JOHN CONNOLLY

# The Politics and Crisis Management of Animal Health Security

Disease
prevention
area

# THE POLITICS AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT OF ANIMAL HEALTH SECURITY

*This page has been left blank intentionally*

# The Politics and Crisis Management of Animal Health Security

JOHN CONNOLLY
*University of the West of Scotland, UK*

# Contents

*This page has been left blank intentionally*

# Note on the Author

Dr John Connolly is a lecturer in politics and public policy at the University of the West of Scotland. His main research and teaching interests include policy analysis, the politics of crisis management and multi-level governance. Dr Connolly was recognised by the UK Political Studies Association when he was awarded the 2009 'Sir Walter Bagehot Prize' for the contribution of his doctoral thesis to research in Government and Public Administration. In 2015 he was made Senior Fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy. Before taking up his post at the University of the West of Scotland he was a policy and evaluation adviser in the Scottish public sector. He continues to undertake consultancy activities in relation to programme evaluation and policy development.

*This page has been left blank intentionally*

# Preface

One of the main reasons why I wanted to write this book is because although there are books that consider policy dynamics and the politics of crisis management, students of public policy do not have an abundance of texts which provide a substantive analysis of a major policy sector. So, in this respect, I wanted to offer a resource to students because it might help them when it comes to their own studies of public policy.

From an empirical point of view, the book is also the result of my curiosity about what impact crises have on what happens afterwards in public policy terms. I was struck my some of the narratives in the politics of crisis management literature suggesting that crises do not always result in reform. I sought to explore this in detail by unpacking the issue to see what I could find out about the contours of policy and organisational change.

The most fascinating aspect of this journey has been that I have had the opportunity speak with key individuals who have (or once had) key public policy responsibilities in Scottish and UK government and in Brussels. The experience of understanding their world, and the contexts in which they work, has been an important learning experience for me. The interviews with current and former officials and politicians, coupled with analysis of documentary sources, are designed to uncover the dynamics and patterns of policy-making processes – including issues such as bureaucratic cultures and institutional change. I hope that this shines through and helps to spark off research ideas for those interested in the area of policy dynamics.

*This page has been left blank intentionally*

# Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to offer thanks to those who have helped me in various ways on the road to completing this book.

I am grateful to all of the politicians and officials who gave up their time to speak to me about their work. Many thanks are due to Allan McConnell (Professor of Public Policy, University of Sydney) for his comments on the book manuscript and for generally being an academic inspiration to me. Allan was one of my very first lecturers as an undergraduate student and from that point I wanted to be an academic like him! After taking some time post-PhD to work in the Scottish public sector I did end up achieving that goal. Thanks also to Robert Pyper (Professor of Public Policy, University of the West of Scotland) for his encouragement since I was an undergraduate and for his continued support as a senior colleague at UWS.

With inspirational individuals in mind, I would like to extend my *very* special heartfelt thanks to David Judge (Emeritus Professor of Politics, University of Strathclyde) for his guidance, meticulousness, patience, persistence, sense of humour, supervision and support – all equally important skills and characteristics of an excellent mentor in my view. David's insights and editing skills have taught me valuable lessons which I will try to harness if I ever write another book. Of course, any faults of interpretation, fact or argument in this book remain entirely my own.

Thanks are due to my folks, Dawn and John, for their support – particularly in the early days when I was an undergraduate student – and for keeping life interesting in many ways (I'm being sarcastic there!). Drawing on his experience as an amateur boxer, my dad likes to say 'the harder you train the easier it is to fight'. I never went into boxing myself; however, I have tried to apply this advice to my life outside of the ring. My sister, Lisa, also deserves a mention for her encouragement and good wishes over the years. I would like to thank my longest friend (more like brother) Martin Robinson for always taking a keen and genuine interest in my academic development. My mother and father in-law, Joy and Jim, have also always been supportive of my endeavours and I extend my warm thanks to them.

I know that my wife, Jennifer, will probably only read the acknowledgements section of this book. Yet despite refusing to listen to any of my academic talk (which is fair enough), your love and support means absolutely everything to me.

I dedicate this book to my two children, Robyn and Joshua ('Joshie'). Thanks for enriching my life beyond words and for not telling anyone that, despite being an academic by day, I'm really just a big kid at night (e.g. by playing the 'big bad mouse' and the 'big bad dog'). It would be really embarrassing if anyone ever found out about that.

# List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ADPG | Animal Disease Policy Group |
| BRP | Business Reform Programme |
| BSE | Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy |
| CAP | Common Agricultural Policy |
| CCS | Civil Contingencies Secretariat |
| COBRA | Cabinet Office Briefing Room A |
| CSR | Comprehensive Spending Review |
| CVO | Chief Veterinary Officer |
| DCS | Disease Control System |
| DEFRA | Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs |
| DOH | Department of Health |
| ECJ | European Court of Justice |
| EU | European Union |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organisation |
| FFG | Food and Farming Group |
| FMD | Foot and Mouth Disease |
| FSA | Food Standards Agency |
| FVO | Food and Veterinary Office |
| GIS | Geographical Information Systems |
| HPA | Health Protection Agency |
| HSE | Health and Safety Executive |
| IAH | Institute of Animal Health |
| LDCC | Local Disease Control Centre |
| MAFF | Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food |
| MP | Member of Parliament |
| NAO | National Audit Office |
| NDCC | National Disease Control Centre |
| NEEG | National Emergency Epidemiology Group |
| NFU | National Farmers Union |
| OIE | World Organisation for Animal Health |
| PHE | Public Health England |
| ROD | Regional Operation Directors |
| RRFMI | Response to the Reports of the Foot and Mouth Inquiries |
| SAC | Scientific Advisory Council |
| SAG | Scientific Advisory Group |

SCFCAH    Standing Committee for Food Chain and Animal Health
SEAC      Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee
SG        Scottish Government
SNP       Scottish Nationalist Party
SVS       State Veterinary Service
UN        United Nations
UK        United Kingdom
vCJD      Variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease
WHO       World Health Organisation
WTO       World Trade Organisation

# Introduction

The 2001 foot and mouth epidemic in the United Kingdom (UK) began on 20 February and turned out to be one of, if not *the*, most significant crises ever to face the UK farming industry. The crisis destroyed farming stocks that had been built up over multiple generations. Some 6,456,000 animals were culled during the crisis (HC-888, 2002: 170). In the end the UK National Audit Office (NAO) estimated that the direct cost of the 2001 crisis to the public sector was over £3 billion, and £5 billion to the private sector (HC-939, 2002: 13). The UK Government compensated farmers for their loss of livestock by some £1.34 billion (HC-888, 2002: 133). With regards to the food chain, there was a loss of £170 million because movement and export bans imposed costs on auction markets, slaughterhouses and food processors (HC-888, 2002: 133). Tourism, in both the rural and urban sectors, lost between £2.7 and £3.2 billion in 2001 (HC-888, 2002: 133).

There were many more costs other than solely the economic variety – there were also political costs. The ability of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) to manage a large-scale animal disease outbreak came into the political spotlight, which led to the reorganisation of UK Government departments during and after the outbreak. May 2001 saw the first post-war postponement of a general election, the removal of the minister in charge of MAFF, Nick Brown, and the creation of the Department for the Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) after the election on 7 June 2001.

The New Labour Government in 2001 was thus faced with one of the most devastating and geographically challenging crises for many years. As events unfolded the epidemic raised significant questions about the legitimacy and credibility of the government's crisis management capabilities. Central-level government policies and institutional structures were subject to societal and parliamentary scrutiny. Moreover, the epidemic exposed the UK Government's inability to manage a crisis more generally and served to highlight the severe political consequences that can emerge when the government's performance is subject to both widespread criticism and calls for reform. Indeed, the government's lack of preparedness, and the fact that coping systems for a widespread disease outbreak were so poor, forced the government to admit failure and to 'learn the lessons'.

This book provides students of public policy and administration with a significant illustration of how key concepts and analytical lenses from public

policy can be applied to the study of the contours of practical policy change. More specifically, the study unpacks the complexities that are associated with the dynamics of policy and organisational change after a crisis. Based on the animal health security policy sector, and by using the 2001 foot and mouth crisis as a case study, the following key question underpins the narrative throughout the book: To what extent have UK crisis management policy and organisational arrangements relating to UK animal health security been subject to change since the 2001 foot and mouth crisis? Based on this question broader areas of inquiry emerge in terms of whether the government has learned lessons from the crisis and also, from a conceptual point of view, what the study indicates about the nature of the dynamics of policy and organisational change. Policy change, based on learning from the past, is taken to mean the process whereby decision-makers revise their policy choices in light of previous mistakes or successes and put these into practice (John, 2012: 186). However, not only are there are a number of drivers which affect change (and claims about success) the process of lesson-learning is often a temporary phenomenon and does not necessarily equate to sustained change over time. For example, change can be affected by crises, electoral shifts, how policies are framed, political dynamics, political will, resource allocation, lack of foresight, institutional inertia, the public mood, levels of resilience in government, political leadership, implementation capacities, poorly articulated objectives, the relationship between evidence and public policy, and a disconnect between policy intentions and outcomes (Kingdon, 1984; Sanderson, 2002; Boin and 't Hart, 2003; Boin et al., 2008; Patashnik, 2008; McConnell 2010; 2011; Brasset and Vaughan-Williams, 2013; Connolly, 2014a).

There are texts which consider the politics and governance of animal diseases (e.g. van Zwanenberga and Millstone, 2005; Packer, 2006) and studies which address foot and mouth and the contours of its history and the emotional traumas that have been induced from the crisis (see Woods, 2004; Convery et al, 2008). The importance of this book is to be found in the fact that there are no existing substantive academic studies that consider the dynamics of central-level policy and organisational change since the 2001 crisis and whether lessons have been learned since then. There are fundamental questions to be asked about how government manages crisis situations and whether change follows as a result. These questions have been of broader academic interest in the public policy and politics literatures in recent times (for example Wildavsky, 1988; Rosenthal et al., 1989; 1991; 2001a; 't Hart, 1993; Bovens and 't Hart, 1996; McConnell and Stark, 2002; Boin and 't Hart, 2003; McConnell, 2003; Rosenthal, 2003; Boin, 2004; Boin et al., 2005; 2008; Perry and Quarantelli, 2005; Drennan and McConnell, 2007). The crisis management literature has emerged as a significant area of study in politics and public administration and is now paying attention to the *politics* of crisis which includes the role of political

actors and the associated bureaucratic arrangements and responses. With this in mind, it is worth starting with a brief explanation of some of the most important terms to be used in this book.

## 'Crisis' and the Associated Concepts of Risk, Uncertainty, Resilience and Legitimacy

What is 'crisis' and what are the ways in which it can be understood? Some scholars have used the term 'crisis' and associated it with events that are *sudden* (Farazmand, 2001: 2; McConnell, 2003: 394–5) or, at the other end of the spectrum, *creeping* (Rosenthal et al., 1989: 27; Booth, 1993: 56; McConnell, 2003: 394–5). Others have described crises as *natural*, *man-made*, *fast-burning*, *unexpected* (Richardson, 1994), *accidental* (Smith, 1990: 265), *cathartic*, *slow-burning*, *long-shadow* ('t Hart and Boin, 2001: 32–5). Other categorisations include *informational*, *criminal*, *fiscal*, *environmental*, *political* (Mitroff et al., 1988: 83–107), *ill-structured messes* (Mitroff et al., 2004: 175), *modern* (Boin and Lagadec, 2000: 139; Rosenthal et al., 2001a; 2001b; Stern and Sundelius, 2002: 80; Boin and 't Hart, 2003: 545), *trans-boundary* (Rosenthal, 1998; 't Hart and Boin, 2001), and *international* (McConnell and Drennan, 2006: 211–12). In short, from a definitional point of view, it is fair to say that crises manifest themselves in different ways and appear in several guises. Although it is understandable that scholars categorise crises in order to frame the direction of their analysis, it is the case that words such as uncertainty, threat, ambiguity and risk are inherent characteristics of crisis.

In this book, 'crisis' is defined as a period of discontinuity and can be termed as a phase of disorder and intensity that, in challenging the existing policy practices and organisational configurations, prompts the need for government readiness and swift decision-making capacities (Keown-McMullan, 1997: 9; Boin, 2004: 197; Boin, 2005: 162). Crises lead to uncertainty with regards to how policy-makers will respond to unfolding events and to how future *risks* are managed. March and Simon (1993: 137) suggest that uncertainty is when 'the decision-maker cannot assign definite probabilities to the occurrence of particular consequences'. Risk, by contrast, is when there is 'accurate knowledge of a probability distribution of the consequences that will follow on each alternative' (March and Simon, 1993: 137). Put differently, but perhaps more directly, Clarke (1999: 11) contends that risk is when you know the possible range of things that may happen following a choice; uncertainty is when you do not. It is often the case that policy-makers will seek to transform uncertainty into risk because issues can then be recognised as being 'manageable' (see Hogwood and Gunn, 1984: 178–83; Clarke, 1999: 11; Boin et al., 2005: 24).

The pressures that emerge from crisis situations require degrees of resilience amongst crisis responders in order to bounce back or 'jump back' (which is the

translation for the Latin word *resilio*[1]). The concepts of crisis, uncertainty, and risk are linked to resilience. Another concept that has been associated with 'crises' in studies of political, economic or social systems is 'legitimacy' – and the challenges to it. The term is routinely used to describe paradigm-shattering periods in science (Kuhn, 1962), capitalist legitimation periods (Habermas, 1975), and punctuated equilibrium after periods of relative policy stability (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993). Jürgen Habermas (1975) provides a view of crisis in relation to economic systems. Habermas asserts that a so-called 'rationality crisis' occurs when economic decision-makers can no longer manage economic growth. This will lead to a crisis of rationality or a 'legitimacy crisis'. This means that followers withdraw their loyalty to decision-makers and their belief in leadership, social order and traditional beliefs and values. They question the state of social and institutional structures (O'Connor, 1987). This legitimacy aspect to crisis may also be developed by picturing legitimacy in terms of policy monopoly (Redford, 1969; Baumgartner and Jones, 1993). Political legitimacy is secured as long as no publicly disclosed problems create widespread demands for accountability, learning and reform.

From a public policy and management perspective, crises call into question existing policy practices and can thus threaten the legitimacy of public institutions (Drennan and McConnell, 2007). Even in times of so-called normalcy, public policy-making is complex because it 'consists of a series of decisions, involving a large number of actors operating within the confines of an amorphous, yet inescapable, ideational and institutional context, and employs a variety of diverse and multi-faceted policy instruments' (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003: 245). This 'normal' complexity is heightened during times of threat and acute uncertainty. Crises generally cause widespread dismay amongst societal actors about how and why they came about and how to resolve the situation. They are situations in which decision-makers experience uncertainty and/or surprise and time compression adds to the pressures that they must deal with (Bovens and 't Hart, 1996: 20).

## The Politics of the Aftermath of a 'Crisis'

The crisis management literature has also addressed issues and debates about governance after a crisis has happened, and whether crisis leads to governmental learning and reform (Stern, 1997; 't Hart and Boin, 2001; Boin et al., 2008). This is the last 'phase' of the crisis management process, which is preceded by the pre-crisis (planning and prevention) and the crisis 'decision-making' (or acute) phases. Boin et al. (2005) argue that critical tasks – sense-making, decision-

---

1   See Brasset et al. (2003) for an overview of the development of the term resilience throughout academic disciplines.

making, meaning-making, terminating, and learning – face political leaders, in the overlapping pre-, acute- and post-crisis management stages. However, it is the management of crisis at the acute stage that has been subject to most attention in the media and in academic studies. The reason for this is that how governments respond to a crisis is very much a crucial issue. The fate and popularity of political leaders can have a direct relationship with how they deal with a crisis (Boin and 't Hart, 2003). Crises, therefore, focus attention on *what the government does and how it does it* and may thus generate pressure for the government to break with existing practices. It can be said, therefore, that crises have the potential to be 'reform triggers' or learning opportunities (Keeler, 1993; Stern, 1997). Yet, the formula of 'crisis = change' is not guaranteed. For example, it might be easier for politicians to reassert the status quo than to engage in a process of soul-searching in order to learn lessons and invest in change. In addition, problems to do with institutional inertia, and an organisational culture that is not conducive to change, might persist despite the impact of a crisis. Alternatively, a crisis may stimulate entrepreneurialism by actors in that fresh ideas may surface which favour change and innovation (Kingdon, 1984). Avoiding a similar crisis in the future, by reforming policy and organisational arrangements, would show the government's ability to both learn the lessons and change and prevent officials and politicians from having to manage a similar stress-inducing crisis.

In this context, the present study is mainly concerned with post-crisis change and how this contributes to policy-making for future critical events. Pre-crisis and acute-crisis management themes are of importance because analyses of change need to 'test' this change by considering how policy and organisational arrangements 'stand up' to similar incidents in the future. The process of learning and reform after a crisis involves understanding what went wrong and changing the pre-crisis and acute crisis management arrangements (this can range from contingency planning, through the use of data and information, to arrangements for ensuring politico-bureaucratic coordination).

The analysis of this book is underpinned by the belief that different analytical perspectives are advantageous to the examination of an issue that is multi-dimensional in nature. In fact studies that do not consider the dynamics and components of change can be accused of not considering the real-life complexities that are associated with the words 'change' and 'policy' (Hogwood and Peters, 1983; Bennett and Howlett, 1992; Howlett and Ramesh, 2003; Kay, 2006; 2009; Capano, 2009; Real-Dato, 2009; John, 2012). The analytical lens for this study derives, therefore, from the literatures on policy change and organisational and institutional change. More specifically, the notion of crisis is discussed in the context of the specific themes to emerge from an examination of crisis management literature, especially ideas about bureaucratic change, cultural change, agenda and ideational shifts, and Europeanisation. In conceptual

terms, therefore, non-crisis and crisis literatures are both important when it comes to studying the nature of post-crisis policy and organisational change. In this respect, the present study of animal health security – principally based on the case of foot and mouth – seeks to understand how the processes of policy and organisational change can be understood, explained, and categorised.

Although the case of foot and mouth will be analysed in detail in subsequent chapters it is important at this stage, for contextual purposes, to provide a brief description of the disease and to put the 2001 foot and mouth crisis in a historical and comparative context.

## Foot and Mouth Disease: A Long-Standing 'Wicked Problem' for Policy-Makers

Without question, foot and mouth disease (FMD) is one of the most catastrophic diseases affecting livestock. It is a highly contagious disease of cattle, pigs, sheep, goats and wild ruminants and is characterised by fever, blister-like sores, and vesicles on the feet, mouth and udder (Barclay, 2001: 10). Animals do recover from the disease over a two to three week period (and it is rarely fatal), however, they are not left to recover by the authorities because the disease is highly transmissible – incurring far-reaching economic and welfare costs – which has driven successive UK governments to adopt a policy of 'stamping out' by culling infected or susceptible animals. From a public policy perspective the disease represents a long-standing 'wicked problem' for policy-makers. Like all wicked problems, the management of the disease presents major challenges and is characterised by its complexity which requires resilience, resource-sharing and collaboration between policy actors (Durant and Legge, 2006). This book demonstrates just how acute these challenges have been for the UK Government.

The complexity of managing foot and mouth disease is not helped by the fact that the disease is difficult to contain by virtue of its potential patterns of transmission. The disease can be transmitted in a number of ways: (1) movement of infected animals; (2) contact with contaminated animal products; (3) contact with contaminated personnel and/or equipment; (4) windborne spread – this usually occurs over a short distance but long distance transmission can occur via the air up to 200 kilometres (HC-31/05, 2001: 10–11). In addition there is the risk of infections transcending borders, especially as long as illegal trading of meat products occurs. The interdependencies of markets across states which, for example, can be seen within the European single market, will always heighten levels of vulnerability for crises, such as disease epidemics. The World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) identifies three main disease control strategies: culling/stamping-out, vaccinate to slaughter, and vaccinate to live

(OIE, 2012). The disease exists on a global scale and this is why there are strict regulations around the management and control of the disease and the trading of animals from FMD-infected countries across the globe put in place by the European Commission of the European Union, World Health Organisation (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the OIE.

In terms of the history of the disease, there are reports that foot and mouth can be traced back to 1546 when a monk in Verona, Italy, described an epidemic which occurred in cattle (Mahy, 2005: 2). The disease became notorious throughout the world through subsequent centuries with intermittent outbreaks in South Africa, Germany and Rhodesia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The first recorded cases of foot and mouth in Great Britain was in 1839 and at the end of that year the disease had spread to most parts of England and to some parts of Scotland (DEFRA, 2009a). The disease persisted from that point on throughout the nineteenth century and the disease was rife throughout continental Europe. This was the period when there were the first recorded outbreaks in the United States and in Canada, with outbreaks being first recorded in South America (Argentina) in the late 1860s and early 1870s, with subsequent outbreaks in Brazil, Uruguay, Chile and Peru (Knowles, 1990). The disease persisted throughout the twentieth century in Britain with most years seeing outbreaks into the hundreds until the epidemic of 1967–1968 (DEFRA, 2009b; 2011). From that point, and apart from one outbreak in 1981, foot and mouth disease was absent from Britain until the catastrophic 2001 crisis.

In 2001 the disease was notified to the authorities when it was identified during a routine meat inspection in an abattoir in Brentwood, Essex (South East England). Although the illegal importation of meat is the most likely explanation for the 2001 foot and mouth crisis in the UK, there remains no conclusive answer to how the virus entered the country.[2] The outbreak that followed signalled not only the first major outbreak of the disease in Britain since October 1967, but also the onset of one of the most serious economic and social crises ever to face rural Britain. Yet a path had already been set for New Labour when they took up office in 1997 as the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) was battling with the fallout from the 1996 bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) – 'mad cow' disease – outbreak. MAFF was

---

2   Nick Brown, the (then) secretary of state for agriculture, was asked in the Agricultural Committee of the House of Commons on 21 March 2001 as to whether or not infected meat was brought into the country. He replied by saying 'knowingly or unknowingly it is most certainly illegal. I cannot think of a way in which this could legally have happened … because there is an absolute prohibition on bringing in meat from areas where there is the infectivity' (HC-363-i, 2001: QQ.94 and 95).