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Research Article

Comparing the Politicisation of EU Integration during the Euro and Schengen Crises

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Abstract

Although European integration has become an increasingly salient and controversial topic in domestic politics, the consequences of this politicisation of the European Union for the integration process have not received adequate scholarly attention. To fill this lacuna, this article devises five hypotheses on the effects of politicisation for the integration process, which are subsequently tested against the evidence of the Euro and Schengen crises. Both crises had comparable origins, but the Euro crisis caused substantial deepening of integration, while the Schengen crisis has not engendered any meaningful reforming steps. The empirical analysis finds that politicisation assumed different forms across the two crises, which is shown to be one causal factor that explains the variation in crises outcomes. The article thereby contributes to a multifaceted understanding of the politicisation of international institutions, EU integration theory and the dynamics of the Euro and Refugee crises.

Keywords

Politicisation; EU integration theory; Euro crisis; Schengen crisis

The recent crises of the European Union (EU) – be it the Euro crisis, the Schengen crisis or Brexit – are symptomatic of a crucial meta-trend that increasingly affects global politics: the public contestation of international institutions. Long characterised by executive and technocratic decision-making processes beyond the purview of mass politics, international cooperation has become salient and controversial in domestic politics, a process that is here conceived as politicisation. Scholars agree that the root cause of the politicisation of international institutions and the enhanced cultural conflicts is that states have ceded ever greater sovereign prerogatives to international bodies like the EU, the World Trade Organisation or the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Ecker-Ehrhardt 2014; Zürn 2014). As the most institutionalised form of international cooperation in the world, which increasingly assumes core state powers (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2018), it is unsurprising that the EU has become strongly politicised (Hutter, Grande and Kriesi 2016; de Wilde, Leupold and Schmidtke 2016; Statham and Trenz 2013).

The consequences of politicisation for the European integration process are, however, not yet adequately understood. The bulk of the comparative politics literature instead concentrates on the drivers and mechanisms of politicisation (Grande and Kriesi 2016: 300; de Wilde et al. 2016: 5; Hobolt and Wratil 2015; Statham and Trenz 2013, 2015). In the field of European integration theory, the accounts of mainstream neo-functionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism have mostly neglected politicisation as an explanatory factor because it challenges their shared axioms of an integration process driven by elites and primarily economic interests (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2018: 180-1). More recent theoretical contributions, however, place greater emphasis on politicisation. Bickerton Hodson and Puetter's (2015) new intergovernmentalist theory characterises the post-Maastricht era by the parallel development of ever greater domestic contestation of the EU and deepening of integration. In contrast, Marks and Hooghe (2009) regard politicisation as a fundamentally constraining

force. Their post-functional theory suggests that greater politicisation is driven by exclusive identity concerns over the perforation of the nation-state by globalisation and Europeanisation. While the contributions of new intergovernmentalism and post-functionalism are important and welcome, in both accounts, politicisation is reduced to an expression of Euroscepticism without extensive theorising under what conditions it occurs and when it becomes consequential.

The main puzzle that emerges from this survey is whether, and if so when and to what ends, politicisation constitutes a causal factor in the integration process. To this end, this article seeks to derive empirically testable hypotheses on the conditions when politicisation affects the integration process, thereby developing post-functional theory, and responding to calls by Kriesi and Grande for a 'more systematic treatment of domestic politics in European studies' (2016: 300). Politicisation is not treated a priori as synonymous with Euroscepticism. Politicisation does often imply resistance towards specific international institutions, but it may also involve demands for further or different international policies and more democratic decision-making procedures (Rauh 2019). The article seeks to devise a more open-ended framework that allows for various forms of politicisation.

To test the hypotheses, this article employs a comparative case study design. The empirical focus is on the Euro and the Schengen crises. The origins of both crises were remarkably similar. External shocks in the form of the collapse of the American subprime mortgage market and the Syrian civil war respectively exposed, in both cases, substantial dissonances in the institutional architecture of the Eurozone and common asylum system and led to severe conflicts among the member states' governments. The crises, however, resulted in strongly divergent results. The Euro crisis engendered significant institutional reforms – like the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) or the Banking Union – and regulatory reforms, including the Sixpack and Twopack legislations. Conversely, the Schengen crisis has been characterised by disagreements on meaningful reforms (e.g. the overhaul of the Dublin Regulation), lack of ambition (e.g. the European Border and Coast Guard Agency), or failure to implement decisions taken respectively (e.g. the emergency relocation scheme).

At first sight, comparing the politicisation of the Euro and Schengen crises appears counterintuitive given that both crises were clearly politicised, leading scholars like Schimmelfennig (2018) and Biermann, Guérin, Jagdhuber, Rittberger and Weiss (2019) to dismiss politicisation as an explanatory factor for the divergent crises' outcomes. Such a judgment, however, rests on an oversimplified understanding of politicisation as a binary phenomenon (Börzel and Risse 2018). Instead, the following analysis suggests viewing politicisation in more differentiated terms based on scale, agency, framing and effect on institutions. Such a nuanced understanding of politicisation as a multifaceted rather than unitary phenomenon promises greater insights into the European integration process at large and the Euro crisis and Schengen crisis specifically.

Indeed, the article finds that the nature of politicisation not only differed across the two crises (correlation) but also that this difference can help explain the variation in crises outcomes (causation). During the Euro crisis, governments marginalised Eurosceptic parties, framed politicisation in economic terms more than those of identity and hence effectively limited the constraining influence of politicisation. Conversely, Eurosceptic parties were not only electorally stronger but were also in government in several key states during the Schengen crisis. Politicisation, concomitantly, was framed in exclusive nationalist terms premised on a principled opposition to delegating further sovereign powers to the European level.

To substantiate this argument, the article is structured in two parts. The theoretical section develops existing literature to derive five testable hypotheses on the effects of politicisation on the integration process. The empirical section tests the hypotheses against the evidence of the Euro crisis and Schengen crisis.

FIVE HYPOTHESES ON THE EFFECTS OF POLITICISATION

The political landscape in Europe has dramatically changed over the past few decades. Since the 1990s, the 'permissive consensus' (Lindberg and Scheingold 1970: 41) in favour of further integration has eroded. According to Hooghe and Marks (2009: 11ff.), the perforation of the nation-state by the processes of globalisation and europeanisation has affected deeply ideational notions of national community and has thereby created a new cultural-political cleavage in Europe (Hutter et al. 2016; Kriesi et al. 2012). This cleavage reflects a conflict between nationalism and cosmopolitanism – represented by Traditional/Authority/National (TAN) and Green/Alternative/Libertarian (GAL) parties respectively.

Post-functionalism suggests that TAN parties have been instrumental in mobilising exclusive nationalist sentiments and polarising debates about European integration. The theory thus problematises when and why politicisation emerges but then assumes that politicisation will inhibit integration. This article takes issue with that assumption. Politicisation does not just come in one form but is a multi-faceted phenomenon with open-ended consequences for the integration process. As such, it can be disaggregated into its component parts, which can be individually examined to provide greater theoretical depth and ample opportunities for empirical testing across a variety of case studies.

The most evident baseline assumption is that the scale of politicisation is one crucial determining factor of how much politicisation affects integration outcomes. To compare the scale across the two crises, politicisation can be broken down into three components – salience, polarisation and expansion of actors and audiences – that can be empirically observed (Börzel and Risse 2018: 85). Indicators for the salience of European integration include newspaper attention, citizen's awareness of the politics of the European Union, or political parties' attention to European issues as reflected in the number of public statements or questions in parliament (Grande and Hutter 2016; de Wilde et al. 2016: 6; Wonka 2016). Polarisation could be operationalised by analysing the positions reflected in national party systems or measuring positions on the European Union and its politics in public opinion surveys (de Wilde et al. 2016: 6-7; Kriesi et al. 2012). The expansion of actors and audiences who follow and engage with European politics is somewhat more difficult to capture and is often linked to salience. New voices in mass media, greater attention to European politics on social media and the visibility of civil society and protest movements signify greater actor and audience expansion (Dolezal et al. 2016; de Wilde et al. 2016: 7). In sum, the first hypothesis is:

H1: The greater the aggregate scale of politicisation, the more it will affect the integration process.

Moreover, the power differentials among member states put a premium on politicisation in the key member states that drive or put a brake on integration efforts. Hence:

H2: Politicisation is more consequential when it occurs in the most important member states.

Depending on the theoretical point of departure, supranational actors that convert functional pressures into spill-over pressures (neo-functionalism) or national governments which cooperate to maximise their material benefits (liberal intergovernmentalism) drive the integration process. Politicisation potentially affects both drivers.

Some of the European institutions may be subject to politicisation pressures. The European Parliament elections every five years provide a gateway for the politicisation of European integration to affect the Parliament's pro-integration course if the composition of parliamentarians significantly alters. As an independent bureaucracy, the potential influence of politicisation on the Commission is less obvious. Yet, as Rauh aptly notes, 'the more alert the public becomes to supranational political authority, the

more rational it is for a competence-seeking bureaucracy to care about the public acceptability of its policies' (2019: 348; also Zürn 2014). Moreover, the Spitzenkandidaten process, whereby the parties in the European Parliament rather than the governments in the Council of the EU appoint the President of the Commission, provides a democratic gateway for politicisation. If politicisation was to assume a Eurosceptic form, it would thus in both cases undermine the integrative dynamics emanating from the supranational institutions. Of course, other European institutions could be affected by politicisation. The selection of the European Parliament and the Commission is based on their significance in both crises, whereas the European Central Bank (ECB), for example, played no role during the Schengen crisis. The Council is excluded here since governments are treated separately. It follows that:

H3: Eurosceptic politicisation reduces spillover pressures exerted principally by the European Parliament as well as the European Commission.

Politicisation could also affect national governments in the liberal intergovernmentalist framework if the assumption is relaxed that domestic preferences are solely shaped by corporate economic interests. Instead, the interaction of a plurality of economic, social and political actors shapes what emerge to be national interests. Whether politicisation thwarts integration dynamics, as presumed by post-functionalism, however, is not predestined. In fact, one school of thought considers politicisation as a central (normative) ingredient for the progress of European integration. The public sphere tradition argues that the politicisation of European affairs will provide the necessary democratisation of the EU, which in turn will foster support among the electorates (Statham and Trenz 2015; Risse 2010). Thus, whether politicisation is an integrative or disintegrative force depends on two interrelated factors: who politicises and how agents frame issues they politicise.

Three ideal-type constellations of actors exist (Taggart and Szczepiński 2018: 11ff.; Grande et al. 2016: 198; Statham and Trenz 2013). Firstly, right-wing Eurosceptic parties reject European integration on the basis that it undermines national community and sovereignty. As such, their Euroscepticism has a distinctly cultural nature that emphasises exclusive nationalist sentiments and is on principle opposed to further integration. Secondly, left-wing Euroscepticism criticises the neoliberal nature of the EU and accuses it of dismantling the welfare state. Unlike old communist parties, however, most contemporary left-wing critics of the EU are not on principle opposed to European integration. Instead, they call for a different Europe, one that is more social and solidary. Thirdly, politicisation could also be framed in cosmopolitan terms. Green parties, elements within civil society and intellectuals tend to advance a multicultural-universalist argument in favour of deeper integration. Thus:

H4: A strong presence of far-right parties that politicise the EU in exclusive nationalist terms subverts the integration process. Conversely, politicisation framed in cosmopolitan or solidary terms is (potentially) conducive towards further integration.

This article moreover assumes that mainstream political elites harbour a preference to limit the influence of politicisation. In most neo-functionalist and liberal intergovernmentalist writings, European integration has always entailed constraining mass politics. In response, national and European elites have developed a repertoire of 'conflict-minimising strategies' (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2016; Bickerton et al. 2015) to limit the influence of politicisation. Most obviously, governments can exclude challenger parties by forming coalitions with pro-EU parties. Since the failure of the Constitutional Treaty in 2005, avoiding referendums, unanimity requirements and the need for domestic ratification has also become a central strategy to quell domestic politicisation. Furthermore, to insulate European integration from domestic politics, governments have resorted to delegating powers to non-majoritarian actors, which are shielded from political pressures. Finally, integration steps can either be pursued by regulatory means or capacity-building by the EU itself. Integration by regulation has been the central strategy to de-politicise European integration. Integration by regulation is less visible as member states remain in charge of enforcement of their tasks. Moreover,

and in contrast to capacity-building, regulatory integration obfuscates the redistributive consequences of integration by relying on seemingly neutral rules binding all member states.

The success of these strategies is not pre-determined, however. Linked to the previous hypothesis (H4), one can expect that economic framing is more conducive towards conflict-minimising strategies than identitarian framing. Economic frames are primarily about policy questions of taxation, investment or redistribution, which can be masked relatively easier as regulatory issues (Börzel and Risse 2018: 88-90). Identitarian frames, in contrast, principally address the EU as a polity, touching upon core state issues such as citizenship and national community (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2018: 182). These questions are more emotive, in turn more politically explosive, and thus cannot sustainably be circumvented by political elites. The sequence between framing and the success of conflict-minimising strategies is not necessarily unidirectional. Governments could seek to frame in economic rather than exclusive nationalist terms. As such, the relationship should be understood as mutually reinforcing. Consequently:

H5: If politicisation is framed in utilitarian or economic terms rather than in exclusive nationalist or cosmopolitan terms, governments are more likely to be successful in limiting the influence of politicisation and vice versa.

THE ROLE OF POLITICISATION DURING THE EURO AND SCHENGEN CRISES

This section tests the five hypotheses against empirical evidence of the Euro and Schengen crises. It proceeds by comparing the following across the two crises: the scale of politicisation on aggregate and in the key member states, the effect of politicisation on agents of integration, the framing of politicisation and strategies to limit politicisation. It finds that the framing of politicisation and interrelatedly the effectiveness of conflict-minimising strategies not only differed but also help explain the variation in crises outcomes.

The Aggregate Scale of Politicisation (H1)

Euro Crisis

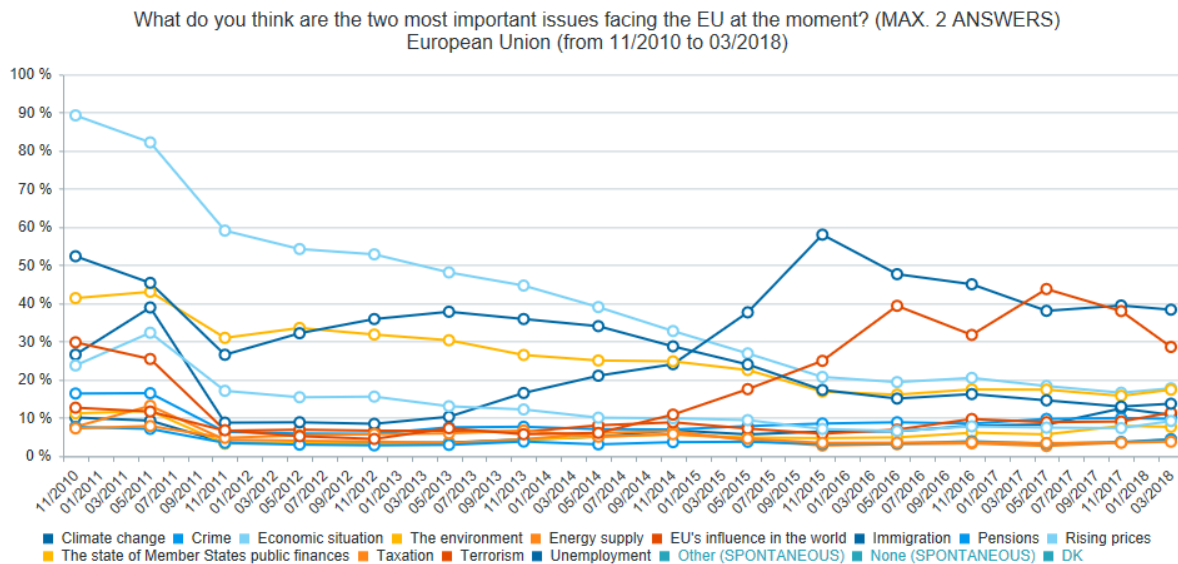
Most scholars agree with Risse that '[t]here is no doubt that the Euro Crisis has politicized European affairs and the EU' (2015: 142). Rauh and Zürn (2016) as well as Kriesi and Grande (2016) empirically demonstrate the unprecedented salience of European issues like bailouts, governments, Eurobonds or austerity measures. They base their findings on coding of core sentences in key European mass media. Schimmelfennig (2018: 979) corroborates these findings with use of public opinion data. In terms of polarisation and expansion of actors, scholars' views diverge, however. Schimmelfennig (2018), referencing the emergence of challenger parties and the fall of various incumbent governments during the Euro crisis and Rauh and Zürn (2016), referencing Eurobarometer data, argue that polarisation was well-pronounced. Concomitantly, Rauh and Zürn draw attention to a variety of protest events, including marches against austerity across Europe during the Euro crisis that provide evidence for greater mobilisation of non-governmental actors. In contrast, Kriesi and Grande (2016: 253) contest that a marked polarisation and actor expansion took place. Rather than becoming part of mass politics, their data shows that debates about the Euro were primarily held in intergovernmental channels dominated by executive elites, which is supported by Hurrelmann, Gora and Wagner (2015). This deviant finding could partially be explained by the fact that Kriesi and Grande's data set only spans to 2012 and excludes data from debtor states, where one would expect polarisation to have run particularly high. Indeed, the outcome of the European Parliament election in 2014, that saw a surge

of Eurosceptic parties, seems to provide evidence for the wider polarisation and actor expansion during the Euro crisis (Hobolt and de Vries 2016; de Wilde et al. 2016). Thus, scholars agree that the Euro crisis covered a period of unprecedented public visibility, but they remain divided on whether it was also extraordinarily broad and intense. Overall, one can infer that the Euro crisis was (moderately) strongly politicised.

Schengen Crisis

Unfortunately, no comparable dataset on politicisation of the Schengen crisis exists, which renders an exact comparison impossible. Nonetheless, the limited available data is indicative of a similarly strong level of politicisation. As to the salience, Figure 1 below draws from Eurobarometer data and illustrates that – in parallel to the onset and subsequent development of the Schengen crisis - citizens came to regard immigration and terrorism as the most important issues facing the European Union.

Figure 1: Eurobarometer data on ‘most important issues facing the EU at the moment’



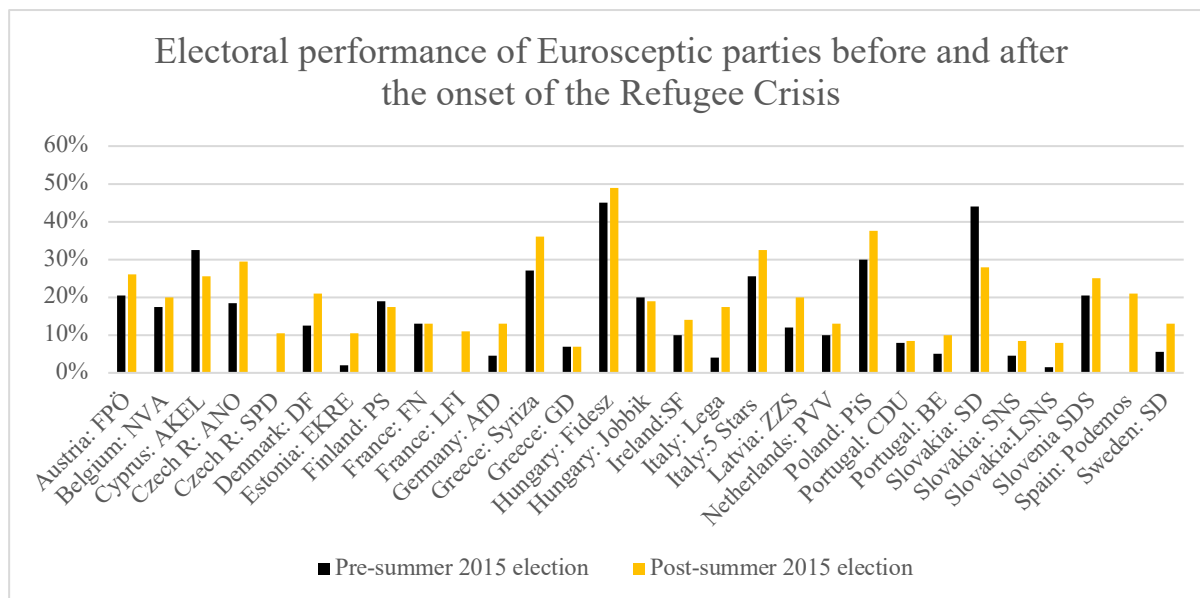
Source: Eurobarometer 2018

Furthermore, the fragmentation of the political party landscape is one key proxy for polarisation. The rise of challenger parties across Europe therefore testifies to the polarising influence of the Schengen crisis. Of course, the causal chain remains unexplored here – other events and deeper structural developments may have contributed to the emergence of extremist sentiments too – but the significant electoral gains made particularly by far-right parties in elections from 2015 onwards cannot be disentangled from the Schengen crisis (Krastev 2017; Mudde 2017). Figure 2 provides an overview of the performance of challenger parties in legislative elections between 2010 and 2018 in those EU member states which are a member of at least one of the Eurozone and the Schengen zone. The characterisation and selection of challenger parties draws upon Taggart and Sczcerbiak (2018) but is non-exhaustive. Despite some outliers, the overall trend of strengthening of nationalist, populist and Eurosceptic parties appears unequivocal (Hobolt and Tilley 2016).

The expansion of actors during the Schengen crisis seems equally pronounced. The crisis mobilised citizens across the continent in the form of solidarity movements like the Refugees Welcome campaign and Protest Movements like the Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident (PEGIDA), which was particularly visible in Germany (Della Porta 2018). Since the Schengen crisis is not included

in the politicisation indexes of Kriesi and Grande (2016) and Rauh and Zürn (2016), the crises cannot be compared numerically. And yet, the scale of politicisation appears broadly similar across both crises – an interpretation shared by a range of scholars (Börzel and Risse 2018; Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2018; Schimmelfennig 2018). The scale of politicisation therefore cannot account for the variations in integration outcomes across the Euro and Schengen crises.

Figure 2: Electoral performance of Eurosceptic parties before and after the onset of the Refugee Crisis



Source: Author’s calculations based on results published by respective national election commissions

Politicisation in Key Member States (H2)

Euro Crisis

The key creditor states that underwrote the loans for the debtor states were Austria, Finland, France, Germany and the Netherlands (Frieden and Walter 2017; European Commission 2016). Kriesi and Grande’s (2016: 255ff.) data on politicisation in Austria, France and Germany shows that politicisation in Germany stood out. Germany’s politicisation index (0.61) dwarfs that of Austria (0.34) and France (0.24). This may appear intuitive given the centrality of Germany during the Euro crisis (Bulmer and Paterson 2013). These findings on the levels of politicisation are corroborated by further observations specific to Germany. Oppermann (2012: 511) stresses that the Euro crisis was the most covered issue in the main German news shows in 2010 and the first half of 2011, underlining the salience of the topic. Wonka (2016) shows that European integration has become an increasingly debated and divisive issue in the Bundestag. Furthermore, Bulmer (2014: 1257) documents the progressing polarisation of the political landscape as the Free Democratic Party (FDP) and the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) – both in government with Chancellor Merkel’s Christian Democratic Union (CDU) between 2009 and 2013 - became increasingly Eurosceptical in defiance of a long-held pro-integration consensus among the mainstream parties. With the advent of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) in 2013, which called for the dissolution of the Euro, the political landscape polarised further (Arzheimer 2015). The importance of the German political parties vis-à-vis the executive was conditioned by the constitutional requirement that the Bundestag had to consent to every individual bailout decision (Abels 2016: 119; Hölscheidt 2016: 112). This expansion of actors beyond the executive also included

the Bundesbank and its outspoken President, Jens Weidmann, as well as the German Constitutional Court (Calliess 2016).

The levels of politicisation elsewhere were also considerable. Miklin (2014) highlights that salience and polarisation were very pronounced in the Austrian Parliament due to much greater divisions among political parties on European integration – within the mainstream parties but also caused by the strong presence of the Eurosceptic Freedom Party (FPÖ) – than in Germany. Various scholars empirically show that the Euro crisis boosted politicisation in France (Hutter and Kerscher 2014; Rothacher 2015). Unsurprisingly, in countries like Greece and, to a lesser extent, Italy, where the socio-economic repercussions from bailout conditionalities or austerity policies respectively were particularly pronounced, the Euro crisis was also strongly politicised (Gianetti, Pedrazzani and Pinto 2017; Kousis and Kanellopoulos 2014).

Schengen Crisis

During the Schengen crisis, the key actors not only included countries of first-entry and destination, but also those that actively sought to obstruct deeper integration: the Visegrad countries, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. The country where the Schengen crisis was most evidently politicised in regard to the relocation quotas appeared to be Hungary. The ruling Fidesz Party under the leadership of Victor Orban had for years been at odds with the European Union over its dismantling of the rule of law and democratic safeguards in Hungary (Müller 2015). The pinnacle of confrontation was reached during the debates on Schengen quotas in late 2015, which were rejected by Orban. After a series of public relations campaign railing against the perceived interference with Hungarian sovereignty and national identity, Orban put the question to the Hungarian people in early 2016. The opposition boycotted the referendum, which partially explains the low turnout of 44 per cent. The result was hence particularly one-sided: 98 per cent voted in favour of rejecting the Schengen quotas (Batory 2018). When outvoted at an extraordinary Justice and Home Affairs Council on 22 September 2015, Hungary (alongside its Visegrad partners) refused to implement the temporary relocation scheme and went so far as to file a lawsuit against the decision together with Slovakia before the European Court of Justice.

The open confrontation between member states and the European institutions that politicised the EU also occurred elsewhere. In the context of a wider socio-cultural conflict and a specific struggle with the European Commission over constitutional questions of the rule of law and democracy, the ruling Polish Law and Justice Party (PiS) politicised the Schengen crisis to stir up antipathy against 'Brussels' (Krzyzanowski 2018). Similar strategies were employed by Czech President Milos Zeman and Slovakian Prime Minister Fico (Stanley 2017: 146-7). Overall, the Schengen crisis was successfully politicised by Eurosceptic parties in Central and Eastern Europe, which were arguably the key blocking actors of further integration (Mudde 2016).

Integration measures were not only opposed by Central and Eastern European member states though. France under the Government of Francois Hollande also rejected a permanent relocation mechanism. The strong presence of the Eurosceptic Front National in the French public sphere, terrorist attacks on Charlie Hebdo in January and in Paris in November 2015 that many associated with Muslim immigration and the well-mediatised Schengen camp in Calais created a politicised and hostile domestic atmosphere. France was also part of a group of countries that suspended the Schengen regime and re-introduced national borders. The others were Austria, Denmark, Germany and Sweden, where the Schengen crisis was demonstrably politicised (Taggart and Sczcerbiak 2018). In Germany, the crisis was more salient, polarised and involved more actors than perhaps anywhere else given the arrival of 890, 000 people in 2015 (BMI 2016). The AfD transformed from a party run by economics professors in favour of abolishing the single currency into a more typical anti-immigration far right-

wing party. Civil society was significantly involved in the physical care for refugees, in pro-refugee movements and in anti-immigration protest marches organised by the Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Occident. Newspapers were, furthermore, replete with open letters and articles by public intellectuals (Vollmer and Karakayali 2018). And in Italy, the failure to craft a policy at the EU-level to redistribute asylum-seekers provided fodder for the fiercely anti-immigrant League under the helm of Matteo Salvini, which gained 17 per cent of seats (compared to just 4 per cent in 2013) in the 2018 elections and subsequently formed a government together with the Five Star Movement.

In sum, European integration was considerably politicised in key member states across both crises. From Germany to Hungary, European issues caused ripples in the domestic public spheres. Despite the lack of comparable quantitative data on politicisation, the range of sources consulted implies that the levels of politicisation did not differ sufficiently enough to explain the variation in integration outcomes.

Politicisation and the Agents of Integration (H3)

The European Parliament

The transmission belts for politicisation in the European Parliament are the parliamentary elections every five years. As such, greater politicisation is likely to shake up the composition of the Parliament and thereby potentially influence its assumed pro-integrationist drive. Elections to the European Parliament have long been conceived as low-salience 'second-order' elections. Yet, the election in 2014 arguably constituted a rupture in this trend (Hobolt 2015). The reasons for this were two-fold. First, the introduction of the Spitzenkandidaten process, whereby the largest parliamentary group would nominate the president of the European Commission, was devised to politicise the election by personalising and Europeanising the campaigns (Dinan 2015). Secondly, the elections were held in an already politicised environment amid the Euro crisis.

Despite a similar turnout to the 2009 election, the outcomes were arguably indicative of a politicised election, in which European issues were of great salience. In Denmark, France Greece, Hungary and the United Kingdom, Eurosceptic parties gained the greatest vote share. Overall, almost 30 per cent of the seats in Parliament were won by Eurosceptic parties (220 out of 751) (Hobolt 2015: 12). The European Parliament has therefore been affected by politicisation from at least 2014 onwards. An important caveat to this observation, however, is that a mere presence in the Parliament does not equate to influence. The Eurosceptics constitute a heterogeneous group and are fragmented across four political groups, which has prevented them from exercising significant political influence. The pro-European parties have also reacted by de facto institutionalising a grand coalition between the centre-right, centre-left and liberal political groups that has succeeded in marginalising the Eurosceptics (Brack and Costa 2016). In fact, the chairs of the all-powerful parliamentary committees are held by Europhile parties (Mudde 2018). Indeed, the European Parliament injected integrative impetus by continuously advocating deeper reforms of the architectures of the Eurozone and the asylum regime (Niemann and Speyer 2018: 35-6; Niemann and Ioannou 2015: 210). Politicisation has therefore not so far affected the European Parliament's pro-integrationist outlook.

The European Commission

For the European Commission, politicisation may appear less consequential at first sight given its set-up as an independent technocracy and guardian of the treaties. Yet, the Commission also possesses the monopoly over initiating supranational legislation, which endows it with considerable agenda-

setting powers. If one subscribes to the view that institutions can exert institutional agency, politicisation should affect its use of these powers. The early crisis years witnessed unexpected inertia by the Commission. Under the apathetic leadership of President Barroso, the Commission failed to play an integrative role. Faced with significant opposition from key member states to its plans to deepen the Eurozone, the Barroso-Commission responded to politicisation pressures, quietly shelving its plans, for instance, for Eurobonds (Hodson 2013: 309-311; European Commission 2011). Conversely, Juncker's Commission drew opposite conclusions from the politicisation within the member states, as he positioned the Commission as the defender of the European common interest. The politicisation of European integration in debtor countries like Greece and in countries of first-arrival or destination seemed to provide essential impetus to Juncker's reform agenda. Written under the auspices of Juncker (Dinan 2016: 109), the recommendations of the Five Presidents' Report on strengthening the Economic and Monetary Union went far beyond what many member states – most notably Germany – found palatable (European Commission 2015). The call for a European Deposit Insurance Scheme to complete the Banking Union, for example, signalled the level of ambition of the new administration (ibid). The Commission also deviated from Barroso's fiscal conservatism when deciding not to sanction France and Italy for exceeding the mandated budget deficit level of 3 per cent in January 2015 and when lending political support to Greece during the negotiations of the third bailout package for Greece (Dinan 2016: 108-9). As such, politicisation appears to have propelled rather than constrained the Commission in spurring integration.

Framing Politicisation (H4)

Euro Crisis

The severe intergovernmental distributional conflicts between creditor and debtor states raised once again the spectre of a renaissance of nationalism in Europe. Protestors in southern member states accused Germany of neo-Nazism and German tabloids mobilised against 'lazy Greeks' and 'crooks' (Polyakova and Fligstein 2016). Yet, the available data largely rebuts the intuition that the Euro crisis was (more than previous integration steps) framed in exclusively nationalist terms (Börzel and Risse 2018). Kriesi and Grande's comprehensive dataset shows that the Euro crisis was 'overwhelmingly framed in economic (50.7%) or political efficiency (21.2%) terms' (2016: 271). In contrast, only 7 per cent of frames were nationalist (ibid.). These findings are largely corroborated by Closa and Maatsch (2014), whose study investigates how parliamentarians framed the debate on the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) in eleven Eurozone member states. They find that the justifications provided were by and large pragmatic, relating to economic interests and necessities. Only Eurosceptical parties framed the debate in exclusively nationalist terms (ibid. 834ff.). Wonka's (2016) detailed study of plenary debates in the German Bundestag provides further support for these findings. According to his data, in 40 per cent of all cases, German parties framed the debate in economic and institutional terms. Only 19 per cent of the frames employed were identitarian, of which 78 per cent were in fact positive, emphasising a common European identity and solidarity.

It is, however, necessary to note that economic and cultural framings cannot always be easily disentangled. Debates about economic policies oftentimes relate to wider identity arguments about the nature of the envisaged polity (see Matthijs and McNamara 2015). The argument here, therefore, is about relative importance: by and large, the available data arguably suggest that the debates were still primarily about economic policies, even if they were secondarily informed by identity concerns (Börzel and Risse 2018; Hobolt and Wratil 2015). This focus on problem-solving certainly did not prevent massive conflicts among member states, but clashes were mostly about EU policies, not the EU as a polity.

The dominant frames employed during the Euro crisis provide ipso facto evidence that far-right Eurosceptic parties were largely marginalised. Indeed, Kriesi and Grande (2016: 272) observe that while these parties resorted to exclusive nationalist frames in 26.3 per cent of the cases, they played only a minor role in the debates. Moreover, the authors suggest that national and supranational executive actors dominated the debate: 76 per cent of all coded sentences pertained to governments (usually the German one), European institutions and the IMF. Thus, executive actors clearly dominated and non-governing parties were negligible. Political parties featured prominently in public debates only in Germany, but not as scholars would expect. Instead of challenger or opposition parties, the CSU (in government since 2005) and FDP (in government between 2009-2013) opposed their own government in many instances and thus boosted politicisation (ibid. 270).

These findings deviate from the expectation of the bulk of the literature on politicisation, which assumes that the politicisation of the EU requires either the existence of radical challenger parties or conflicts between the government and the main opposition party (Grande and Hutter 2016). With the exception of the German intra-governmental conflict, the (admittedly limited) data demonstrates that these two mechanisms were hardly present during the Euro crisis. The lack of agency thus hints at the importance of structural factors to explain the politicisation of the Euro crisis. Indeed, Hobolt and Wratil (2015) propose that the economic crisis was a sufficient exogenous shock, which entailed tangible effects on personal circumstances and visible consequences for political systems to politicise the crisis (ibid. 241, 252). Due to its inherent negativity bias, other scholars also suggest that the media acted as critical agents in politicising the crisis (e.g. Cross and Ma 2015). This would explain why a crisis that was dominated by executive actors was heavily politicised.

Schengen Crisis

Conflicts over migration lie at the heart of the nationalism-cosmopolitanism cleavage and tend to be dominated by constitutive questions focussing on self/other distinctions more than political or economic policies (Risse 2010; Wodak 2015). The framing of the Schengen crisis has been reflective of these characteristics. The early welcoming culture in countries like Austria, Germany or Sweden, where the crisis was initially framed in moralising terms, which depicted Schengen as deserving victims of hardship, swiftly gave way to a framing of 'threat' that had been dominant in Central and Eastern European states from the very beginning (Schuette 2018; Triandafyllidou 2018: 211-2; Vollmer and Karakayali 2018: 120-1). Asylum-seekers were presented as unmanageable natural disaster-like menaces (hence the language of flows and tides) to the 'native' Europeans. Unlike the moralising frame, which invokes notions of solidarity and common humanity, the 'threat' framing invokes a zero-sum game, whereby any benefits for the asylum-seekers come at the cost of the native Europeans. The proposed solution then is to construct (European or national) fortresses to keep the foreigners out.

Indeed, challenger parties were at the forefront of framing the Schengen crisis in exclusive nationalist terms in Western Europe. Yet, these Eurosceptic sentiments have also gradually entered the political mainstream in many countries (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2018: 10; Börzel 2016). Rheindorf and Wodak (2018) demonstrate how the Austrian FPÖ's initial radical calls to limit the number of Schengens allowed to enter the country and to build a border fence became discursively normalised as they were adopted (in somewhat weaker form) by the mainstream conservative and social-democratic parties. A similar process occurred in Germany, where the AfD's framing of Schengens as cultural and security threats entered the mainstream as the Bavarian Christian Social Union and the Free Democrats tangibly moved to more exclusionary positions. In Central and Eastern Europe, the key parties in the framing process from the beginning included governing parties. The Polish PiS party successfully mobilised anti-immigration sentiments in the run-up to the October 2015 election to win the majority

of seats and subsequently hardened its stance to oppose the imposition of Schengen quotas (Krzyzanowski 2018). Similarly, parties in government in Hungary (Fidesz), the Czech Republic (ANO) and Slovakia (Direction) assumed exclusionary nationalist positions.

In light of the absence of a counter cosmopolitan movement, the dominant framing of the Schengen crisis closely corresponded to the exclusive nationalist frame. As right-wing challengers became electorally stronger (see figure 2) and mainstream parties (particularly on the centre-right) increasingly adopted the nationalist rhetoric, the image of Europe as a fortress became entrenched in public discourse (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2018). Unlike the Euro crisis, the Schengen crisis was consequently debated in constitutive, identitarian terms that involved principled opposition to deeper integration that would result in ceding powers to control immigration. The fact that the Visegrad countries maintained their opposition towards the Schengen quotas despite being threatened by economic sanctions (via reducing the subsidies from structural cohesion funds) is emblematic of the primacy of identity over material concerns. As expected by post-functionalism, politicisation framed in exclusive nationalist terms actively impeded the creation of new supranational institutions (i.e. a stronger European Border and Coast Guard), rules (i.e. Schengen allocation quotas), as well as the implementation of decisions already taken (Börzel 2016).

Politicisation and Conflict-Minimising Strategies (H5)

Euro Crisis

Despite continuing overall support for the single currency, electorates in the periphery vocally objected to the imposition of austerity measures and concomitantly the concession of political control to the centre, while populations in the centre protested against providing the financial means to bail out the periphery (Streeck and Elsässer 2016). Economic pressures, however, incentivised governments to attempt to deepen integration regardless. Henceforth, they employed a variety of measures to circumvent the constraining dissensus (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2016; Bickerton et al. 2015).

First of all, governments largely succeeded in preventing Eurosceptic parties from joining or forming governments. Figure 2 above demonstrates the level of volatility in the European party system during the Euro crisis, characterised by the emergence of challenger parties on both ends of the spectrum, the decline of mainstream parties and fall of incumbent governments. In response, pro-European parties formed grand coalitions or tolerated minority governments to isolate Eurosceptics. The emergence of the far-left Syriza party as the strongest force in Greek politics during the January 2015 election and the subsequent formation of a coalition-government with the far-right ANEL party constituted the major exception.

Second, governments minimised the need for parliamentary ratification and referendums on new reforms. EU law usually requires the unanimous ratification of treaty revisions or new treaties, involving constitutionally required referendums in a number of member states. The two major treaties – the Fiscal Compact and ESM Treaty – were both designed as intergovernmental treaties with their own legal personality outside the purview of EU law (Jörges and Kreuder-Sonnen 2017: 120). As a result, these reforms did not necessitate domestic ratifications (only Ireland held a referendum on the Fiscal Compact). Beyond these legal-institutional acrobatics, individual governments were pressured not to hold referendums or to ignore the outcomes. This was most evident when the coalition of creditors de facto forced Greek Prime Minister Papandreou to cancel a planned referendum on the terms of the second bailout or when the Troika harried the Tsipras government to disregard the rejection by the Greek people of the third bailout.

Third, the EU cemented the technocratic nature of governance by delegating further powers to non-majoritarian institutions and strengthening binding rules. The ECB acquired new competences to supervise and resolve the European banking sector. More significantly, the ECB's controversial interpretations of its mandate to assume the role of lender of last resort transformed its nature from a pareto-improving agency to a crucial political actor, whose policies had massive redistributive competences. The Outright Monetary Transactions and Quantitative Easing programmes amounted to building up fiscal capacities on the supranational level, circumventing the opposition of domestic publics and parliaments in creditor states. The regulatory reforms (Sixpack, Twopack) transferred budgetary powers to the European level by enshrining rules on deficits and debt levels and endowing the European Commission with the monitoring and, in case of violation, sanctioning powers to override parliamentary grip on budgets. Non-elected experts rather than national parliamentarians increasingly determined crucial policies in debtor states (Streeck 2016: 113ff.).

However, this disarmament of domestic political actors has been asymmetrical. The example of the German Bundestag during the bailout negotiations is particularly telling. No other national parliament possessed both the *ex ante* and *ex post* veto powers during the bailout negotiations under the ESM, as per the legal requirement of a series of German Constitutional Court rulings. Moschella (2016) demonstrates that the involvement of the Bundestag on the third bailout package for Greece hardened the German negotiation stance relative to countries that were closely aligned to the German position (e.g. Finland) but which did not require parliamentary ratification. As such, the asymmetrical politicisation in national parliaments could provide one explanation as to why the integration outcomes reflected by and large the preferences of the creditor states, as they were not only in a preferable bargaining position but also much less willing or able to compromise due to the need for parliamentary ratification (Kanthak and Spies 2017).

Fourth, the creditor states framed the Euro crisis as a regulatory crisis (Chang 2016: 495). Not only did this interpretation lend itself to shifting the burden of adjustment onto the debtor states, but it also masked the necessary fiscal capacity-building that was likely to be politicised and opposed by electorates in creditor states. Accordingly, most reforms undertaken were of a regulatory nature to ensure compliance with budgetary rules and force structural reforms in debtor states, including the Fiscal Compact and the Banking Union (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2016: 175-80). When member states agreed to create fiscal capacities via the rescue packages for Greece, the EFSF, or the ESM, they were designed to provide the bare minimum support on a strictly temporary basis. Rather than being governed supranationally, these funds were under tight control of the creditor states. Moreover, the ECB with the tacit support of the member states created fiscal capacity concealed as monetary policy.

This array of individual measures to shield European integration from domestic politicisation and constraining dissensus amounted to a comprehensive strategy of pursuing 'integration by stealth' (Majone 2014). The disempowerment of national legislatures in debtor states, the neglect of established legal procedures and strengthening of non-accountable actors raises significant normative questions vis-à-vis the EU's democratic legitimacy (Schmidt 2015). Yet, this form of Schmittian 'emergency politics' (Jörges and Kreuder-Sonnen 2017; White 2015) or 'executive federalism' (Habermas 2015) allowed governments to deepen integration in the face of domestic resistance.

Schengen Crisis

Across the continent, the arrival of more than a million asylum-seekers in 2015 was also particularly politicised, whereby the majority of European citizens, if to varying extents, favoured either reducing arrival numbers or maintaining low arrival numbers (Zaun 2018: 50-4). A coalition of the European Commission and member states with high levels of asylum applications resorted to the tried and tested strategy of limiting domestic politicisation by delegation to non-majoritarian institutions and

advancing integration by regulation. In contrast to the Euro crisis, however, the strategy to limit politicisation largely failed.

Since the onset of the Euro crisis, Euroscepticism had been spreading across the continent, thereby empowering challenger parties mostly on the far-right (see Figure 2), which transformed the political landscapes in two distinct ways. Firstly, the rise of challenger parties incentivised governments to adopt a more uncompromising stance on immigration to maintain electoral appeal (Zaun 2018; Hartevelde, Kokkonen and Dahlberg 2017). The surging of the AfD, the FPÖ, French Front National, Dutch Freedom Party, or Italian Lega Nord is therefore likely to have had a constraining effect on governments to reach compromises at the EU level in the first place and to implement these decisions at the domestic level subsequently. Secondly, and unlike during the Euro crisis, Eurosceptic parties were also part of governments in key member states. The Visegrad countries were all governed by Eurosceptic governments (or mainstream-Eurosceptic coalitions) at some point during the Schengen crisis. Historically, Eurosceptic parties that had entered the government tended to moderate their Euroscepticism as part of the process of mainstreaming (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2013). This was not the case during the Schengen crisis. As a result, the politicisation of the Schengen crisis specifically and the European polity more generally could no longer simply be ignored. Börzel (2016: 18) and Hobolt and Tilley (2016) highlight the importance of the sequence of the two crises. Voters increasingly turned to challenger parties not only due to the perceived economic failures of mainstream parties but also to protest against the de-politicisation strategies that had narrowed the political choices available to citizens, reflective of the pervasive 'there is no alternative' discourse. Ironically, the strategies to limit politicisation therefore had the opposite effect by fuelling citizens' desire to reclaim decision-making powers (Statham and Trenz 2015: 296-8; de Wilde and Zürn 2012).

Nonetheless, governments in favour of deeper integration and the Commission sought to limit the influence of politicisation by relaxing unanimity requirements. In an unprecedented move in asylum and immigration policy, the temporary emergency relocation scheme was decided by Qualitative Majority Voting, overruling countries like Hungary and Poland. To counteract the widespread non-compliance with decisions already taken in the Council and to circumvent domestic opposition, the Commission furthermore attempted, as during the Euro crisis, to delegate greater monitoring and enforcement powers to non-majoritarian bodies. It proposed to endow the new European Border and Coast Guard Agency with independent powers to intervene directly in member states that fail to comply with the legal standards of external border management (Börzel 2016: 24-5). The Commission also suggested reforming the Dublin Regulation to include an automatic relocation mechanism beyond the control of individual countries to de-politicise the allocation of Schengens. Yet, the level of opposition towards a permanent relocation scheme or a powerful border agency prevented the adoption of either reform, even by Qualitative Majority Voting (Schimmelfennig 2018: 981).

Those member states in favour of deeper integration also struggled to paint the crisis in regulatory terms. A number of regulatory reforms were agreed upon in the Council regarding external border management, procedures of assessing asylum applications, or a list of safe countries of origin (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2018: 188). Yet, these were largely measures designed to manage future movements of asylum-seekers not to address the allocation of Schengens that had already arrived in the EU. Only supranational capacity-building to share the burden would effectively address this issue. Member states did agree to provide modest financial and administrative support to countries of first entry but failed to implement or reach agreement on physical burden-sharing, which would have had the most evident redistributive consequences. Unlike during the Euro crisis where the ECB could fill the lack of capacity-building, the supranational agencies during the Schengen crisis were far too weak to exert such agency. Accordingly, the attempt here to imitate the 'integration by stealth' strategy largely failed.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

The starting point of this article was the observation that scholars have paid insufficient attention to the effects of politicisation on European integration. The aim of this analysis, therefore, has been to devise a theoretical framework based on testable hypotheses on the consequences of politicisation. The findings of the empirical section confirmed some of the expectations. The aggregate scale of politicisation (H1) as well as the individual-level scale in key member states (H2) did not differ across the crises, while the effects of politicisation on the supranational agents were inconclusive (H3). However, two crucial factors varied: the framing of politicisation (H4) and the differing success of governments to employ conflict-minimising strategies (H5). During the Euro crisis, politicisation was largely framed by executive actors in terms of economic or political efficiency, which was conducive to the several strategies that limited the constraining effects of domestic politicisation. Conversely, empowered challenger parties during the Schengen crisis framed politicisation in exclusive nationalist terms. They fiercely resisted supranational compromises or failed to implement agreed-upon reforms. Politicisation was thus not only different across the crises but arguably also constitutes one causal factor for the differing outcomes. Of course, this does not suggest that other factors highlighted by liberal intergovernmentalism, i.e. the different bargaining constellations and neofunctionalism, i.e. the different economic costs of inaction and power of the ECB, were insignificant. Instead, the article makes a case for a multi-causal explanation, which, however, must include politicisation.

The sequence of the two crises was central in producing the different outcomes, as the short-term success of limiting the influence of politicisation during the Euro crisis only strengthened politicisation in the mid-term. This finding supports the wider argument that the 'attempt to reverse politicisation is not viable' (de Wilde and Zürn 2012: 137). Since the origin of politicisation is the transfer of authority from the nation-state to supranational institutions, de-politicisation strategies can only affect the intermediating opportunity structure – e.g. the holding of referendums – but not the fundamental cause. Unless the trend of institutionalising international cooperation and strengthening supranational actors is rescinded, politicisation is here to stay, which testifies to the need for any theory of regional integration to take politicisation seriously as a causal factor.

Hence, important implications for the bigger picture of European integration flow from this article. Of course, the reliance on only the Euro and Schengen Crises demands caution when generalising beyond the case studies. While further empirical work is needed, the conclusions of this article make the case for the extension of mainstream theories to consider domestic politics in earnest. It arguably requires theories to move beyond the parsimonious assumptions of an integration process that is driven by economic interests and political elites. The more international institutions assume core state powers, the more publics will become interested in them and the more political agents will draw them into the realm of mass politics. The subsequent political conflicts will likely be more about political values and identities than economics. The rise of right-wing, Eurosceptic governments across the continent, whose political demands are hardly graspable by conventional neo-functional or liberal intergovernmentalist theories, epitomises this development.

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