics and in (protective) policymaking as well as political communication.

The concept of protective policies is not well established in the social science literature yet, although there has been much writing on protection in individual policy areas such as social protection (Estevez-Abe, Iversen, & Soskice, 2001; Jensen & Wenzelburger, 2020; Scruggs & Hayes, 2017), environmental protection (Panwar, Kaushik, & Kothari, 2011; Rehbinder & Stewart, 1985) or protection from crime (Wilhite & Allen, 2008; Zahnnow, Zhang, & Corcoran, 2021). Protection thus appears to be a relevant concept cutting across many different policy areas. Albertson and Gadarian give a preliminary definition for protective policies stating that "policies can be considered protective based on the quality of the policy, because political leaders frame them as such, or because few opposing policies effectively challenge them" (2015, 100f.). While their definition has served as a starting point for the review, this contribution aims at providing a more in-depth and refined conceptualisation of the notion of protective policies, which is key to the PROTEMO project. The literature review draws on over 430 studies which were deemed most relevant and are referenced in the bibliography. The references span various academic disciplines, including social and cognitive psychology, political psychology, political science, policy sciences and communication science/studies.

Protective Policies

From the literature review, we can conclude that the term of “protective policy” has not been thoroughly discussed as a transversal concept cross-cutting several policy areas. Instead, “protective” as an adjective has been used widely in connection with concrete policies, mainly in the realm of the welfare state, law and order or crime, foreign and security policies, environmental policies, health policies and migration. Following this order, most articles discussing protection are indeed published on welfare state policies and examine a variety of forms of social protection, such as protection from poverty or protection from unemployment. By showing that policies geared towards protection do not necessarily lead to the desired, perhaps even reverse effects, Dercon (2002) urges to be careful not to equate policy outputs with the consequences (policy outcomes) on the ground for those individuals or groups at which the measures are aimed. It is thus essential that caution to the specific policy instruments is taken into account in any study on protective policies. Besides concrete instruments, studies also highlight the importance of considering which groups in society are actually demanding and benefitting from the promised protection (Huo et al., 2008; Mares, 2005). Huo et al. conclude that, whereas certain policies traditionally advocated by social democratic parties seem to be correlated with higher protection from short-term unemployment, this is not the case for other instruments common in the repertoire of social democratic parties (2008, 17). In addition, scholars point to the importance of functionally equivalent policies. Whilst Castles demonstrates that trade policy and labour market regulation acted as functional equivalents of social protection in 20th century Australia and New Zealand (Castles, 1985, 1989), Mares (2005), on the other hand, empirically shows that welfare state expansion can be seen as a functional equivalent to protection through trade policy. Mares’s insight underlines the need to conceptualise protective policies transversally across individual policy areas. A final contribution to these macro-level studies is made by Burgoon and Dekker (2010) who find that demand for (social) protection by citizens is rooted in actual job insecurity due to precarious work contracts and channelled through subjective job and economic insecurity as felt by the survey respondents in their study.

In foreign and security policy, some loosely related articles show that foreign policy-making can be modelled as responding to demands of protection by citizens or certain norms and values, such as democracy (Wolff & Wurm, 2011). Other studies stress the necessity for protective policies to address a group of individuals which is in need of protection and that this group is not necessarily the citizens living within a nation-state (Mythen et al., 2012; Roberts, 2017). Mythen et al. make an important contribution by looking at different groups of individuals within a society and showing that protecting certain groups with policy measures can entail the opposite feelings of being less protected and more insecure for other groups within one and the same country – a phenomenon the authors name “partial security” (2012, 395). Their article also links the concept of protection to specific policies, namely law and order policies directed at prevention of harm, which they dub “policies of pre-emption”. With more direct reference to the concept of protective policy, McCormack (2010) shows that the notion of the “protective state” is broad, encompassing more policies (and risks/threats) than those conceived of as “security policy”. In contrast to critical sociology literature, he understands the decline of secret security policies and the expansion of the public protective state as the result of a state struggling with legitimacy issues which are sought to be countered through civic engagement and transparency that legitimise protective policies.

While the literature on law and order policies covers a wide range of different policies related to protection comprising policies related to quite varying degrees of risks and threats. It is also

evident that individual perceptions of threat and anxiety are strongly linked to support for protective policies, and that individual-level factors, such as a person's secure attachment, moderate this relationship (Huddy et al., 2007). Articles in this policy area also draw attention to contextualisation of where and how those policies are implemented on the ground as something that must be taken into account when conceptualizing protective policies as well as their effects (Arias, 2013; Freeman, 2009). Finally, while focussing on the state as main provider of security may be the most evident strategy, scholars need to be open for the possibility that protection may be provided by non-state actors (such as gangs in a neighbourhood) and that state engagement may even reduce the security when it conflicts with the local security arrangements (Arias, 2013).

In the field of environmental and energy policy, protective policies, as a concept, is not explicitly used. It is hard to sum up what lies at the core of the notion of "protective policies" in this area. To some extent, it refers to the protection of consumers and natural environments against risks (i.e., pollution) (Blesl et al., 2010; Howden et al., 2023), but it can also encompass the protection against insecure provision as in security of energy supply or even against direct attacks on infrastructure (Farrell et al., 2004).

In the area of health policies, again, studies do not explicitly deal with "protective policies", albeit being all relevant to the issue. From the studies about occupational health and safety (Carleton et al., 2018; Sorensen et al., 2021), a key take-away is the fact that protective policies indeed play a role to grant protection through, first, dedicated regulatory policies in the area of occupational health and safety and, second, through 'other social protection policies', including minimum wage policies and sick leave. In a cross-country comparison, Hick and Murphy (2021) find that different countries, in this example, the UK and Ireland, ramped up protective policies in the wake of the pandemic but did so in markedly diverging ways which can be explained partly with reference to policy legacies and government ideologies.

Regarding the final area of migration policies, studies emphasise the need not only to look at the actual groups that are protected by a policy but to also take into account that by identifying such groups, the question of how to define the in- and out-groups moves centre-stage. This brings questions of identities, cultural norms and political dynamics to the fore.

For further readings, see:

- On protective policies in general: Albertson & Gadarian 2015; Ansell 2019; Starke, Elbek and Wenzelburger 2024
- On protection in *migration policies*: Koning, 2021; Sajjad, 2018; Uehling, 2008
- On protection in *welfare state policies*: Garritzmann et al. 2022; Olsen 2019; Rehm 2016; Seelkopf & Starke, 2019
- On protection in *law and order policies*: Tonry 2022; Wenzelburger 2020; Zedner, 2009
- On *protection in health policies*: Blank, Burau & Kuhlmann, 2017; Schmidt, de Carvalho, & Rothgang, 2024; Wendt, 2022

Emotions in Political Science Research

Studies on emotions in a political context are rooted in different theoretical approaches on how to conceptualise emotion and affect, with two most influential ones: (Cognitive) Appraisal Theory and a constructivist account of emotion. Most commonly, scholars build on Appraisal Theory which defines emotion as a multi-component phenomenon centring the name-giving element of

cognitive appraisal. Cognitive appraisal thereby refers to the individual's detection and evaluation of external stimuli in regard to whether and how these are significant for personal well-being (Frijda & Mesquita in Kitayama & Markus, 1995, 51; Moors et al., 2013, 120; Smith & Lazarus, 1993, 237). This makes cognition essential to the human experience of emotion. Scholars of this approach hold that the evaluation of one's environment then translates into "action tendencies" (Scherer, 2005, 698), that is, into specific behavioural responses of the individual to the perceived changes in their environment (Lerner & Keltner, 2000, 476; Schmidt-Atzert, et al., 2014, 210). The fact that it is strictly speaking not the event or stimulus itself that elicits an emotion but our evaluation of it, highlights the intertwinement of cognition and affect in the literature and may also explain the strong influence of cognitive appraisal theory, especially within political research.

Scholars in political science and policy studies also commonly adopt a constructivist account of emotion which understands emotions as not only psychologically constructed by memory, predictions and embodied knowledge but also being heavily influenced by social roles and values in a culture or society (Frijda & Mesquita in Kitayama & Markus, 1995; Pierce, 2021, 597f.). In that sense, emotions, strictly speaking, constitute individual, quite heterogenous experiences that vary over a person's course of life and depend on the given situational context (Barrett, 2006, 27, 32). On the other hand, an individual perceives emotional expressions of others via categorization (Barrett, 2006, 27), a cognitive process of making sense of the environment. Here again, one is confronted with an intricate relationship between cognition and emotion. Boundaries between different emotion theories in (political) psychology are however not clear-cut, and scientific research is often informed by more than one approach.

What unites the variety of contemporary approaches and theories is a tacit, sometimes explicit agreement on a processual or componential definition. Emotions inform us of changes in our environment, assigning them an essential function in aiding how we understand the world (Pierce, 2021, 599), and hence strongly influence politically-relevant behaviour as well as how we interact in and engage with the political realm more broadly. Given this scientific realisation, scholars have introduced different theories for analysing emotions in political contexts with *Affective Intelligence Theory* (AIT) by George E. Marcus, Michael MacKuen and W. Russell Neuman as the perhaps most prominent and widely used example from political psychology.

Enjoying particular popularity in US political psychology, AIT maintains that emotions help individuals "manage their attention to the political world" (Marcus et al., 2011, 324). This allows to draw conclusions regarding specific behavioural reactions in political contexts. Based on the general assumptions made by AIT, Pierce (2021, 602) illustrates how different discrete emotions can be grouped together on the basis of triggering the same expected behavioural response. In a review of studies using AIT, Funck and Lau however question the significance of most findings corroborating AIT advising researchers to be cautious towards the multiplicity of determinants of human behaviour (2023, 14f.). In addition, even though AIT is the most mentioned emotion theory, political science scholars mainly use it in an eclectic manner (i.e., Banks, 2014; Valentino et al., 2011; Vasilopoulos et al. 2022; Wamsler et al., 2021).

Studies examined in this literature review show that anger and fear are the most studied emotions in political research (cf. Wagner & Morisi, 2019). Generally speaking, anxiety is found to be causally linked to increased policy-learning (Lablih et al., 2024), whilst anger is connected to specific voting preferences, namely to the increased support for radical parties even though a causal relationship between emotion and radical vote cannot clearly and consistently be established (Jacobs et al., 2024, 23).

From the review, we can also conclude that a topic of particular interest in political science research, which deals with (mainly negative) emotions, is populism. In this light, mainly right-wing populist success in Europe and the US is frequently explained through the usage of heightened emotional rhetoric (Hopkins in Huddy et al., 2023; Verbalyte, Bonansinga & Exadaktylos, 2022). More concretely, besides emotions of resentment and fear, anger is found to be the recurring affective ingredient in populist communication and a factor for its success.

For further readings, see:

- On *emotion theory*: Gadarian & Brader in Huddy et al. (Eds.), 2023; Moors et al., 2013
- On *emotions and populism*: Abts & Baute, 2022; Erhardt et al., 2023; Flinders and Hinterleitner, 2022; Marx, 2020; Tolbert et al., 2018; Widmann 2021, 163; Wirz, 2018; Valentim & Widmann, 2023

Emotions in (Protective) Policymaking

Studies on emotions in public policymaking show that there are multiple opportunities during the process of introducing a policy in which emotions play a role and can thus be analysed. When it comes to protective policies, uncertainty and insecurity prevail, and negative emotions appear to be more prominent. Moreover, understanding something as an issue of protection relies on the successful communication or framing of said topic (cf. Albertson & Gadarian, 2015, 43). A specific threat needs to be identified as such which, in turn, needs to be addressed by a respective policy (ibid.). In security studies, this understanding has given rise to an extensive strand of literature on 'securitization'. (see Copenhagen School; Waever, 1993).

Research on the usage of emotional rhetoric in times of crisis and heightened public perception of threat stresses that presenting something as a threat, thereby eliciting fear among the public, is a strategic choice. When coming from political actors, it is usually aimed at garnering electoral support as fear represents a powerful motivational driver that can even override partisanship (Albertson & Gadarian, 2015, 136). Anxious people prefer politicians who promise them protection and favour those policies which they deem avert risk and provide protection (ibid., 101; cf. Wagner & Morisi, 2019). With regard to the Covid-19 pandemic, some studies look at the linkage between behavioural responses to protective, Covid-related policies and experiences of different emotions. Nonetheless, even in times of heightened public perception of threat, research has found that political communication is not exclusively appealing to negative but a wide range of differently valenced emotions (Gross, 2008; Loseke, 2009).

In political science, the approach to decision-making is still knowledge-centric (Knaggård, Dolan & Blum, 2019; Paul & Haddad, 2019: 310), whereas the concept of emotion remains understudied despite the so-called 'affective turn' in social sciences. Nonetheless, extant policy theories have in fact a lot to say about rationality in policymaking. The Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) by John Kingdon is a prominent theory of policy-making which finds at its core two epistemological assumptions: ambiguity and bounded rationality. For certain scholars (Cairney & Weible, 2017, 620; Cairney & Jones, 2016, 42; Knaggård, Dolan & Blum, 2019; Kuhlmann in Zohlnhöfer & Rüb, 2016; Zahariadis, 2015), these are manifestations of something beyond certainty and rationality considered in the MSF already at the foundational level. Zahariadis, even posits that the MSF is the only framework "that pays explicit attention to emotion via the concept of national mood" (2015, 467). Maor and Gross (2015, 3) conceptualise and add the emotional entrepreneur as a central actor in the policy-making process. Others focus more on the processes described by the MSF, arguing that any problem definition incorporates knowledge, values and emotion (Knaggård,

2015, 456). Considering that framing is essentially about selective highlighting, Knaggård claims that specific actors may prioritise the emotional aspect of a frame whenever knowledge is limited (2015, 457). Other studies examine the affective dimension of bringing together different actors and processes in order to successfully adopt a policy. In this context, Zahariadis (2015, 477) asserts that, under certain circumstances, fear heavily impacts the ways in which specific problems are coupled with respective policy solutions

For further readings, see:

- On *emotion and insecurity*: Bonansinga, 2022
- On *emotion and punitive policies*: Jefferson 2023
- On *Covid-19*: Erhardt et al. 2022; Merrolla et al., 2023; Renström & Bäck, 2021; Vasilopoulos et al., 2022
- On *emotions in the MSF*: Stucki & Sager, 2018

Emotions in Political Communication

Given that the experience of emotion is unarguably shaped by language (Schmidt-Atzert, et al., 2014, 218), various studies in the discipline of political science analyse political communication in order to understand how emotions can generally be expressed as well as strategically elicited by a wide range of different actors. Research shows that politicians and policymakers for example deliberately use the appeal of emotions depending on their audience and, partially connected to that, their pursued goals (Osnabrügge et al., 2021; Stapleton & Dawkins, 2022). Yet, emotional communication cannot exclusively be observed in the rhetoric of political actors. Instead, a variety of different actors uses emotional appeal in their communication on issues of societal relevance, in particular when public awareness is high. Climate activists elicit hope to send a positive message gathering and keeping supporters for their cause (Kleres & Wettergren, 2017). Another study on the pandemic concludes that scientists as well incorporate emotions into their rhetorical repertoire (Dingler, 2024). Such studies make a significant contribution to existing research as the communication of non-political actors can indeed determine the dominant narratives in the media and general public discourse (Andsager, 2000). In this context, it is important to mention a study by Maier and Nai (2020) who find that both, campaign negativity and campaign emotionality, generate higher media coverage for a political party. However, it is interesting that the effect of emotions on media attention is remarkably stronger than that of campaign negativity. This underscores how beneficial emotional rhetoric can be for political actors.

Finally, there is existing research on emotions and framing. It shows that frames congruent with prior beliefs held by recipients can actually change policy attitudes (Gross, 2008). Other studies in this field (Brewer, 2001; Clifford, 2018; Druckman & McDermott, 2008) investigate the effect of certain emotions on the persuasiveness of different frames. These findings however remain highly context-bound depending on the topic, the distinction between different frame types and between emotions.

For further readings, see:

- On *crisis and conflict communication*: De Castella & McGarty, 2011; Eisele, Tolochko & Boomgaarde, 2022; Verhoeven & Metze, 2022.

Conclusions

By drawing together insights from studies in political psychology, political science and policy studies, this literature review provides a thorough understanding of extant knowledge on (i) the different policy areas in which protective policies, albeit not necessarily being labelled as such, play an important role, and (ii) on the different effects and roles emotions play in different political contexts. For visualisation, the table (Annex) summarises the main points of convergence of the different parts of the review by linking the main take-aways from the literature on protective policies to the emotions literature. It shows that different dimensions of protective policies can be related to approaches in the literature on emotions indicating possible angles for future research.

Annex: Convergence of literature on protective policies and on emotions

Take-aways from protective policy review	Linkage to emotions literature
Target groups of protection	Constructivist approaches in research on emotions argue that emotions are influenced by social roles and values in a culture or society. Here, construction of in-groups and out-groups, of those that deserve protection and those that do not, is a key aspect linking emotions to target groups.
Origin of protection	Threats, Anger, Anxiety but also positive emotions can elicit demands for protection; Difference between framed and unframed “origins” of protection depending on the concrete stimulus (→ appraisal theory)
Assessment of the need of protection	Individual-level differences can be important in how certain frames affect emotional responses by the public. Depending on certain individual characteristics, a certain (framed or unframed) stimulus (e.g., threat) can lead to more or less support for protective policies. The congruence of frames with individual predispositions may become important here.
Providers of protection	The role of speakers may play a role in how a frame affects individual emotions. No research on how emotions affect support in terms of the providers of protection.
Policy instruments providing protection	Different emotions can lead to support of different policy instruments (e.g., retribution vs. protection).
Drivers of protection	Emotions are related to the success of populist parties, which can, in turn, affect policy-making on protective policies by mainstream parties
Time horizon	The impact of emotions on protective policies as usually been studied in the short term (e.g., through framing experiments). However, as the time horizon of protective policies may differ, studying the interrelationships between emotions and protective policies need to be aware of the short time horizon that most of the emotional dynamics seem to have – or to theorize and empirically study medium- and long-term effects more closely.

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