

European Integration and the War in Ukraine: Just Another Crisis?

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After the sovereign debt, migration, Brexit and pandemic crises (to name but a few), the European Union (EU) again faces a crisis of – as yet – unknown proportions. Putin's war of aggression against Ukraine violates every principle of the European security order that emerged with the end of the Cold War. It also contests the liberal model for organizing societies the EU and its member states have been built around. Amidst these profound challenges the German Chancellor Olav Scholz referred to as 'Zeitenwende', politicians and pundits alike call for the deepening of European integration to defend the EU as a liberal integration project. Institutional reforms are deemed indispensable to prepare the EU for the accession of the Western Balkans and Ukraine and build the EU's strategic autonomy in weathering current and future challenges, geopolitical and otherwise. The sovereign debt, mass migration, rule-of-law backsliding and the Covid-19 pandemic have revealed the EU's weakness as a regulatory polity in coping with non-military transboundary crises. Military security pressures might do what the previous crises failed to do – finally push the member states to build up the EU's fiscal and coercive power turning it into United States of Europe.

Even if the treaty reforms necessary for remedial capacity-building were on the cards in the foreseeable future, EU research does not necessarily support the expectation that conferring more power to the EU produces more power of the EU. The problem of the EU's wanting actorness does not lie so much in the weakness of its fiscal and coercive power nor in its decision-making rules and procedures. It is the member states – in the East and the West – prioritizing their national self-interests over realizing shared goals. The Ukraine crisis is a case in point. Despite the persistence of intergovernmental institutions in foreign and security policy, the member states have been remarkably united in supporting Ukraine against Russia's war of aggression.

As in previous crises, the EU has been coping with its first military security crisis by using its regulatory power to facilitate the joint exercise of fiscal and coercive power by the member states. Yet, the outcome of this crisis differs. It has not resulted in a strengthening of the EU's regulatory powers as we have seen it in the Euro crisis. Unlike in the Covid-19 crisis, the member states have not been willing to give the EU more fiscal power to finance the financial assistance for Ukraine either. At the same time, intergovernmental co-operation has not been deadlocked by member states' refusal of solidarity that has derailed joint decision-making in the Schengen crisis. In our previous work on the EU's multiple crises, Thomas Risse and I argued that changes in the EU's identity politics account for the differing outcomes of the Euro and the Schengen crises (Börzel and Risse 2018). In this article, I explore the extent to which the political mobilization of

particular identity constructions related to questions of order rather than borders in framing the Ukraine crisis can help explain why member states have upgraded their common interest in supporting Ukraine without granting the EU additional power.

The article starts by conceptualizing supranational institutions and member state solidarity as two separate dimensions of deepening European integration. It then develops an argument that links deepening European integration to identity politics. To empirically illustrate the argument, I analyze the outcome of the EU's Ukraine crisis and compare it to previous crises. The comparison reveals that the member states have been willing to upgrade their common interests without pooling or delegating additional powers though. This outcome differs from the Euro, the Schengen and the Covid-19 crises, in which member state solidarity went hand in hand with a strengthening of supranational institutions – with the exception of the Schengen crisis, which resulted in neither. Mainstream theories of European integration may explain the absence of institutional reform in the Ukraine crisis by insufficient functional pressure to outweigh the high sovereignty costs involved in granting the EU coercive power. It is less obvious, however, how they would account for the willingness of member state governments to unite in their support for Ukraine in the absence of such pressure. The second part of the article therefore discusses whether the explanation for this peculiar outcome can be found in the identity politics involved in Putin's war against Ukraine. Unlike Schengen and similar to Euro and Covid-19, the upgrading of the common interest even by right-wing populist governments has been facilitated by the war being framed in terms of order (who are we) rather than border (who belongs to us). The identity discourse about what community the EU wants to be fostered solidarity amongst the member states in coping with the Covid-19 pandemic, and in the same way, it is generating solidarity with Ukraine in defending its independent nationhood against Russia, including the granting of accession prospects. EU membership, of course, also relates to issues of borders and belonging; questions of order and border intersect, particularly since EU accession is conditional upon the commitment to and compliance with the EU liberal principles for organizing politics and society. Being a European neighbor, Ukraine qualifies for EU membership. Geographic and cultural proximity also accounts for the willingness of Poland to receive millions of Ukrainians. The article concludes by discussing why the identity discourse enabling a far-reaching upgrading of the common interest on security and defense issues has not resulted in a strengthening of supranational institutions.

I. The Deepening European Integration: Governance, Solidarity and Identity

There are different ways to conceptualize and measure the deepening of European integration. EU scholars tend to focus on the institutional dimension. Regional integration involves the 'delegation and pooling' of national sovereignty rights (Hooghe and Marks 2015). 'Delegation' ('level', or 'breadth' of integration) refers to the number of policy sectors in which states are willing to share or transfer national competencies to the European level; 'pooling' ('scope', or 'depth') denotes the power and autonomy of regional authorities in exercising these competencies (Börzel 2005; Hooghe and Marks 2015; Lindberg and Scheingold 1970). The breadth of EU competencies is quite comprehensive. There are very few areas in which the EU is unable to take action. The issue is how much control member states still hold over EU policy-making. This varies

considerably across and within policy areas,¹ depending on the ‘governance mix’. The power of individual member states, and hence the need for upgrading the common interest, increases from intergovernmental co-ordination, which requires unanimity (e.g., security and defense), over joint decision-making by majority voting (e.g., asylum and migration) to supranational delegation (e.g., monetary policy) where member states are not involved (cf. Börzel 2010).

Early on, Ernst Haas identified what he considered ‘a particular interesting indicator for judging progress along the path of integration’ (Haas 1961, p. 367): conflict resolution by ‘upgrading of the common interest’ rather than on the basis of the ‘lowest common denominator’ or ‘splitting the difference’. Haas saw the mode of conflict resolution and the powers of supranational institutions as two dimensions of political integration, which were causally linked: ‘[P]arties succeeded in redefining their conflict so as to work out a solution at a higher level, which almost invariably implies the expansion of the mandate or task (...)’ (Haas 1961, p. 368). The causal mechanisms that links the two is that ‘the up-grading of the parties’ common interests relies heavily on the services of an institutionalized mediator (...) with an autonomous range of powers’ (Haas 1961).

The idea that supranational institutions foster the upgrading of the common interest amongst member states is reflected in the demands of EU scholars and policy-makers alike for extending majority rule on issues of security and defense to strengthen the EU’s capacity to act as one, internally and at the global level. Yet, the Schengen crisis has demonstrated how asymmetrical effects on the member states, on the one hand, and the increasing electoral support for populist parties, on the other, can result in a constraining dissensus on centralized political action (Börzel and Risse 2018; Hooghe and Marks 2009). EU competencies and majority voting have not been sufficient to make member states upgrade the common interest in coming to terms with mass migration into the EU. Outvoted member states have resorted to ‘opposition through the backdoor’ (Falkner et al. 2004) by refusing to comply with EU decisions, for example, to relocate Syrian refugees (Börzel 2021, pp. 164–169). At the same time, the war in Ukraine demonstrates that the EU is perfectly able to act as one, even under unanimity. The EU has never been so united on foreign and security policy issues.

This is not to say that supranational institutions have no role in fostering conflict resolution by upgrading the common interest. Member states have strengthened the powers of supranational institutions to depoliticize controversial decisions allowing them to upgrade the common interest, resulting in a deepening of integration (Börzel 2016). Conversely, the strengthening of supranational institutions requires an upgrading of the common interest by the member states. They have to give up national sovereignty to realize common goals through supranational institutions. There seems to be, however, factors that interfere with, and compensate for, the policy effectiveness of joint decision-making and supranational delegation to the European Commission and undermine the agreement on institutional reforms to realize common goals. The willingness and capacity of member states to agree on and comply with EU decisions depend on the costs they have to incur. The higher the costs, the more likely member state governments are to face domestic opposition against EU decisions, particularly if domestic actors are aware and care about them (Börzel 2021, Chapter 2). With the deepening of

¹For a mapping of the breadth and depth of EU competencies and tasks, see Leuffen et al. (2022, pp. 40–46).

European integration, the EU has become increasingly politicized (Hooghe and Marks 2009; Rauh and Zürn 2016; Rauh 2016, Chapters 1 and 2). Citizens oppose or support EU policies rather than being neutral, ambivalent or indifferent (De Wilde et al. 2016; Hutter et al. 2016, pp. 7–12). Politicization is a constraining (Hooghe and Marks 2009) or even paralyzing (Scharpf 2009) factor of deepening European integration. Intensified political conflict in public media and party competition changes the quality of European integration because political élites can no longer control it. Eurosceptic attitudes of citizens in national elections and referenda on EU affairs limit the room for maneuvering by national governments and European policy-makers searching for functional solutions to Europe's pressing problems. The shift from elite-driven interest group politics to mass politics goes hand in hand with a growing salience of a new cleavage that is cultural rather than material and relates to identity and community (Hooghe and Marks 2018). The new cultural cleavage has been referred to as green, alternative, liberal versus traditional, authoritarian, nationalist, as integrationist versus demarcationist or as cosmopolitan versus communitarian (cf. De Wilde et al. 2014; Kriesi et al. 2008; Marks et al. 2002). It restructures political competition around issues such as lifestyle, cultural diversity, immigration, ecology and nationalism.

Thomas Risse and I argued that the cultural cleavage maps unto the difference between those citizens holding exclusive nationalist identities versus those with inclusive Europeanized identities where Europe is added to their national identities (Börzel and Risse 2009; Risse 2010). Thus, the political mobilization of collective identities can cut both ways with regard to the deepening of European integration. Inclusive Europeanized identities generate public solidarity with other member states as well as public support for European integration whilst exclusive nationalist identities have the opposite effect (Risse 2010). The politicization of identification patterns with regard to border and community membership by (mostly right-wing) political parties prevents member states from upgrading the common interest. The opposite is the case when political controversies are framed in terms of questions of order, that is, what constitutes Europe as a community and how much solidarity members of the community owe to each other under which conditions. We empirically demonstrated our hypotheses by comparing the Euro and the Schengen crises (Börzel and Risse 2018). The Covid-19 crisis corroborates our argument that identity politics centering around issues of order are more conducive to deepening integration on both dimensions (see below). The outcome of the Ukraine crisis is more difficult to interpret as it involves an upgrading of common interest without moving towards supranational institutions.

II. Russia's War Against Ukraine: Yet Another Crisis

Europe was still recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic when Russia's military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 triggered the next crisis or rather set of crises. It is not the first war fought on the European continent since the end of the Second World War. Nor are EU member states party to the war. It therefore may be debatable to what extent Ukraine war constitutes the EU's first existential military threat setting in motion new dynamics of 'European state-building' (Kelemen and Mcnamara 2022). What Putin's war certainly did was to destroy the European security order as it had emerged from the Cold War. He not only rejects its liberal foundations as they were laid down in the Paris Charter

of 1990 which committed signatories to democracy, human rights and the rule of law as the fundamental values governing the future practice of their relations. The war of aggression also violates the basic principles of sovereign equality and territorial integrity enshrined in the ‘Westphalian’ part of the post-World War II international order that has been equally accepted by liberal and non-liberal states (Lake et al. 2021). Finally, Putin’s weaponization of interdependence (Farrell and Newman 2019) regarding energy resources and food profoundly challenges the doctrine that used to inform the foreign policies of European and other Western states that international exchange and engagement promote peace and prosperity. This is why German Chancellor Olav Scholz called for a ‘Zeitenwende’ (historical turning point) in Germany’s foreign policy, with major ramifications for the EU.² His calls for a deepening of the EU (more majority voting in the Council) have been echoed by some European leaders (e.g., Spain)³ and rejected by others (e.g., Poland).⁴

Meanwhile, the EU has shown an astonishing ability to take action against the massive violations of international law committed by Putin’s Russia.⁵ The EU member states have agreed – unanimously – on no fewer than 11 sanctions packages, on supplying military equipment and training to the Ukrainian armed forces and on providing almost €75 billion in financial, humanitarian, emergency, budget and military support. The member states have also welcomed around six million refugees and have given temporary protection to more than four million.⁶ Finally, the EU heads of state and government promised ‘to contribute, together with partners, to future security commitments to Ukraine, which will help Ukraine defend itself in the long term, deter acts of aggression and resist destabilisation efforts’.⁷ This is the first time that EU member states have made such a security commitment to a third country. The unity of the 27 member states’ external action vis-à-vis Russia is all the more remarkable amidst the dependence of many of them on energy from Russia and the close relations some of them used to socialize with Putin’s regime. Hungary’s Prime Minister Victor Orbán barked at some of the joint actions but ultimately came around (Genschel 2022, p. 1893).

If security and defense already constitute a least likely case for member states upgrading the common interest, so does EU enlargement. For 20 years, different member states had blocked any plans for widening the EU (e.g., the Netherlands and France) or insisted on accession conditions for current candidates related to their myopic national interests (e.g., Greece and Bulgaria). The EU’s ‘enlargement fatigue’ (Rehn 2007) ended in June 2022, when the member states unanimously agreed to grant Ukraine, Moldova and possibly Georgia candidate status.

The member states have agreed on a comprehensive set of joint actions, with ‘very little infighting (...) and clear evidence of burden-sharing’ (Anghel and Jones 2023, p. 775).

²<https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/scholz-speech-prague-charles-university-2079558>, last access 4 August 2023.

³<https://spanish-presidency.consilium.europa.eu/en/programme/the-spanish-presidency-programme/>, last access 11 August 2023.

⁴<https://www.gov.pl/web/primeminister/mateusz-morawiecki-at-heidelberg-university---europe-at-a-historic-turning-point>, last access 11 August 2023.

⁵A comprehensive overview, which is regularly updated, can be found on the EU’s website, https://eu-solidarity-ukraine.ec.europa.eu/index_en, last access 3 August 2023.

⁶<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>, last access 10 August 2023.

⁷https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/european-council-conclusions-ukraine_en, last access 3 August 2023.

At the same time, they have refrained from giving the EU more fiscal and coercive power or changing the decision-making rules and procedures on security and defense issues. The member states made a commitment in March 2022 towards building EU sovereignty in the fields of defense, economy and energy.⁸ However, rather than centralizing core state powers at the EU level, they have jointly mobilized their national armed forces, fiscal resources and administrative capacities, supported and regulated by EU institutions (Genschel 2022).

The French proposal to use the fiscal instruments of mutualizing debt introduced to finance the EU measures to help member states recover from the socio-economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic was rejected (Genschel 2022, p. 1896), most notably by the German government,⁹ whose Chancellor Scholz had helped negotiate the EU Recovery Instrument hailing it as the EU's 'Hamiltonian moment' when he was still Minister of Finance (cited in Freudlsperger and Schimmelfennig 2022, p. 1881). Instead, the Commission had to repurpose the €300 billion in loans not used in NextGenerationEU for its REPower Europe program (Anghel and Jones 2023, p. 776). Nor have the member states taken any action to build centralized military capabilities to honor their security commitment to Ukraine without having to rely on the United States. Despite calls for more majority voting on security and defense matters, which would allow the EU to circumvent the veto of non-aligned member states (Austria, Ireland, Malta and Cyprus) as a major obstacle to its strategic autonomy, the intergovernmental institutions of the Common Security and Defense Policy have remained unchanged.

In sum, the EU's handling of the Ukraine crisis has involved a remarkable degree of upgrading of the common interest – without, however, resulting in any institutional deepening of European integration as we have seen it in the Euro and the Covid-19 crisis. To prevent the breakdown of the euro zone, the Euro countries established a whole set of new supranational institutions (for a more detailed analysis, see Börzel 2016). The Fiscal Compact, the European Stability Mechanism, the Banking Union, the Macro-Economic Imbalance Mechanism and the European Semester constitute a far-reaching institutional deepening of European integration. So do the reforms introduced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic (cf. Brooks et al. 2023, pp. 728–735; Kassim and Tholoniati 2021, pp. 617–627).

The member states accepted the proposal of the Commission for a European Health Union increasing the role of the EU in the field of health security. They also strengthened the powers of the European Medicines Agency and the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control and established the Health Emergency, Preparedness and Response Authority. EU funding for dealing with health and cross-border threats was stepped up. Finally, the Commission was tasked to undertake the joint procurement of medical equipment and vaccines, to roll out an EU-wide Digital Covid Certificate, and co-ordinate the information-sharing amongst national health authorities.

To mitigate the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic, the escape clause of the Stability and Growth Pact was suspended, a pandemic credit line was created in the European Stability Mechanism and a temporary Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks

⁸<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/03/11/the-versailles-declaration-10-11-03-2022/>, last access 10 August 2023.

⁹<https://www.ft.com/content/86b27da5-bc6c-49d0-af72-62f79c5c39b3>, last access 10 August 2023.

in an Emergency (SURE) was established offering loans to member states to finance job retention schemes. The European Investment Bank offered additional loan guarantees to small and medium size enterprises. Most importantly, the EU Recovery Instrument (Next Generation EU) and the 2021–2027 multi-annual financial framework established in 2020 provide for the largest budget the member states have ever agreed on (€1.85 trillion). To help raise the €750 billion for Next Generation EU, the member states have authorized the Commission to borrow funds on behalf of the EU on the international capital markets. For the first time, the member states engage in collective borrowing. Unlike Euro bonds, all member states will be liable. To repay the joint debts, the EU shall receive new own resources in form of a tax on non-recyclable plastic waste, a digital levy on large digital companies, a carbon border adjustment mechanism, a financial transaction tax and an extension of the EU Emission Trading Scheme to the aviation and maritime sector. Finally, member states agreed for the first time to make the disbursement of EU funds conditional on a member state's respect of the rule of law. Whilst not directly linked to the protection of the EU's fundamental values enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU), the rule-of-law mechanism shall be activated where the financial interests of the Union are at stake. This includes cases of severe corruption, whose control requires independent courts.

Taken together, the member states agreed on a forceful European response to the Covid-19 crisis, strengthening the EU's powers in public health policy, revising existing and creating new macroeconomic instruments to complement national measures to support the recovery and resilience of economies, particularly in the member states most hit by the crisis. Granting the Commission the power to borrow money and collect EU-level taxes may not constitute a 'Hamiltonian moment', but they are major steps in bringing the EU closer to a truly economic union – even though the member states could not agree to make the EU Recovery Instrument a permanent fiscal instrument of mutualizing debt and have relied on alternative ways of raising the funds to support Ukraine. The Commission freezing access to EU funds under the Rule of Law Conditionality Regulation appears to be more effective to counter rule-law-backsliding in Hungary and Poland than sanctions under Article 7, which member state governments have been unwilling to invoke (Oliver and Stefanelli 2016; Pech 2022). The outcome of the Covid-19 crisis was enabled by a substantial upgrading of the common interest that involved not only large-scale financial redistribution amongst member states but also the violation of a core EU norm of no common EU debt issuance and the breaking with the austerity policy as the condition for Northern creditors' solidarity with the Southern debtors during the Euro crisis. Solidarity in the Covid-19 crisis has been equally conditional, but this time on the respect of the rule of law (cf. De La Porte and Jensen 2021).

Whilst the Ukraine crisis has not seen any of the institutional deepening of the Euro and the Covid-19 crises, it still differs from the Schengen crisis, which has been a complete failure. Initially, the inability of the EU in coming to terms with the refugee flows was not related to the unwillingness of member states to take joint action. Between the end of September 2015 and the end of April 2016, the member states agreed on a whole set of joint measures aiming at 'sharing the responsibility' (Council of the European Union 2015) for the refugees who had already entered the territory of the EU, on the one hand, and managing future refugee flows, on the other. Action was taken by drawing on the EU's legal framework for a common asylum and migration policy. Core measures

included several billion euros for various funds to support member states and third countries in managing and accommodating migration flows; the adoption of a common list of safe countries of origin; the relocation of 120,000 ‘persons in clear need of international protection’; and the establishment of additional hot spots in Italy and Greece. Ultimately, however, the member states failed to upgrade the common interest as they refused to implement most of the agreed joint measures. They did not meet their various funding pledges, nor did they send the promised numbers of additional experts to FRONTEX or the European Asylum Support Office (EASO). Most importantly, only a fraction of the altogether 160,000 refugees were relocated from Greece and Italy. Instead of upgrading the common interest, governments took national measures tightening border controls (Börzel 2021, pp. 164–169). Any attempts to reform the Common European Asylum System to arrive at a fair sharing of responsibility for ‘registering and processing people in need of protection and who are not returning to their home countries or safe third countries they are transited through’ (European Commission 2016, p. 3) have failed so far. The ‘historic’ agreement reached by the Council on Justice and Home Affairs in June 2023 on two asylum and migration laws¹⁰ was endorsed by a majority of 21 out of 27 member states.¹¹

The asylum procedure regulation would allow quick assessment at the EU’s external borders of unfounded or inadmissible applications. Applicants with low chances of being admitted would not be allowed to enter the EU proper. Rejected applicants would also be sent back more quickly. The strengthening of external border protection is the lowest common denominator in the reform of the Common European Asylum System. The second part of the reform would replace the Dublin rule, which makes the Mediterranean frontline states responsible for the examination of asylum applications as the member states of first entry. To arrive at a fairer and binding allocation of people applying for protection across all member states, the new asylum and migration management regulation should determine which member state was responsible for the examination of an asylum application. The member states would be given a choice of either accepting a certain number of people seeking protection each year or paying into a joint EU fund. Both, however, requires an upgrading of the common interest particularly by Central and Eastern European transit countries they are unwilling to engage in. Poland, which had voted against the two proposals along with Hungary in the Council (Bulgaria, Lithuania, Malta and Slovakia had abstained), announced to neither accept any relocations of migrants and asylum seekers nor make the required payments instead.¹²

With an upgrading of the common interest in supporting Ukraine but no institutional reforms of the intergovernmental Common Security and Defense Policy, the Ukraine crisis falls in-between the Euro and Covid-19 crisis with their successful deepening of European integration, on the one hand, and the Schengen crisis as a complete failure on both accounts, on the other.

¹⁰<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/06/08/migration-policy-council-reaches-agreement-on-key-asylum-and-migration-laws/>, last access 4 August 2023.

¹¹<https://notesfrompoland.com/2023/06/09/poland-condemns-eu-migration-and-asylum-pact-agreed-by-european-council/>, last access 4 August 2023.

¹²<https://notesfrompoland.com/2023/06/09/poland-condemns-eu-migration-and-asylum-pact-agreed-by-european-council/>, last access 4 August 2023.

To what extent can identity politics account for this mixed outcome of the Ukraine crisis?

III. EU Crises and Identity Politics

Standard theories of European integration, such as liberal intergovernmentalism (LIG), neofunctionalism (NF) or postfunctionalism, provide explanations for the outcome of each of the EU's multiple crises (see, e.g., the contributions in Brack and Gürkan 2020; Hooghe and Marks 2019; Ioannou et al. 2017; Quaglia and Verdun 2023a; Tosun et al. 2016; Wiener et al. 2019). Explaining variation across the various crises poses more of a theoretical challenge, particularly with the Ukraine crisis adding a new type of outcome. Why did member state governments manage to depoliticize the Euro and the Covid-19 crisis, deepening European integration, whereas they failed to do so in the case of the Schengen crisis, despite a common interest in preserving the borderless Schengen area to avoid welfare losses incurred? Why have they been able to bridge their differences over Russia without, however, delegating more fiscal and military powers to supranational institutions or enabling more majority voting on security and defense issues?

To solve the puzzle, LIG and NF both point to interdependence creating incentives for member state governments to delegate more power to the EU and determining the distribution of costs not to do so (costs of non-integration). LIG focuses on common member state preference for the preservation of the common currency (euro), the borderless Schengen area (migration, Covid) and (energy) security (Ukraine). The varying degree to which member state governments have been willing to pool and delegate sovereignty at the EU level is then explained by the asymmetrical distribution of costs and the bargaining power of big states (cf. Schimmelfennig 2021). NF emphasizes spillover mechanisms and supranational entrepreneurship in depoliticizing costs through supranational delegation (cf. Niemann 2021). LIG would argue that member state incentives to strengthen the fiscal and coercive powers of the EU in security and defense to cope with the Ukraine crisis are unequal as some are more threatened by Russia, due to their geographical proximity, than others (Genschel 2022, p. 1888). Moreover, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has provided for the necessary military capabilities to protect the EU (Kelemen and Mcnamara 2022, p. 9), and the EU can use existing funds, for example, of the EU Recovery Instrument, to finance its support for Ukraine. However, why have the member states refrained from incurring sovereignty costs to strengthen the EU's strategic autonomy but agreed on comprehensive sanctions against Russia that resulted in massive economic and political costs due to the ensuing energy crisis and inflation, which are as unevenly distributed amongst the member states as the security threat by Russia? This is where LIG may bring in leadership. Due to the reliance of its export economy on the single market, the Euro and the borderless Schengen area as well as its energy dependency on Russia, Germany has incurred relatively high costs in all four crises. In the Euro and the Covid-19 crisis, German leadership, in tandem with France, was crucial in bringing about institutional reforms (Crawford 2021; De La Porte and Jensen 2021, pp. 392–395; Schild 2013, pp. 30–39). Despite her personal engagement, the government of Angela Merkel failed to foster joint action by the member states in coping with the mass influx of refugees in 2015 (Crawford 2021, pp. 496–502). Her successor, Olaf Scholz, called for a more sovereign Europe. Yet, rather than European

leadership, he has shown national prudence, if not reluctance regarding the imposition of an oil and gas embargo against Russia or the delivery of heavy weapons to Ukraine (Anghel and Jones 2023, p. 772). Whilst (German) leadership appears to make a difference, the question remains, why Germany failed in its leadership in the Schengen crisis and refrained from taking over leadership in the Ukraine crisis.

Supranational entrepreneurship has been present in all four crises (Kassim and Tholoniati 2021). The European Commission successfully fostered agreement amongst the member states on the strengthening of supranational institutions in the Euro and the Covid-19 crisis (Kassim 2023; Niemann and Ioannou 2015). Any of its proposals for reforming the supranational Common European Asylum System (CEAS), in contrast, have failed so far (Kassim and Tholoniati 2021, pp. 306–307). The Commission has played a leading role in co-ordinating the member state responses to Russia's war of aggression, including the sanctions, the humanitarian assistance and the membership perspective (Anghel and Jones 2023, p. 772). At the same time, it has not taken any initiatives to change the intergovernmental institutions in security and defense.

Postfunctionalism, finally, highlights politicization as a key impediment for deepening integration (Hooghe and Marks 2009, 2018). The constraining dissensus and the ensuing politicization driven by Eurosceptical populist parties, particularly on the right, explain why the member states failed to upgrade their common interests in the Schengen crisis. But why were member state governments and the EU able to shield their decisions on deepening integration during the Euro and the Covid-19 crises, and taking joint action against Russia, from the domestic opposition of parties that claim to defend popular sovereignty against supranational technocracy and sought alliances with Russian President Putin?

Part of the answer lies in identity politics. During the Euro and Covid-19 crisis, identity politics concerned mostly constitutive features of the EU. How much solidarity is required in a multilevel political community to keep it together and what do members of the community owe to each other in terms of duties and obligations to keep the order? In other words, the political and social identity of the EU was at stake relating to questions of its political and economic order rather than its borders. In the Euro crisis, the issue was solidarity versus budgetary discipline as the rich Northern member states argued that the Southern European crisis countries had lived beyond their means and could only expect solidarity if they complied with the austerity rules of the Euro zone (Börzel 2016, p. 16; Börzel and Risse 2018, p. 96). The identity discourse during the euro crisis rarely used 'self/other' distinctions to demarcate between debtor and creditor countries. The distinction between the 'prudent' North and the 'prodigal' South did at best raise questions of whether the membership of Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece in the Eurozone had been premature. The dominant issue was how much solidarity the creditors deserved given their disrespect for the 'rules of the game'. Focusing on what kind of political community the EU wanted to be rather than on who belonged to it allowed the governments of creditor countries to muster sufficient solidarity for the fiscal transfers necessary to keep the debtor countries afloat and, hence, the Euro zone together (cf. Börzel and Risse 2018, pp. 96–98).

In the Covid-19 crisis, all member states were affected by the pandemic. Some were hit harder than others but without bearing the blame (Quaglia and Verdun 2023b, p. 600). At first, the member states appeared to follow a nationalist reflex, unilaterally introducing temporary export controls and travel bans and seizing shipments of medicines and medical equipment rather than engaging in joint action at the EU level (Brooks et al. 2023,

p. 727). After a couple of months, however, the hardship inflicted on people all over Europe triggered a swift and forceful response by the EU and its member states to the health emergency (see above). Similar to the Euro crisis, the deepening of integration could rely on the solidarity of the majority of European citizens generated by their inclusive national, that is, Europeanized, identities. European leaders, including German Chancellor Merkel, French President Macron and Commission President von der Leyen, called for economic solidarity to aid areas of the Union most affected by Covid-19 (Bauhr and Charron 2021, pp. 534, 536). The rich Northern governments ('the frugal 5') gave up on their opposition against the mutualization of debt and compromised on fiscal austerity as a condition for solidarity (Kassim and Tholoniati 2021, pp. 622, 624). The Hungarian and Polish governments accepted the rule of law as a new condition for accessing EU recovery funds (De La Porte and Jensen 2021, p. 393). The latter is all the more remarkable as the two main rule-of-law back-sliders had far less to gain from the concession of the 'frugal 5' than the Southern European Euro countries, which were hit the hardest by the pandemic. The concessions by the 'frugal 5' and the rule-of-law backsliders were certainly facilitated by side-payments and issue-linkages brokered by German-Franco leadership and the supranational entrepreneurship of the European Commission (cf. De La Porte and Jensen 2021). However, similar to the Euro crisis, the dominant discourse of European solidarity in coping with a transboundary health emergency and its economic consequences promoted the upgrading of the common interest amongst member state governments. The survey of Bauhr and Charron finds that public support for EU fiscal redistribution in response to the Covid-19 crisis was associated with cosmopolitan values and support for European integration rather than material concerns and utilitarian factors, such as the personal costs incurred by the pandemic or anticipated benefits from EU funds (Bauhr and Charron 2021). Member state governments were not constrained by the mobilization of right-wing populist parties that refrained from turning the politicization of the national policies to fight the pandemic and their effects on public health, the economy and individual rights against the strengthening of the EU's fiscal and public health related powers (Kriesi and Oana 2023, pp. 743–745, 753; Quaglia and Verdun 2023b, p. 604).

The Schengen crisis and the debates about migrants and refugees were about 'the others', about 'who we are' and 'who belongs to us?'. The main conflict line is not about questions of order but about borders and belonging: It puts ideas about a multicultural, open and cosmopolitan Europe against an alternative vision which Risse termed 'nationalist Europe' (Risse 2010, pp. 245–246). The PiS government of Poland justified its rejection of the two most recent CEAS reform proposals declaring that it would 'not consent' to any 'cultural experiment imposed on us' by relocating 'illegal immigrants'.¹³ Likewise, Germany's far-right *Alternative für Deutschland* will campaign in the upcoming European elections on cracking down on migration and reform the EU as 'a federation of European nations' protecting 'different identities'.¹⁴ The politicization of borders and belonging by mostly right-wing populist parties activated and mobilized citizens holding exclusive nationalist identities whilst the majority remained silent and inactive in the absence of a transnationalized and cosmopolitan counter-discourses by the European elites

¹³ <https://notesfrompoland.com/2023/06/09/poland-condemns-eu-migration-and-asylum-pact-agreed-by-european-council/>, last access 4 August 2023.

¹⁴ <https://euobserver.com/world/157327>, last access 5 August 2023.

(Börzel and Risse 2018, pp. 18–19). The border identity discourse substantially constrained member state governments in upgrading the common interest, in general, Germany's capacity to exercise leadership in forging European solidarity, in particular (Crawford 2021, pp. 501–502).

The US and European leaders have framed the Ukraine crisis as a premeditated, unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression launched by Russia, which not only threatens the UN-based security order but also contests liberal values. Two days after the invasion, US President Biden linked Russia's violation of international law to a 'contest between democracy and autocracy, between sovereignty and subjugation' in which 'freedom will prevail'.¹⁵ For French President Macron, '[d]emocracy is being called into question before our eyes' and provides an opportunity for Europe, to become a 'power of peace'.¹⁶ EU Commission President von der Leyen explained in her 2022 State of the Union address that 'a whole continent has risen in solidarity' with Ukraine because Putin's war was 'not only a war unleashed by Russia against Ukraine' but also a 'war on our energy, a war on our economy, a war on our values and a war on our future. This is about autocracy against democracy'.¹⁷ In his Prague Speech in August 2022, German Chancellor Scholz declared that Europe and Germany's support for Ukraine as Europe was 'united in peace and freedom', 'was open to all European nations who share our values' and was 'the lived rejection of imperialism and autocracy'.¹⁸ Polish Prime Minister Morawiecki echoed Scholz, claiming that 'Europe finds itself at a historic turning point' and emphasizing the importance of European values of 'peace, freedom, and solidarity' in the face of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. 'Today, Ukrainians are fighting not only for their own freedom. Since February 24, 2022, they have also been fighting daily for the freedom of all Europe (...). The defeat of Ukraine would be the defeat of the West. Indeed, of the entire free world'.¹⁹ Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni defended Italy's military aid to Ukraine, which is unpopular with Italian voters, reminding them that '[t]he Ukrainian people are defending the values of freedom and democracy on which our civilisation is based, and the very foundations of international law'.²⁰

The identity discourse about the values that define Europe as a community and that are at stake in Ukraine resonates with Ukrainian President Zelensky's tying Ukraine's struggle for its right to national self-determination to the defense of freedom and democracy. 'Europe [is] the space of freedom, democracy, social development and fundamental values that unite us all'.²¹ Even President Putin refers to European values in his justification of the 'special military operation' as the necessity to 'protect Russia and our people' not only against 'abuse and genocide' by the Ukrainian government but also against

¹⁵<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/02/24/remarks-by-president-biden-on-russias-unprovoked-and-unjustified-attack-on-ukraine/>, last access 11 August 2023.

¹⁶https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/short_news/macron-war-in-ukraine-marks-change-of-an-era-for-europe/, last access 11 August 2023.

¹⁷https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/ov/speech_22_5493, last access 11 August 2023.

¹⁸<https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-en/news/scholz-speech-prague-charles-university-2079558>, last access 4 August 2023.

¹⁹<https://www.gov.pl/web/primeminister/mateusz-morawiecki-at-heidelberg-university---europe-at-a-historic-turning-point>, last access 11 August 2023.

²⁰<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/italys-meloni-ready-risk-unpopularity-over-support-ukraine-2023-03-21/>, last access 11 August 2023.

²¹<https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/mi-nikoli-ne-mayemo-zupinyatisya-v-zahisti-svobodni-j-demokra-78353>, last access 11 August 2023.

threats of the ‘the United States and its allies’. These threats are exemplified by ‘NATO expansion’ as well as ‘attempts (...) [to] destroy our traditional values and impose on us their pseudo-values that would corrode us, our people from the inside’.²²

The mobilization of shared European values has generated public support in member states for the increasingly costly sanctions against Russia, humanitarian and military aid for Ukraine as well as welcoming hundred thousands of Ukrainian refugees (Genschel 2022, pp. 1892–1893). It also turned around the majority of Europeans that had opposed any further enlargement.²³ A community that owes solidarity to third countries because they share and defend these values cannot deny them membership.

Conclusion

In the EU’s ‘perma-crisis’, Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine introduces a new variety of crisis outcome, which has not resulted in deeper integration as we have seen it in the Euro and Covid-19 crisis, but does not constitute an outright failure as in the case of the Schengen crisis. Scholars have described this outcome as ‘more cooperation among the member states rather than more centralization at the EU level’ (Genschel 2022, p. 1886) or ‘resilience without ostentatious change’ (Ferrera et al. 2023, p. 17). The article offers a conceptualization that distinguishes between upgrading of the common interest and institutional reform as two dimensions of deepening integration. Whilst security and defense is a least likely case for both, member state governments have been persistently able to bridge their national differences in responding to Russia’s military invasion of Ukraine, which prevented a more effective response of the EU to Russia’s annexation of the Crimea in 2014 (Howorth 2017; Kuzio 2017).

Theories of European integration have difficulties in accounting for this new variety of crisis outcome, particularly in comparison to previous ones. Whilst identity politics can help close the gap, it fails to explain why the framing of the war as a struggle for the values that define the EU as a political community has enabled an upgrading of the common interest but no supranationalization of the Common Security and Defense Policy. The identity discourse has prevented a politicization of the EU’s joint action despite growing economic costs incurred by the ensuing energy crisis and inflation. Despite calls for strengthening the EU’s strategic autonomy, member state governments have refrained from moving towards majority voting and giving the EU more fiscal and coercive power.

The findings suggest that the deepening of integration in response to a transboundary crisis, military or not, depends on both functional and post-functional conditions (see also Freudlsperger and Schimmelfennig 2022; Genschel 2022). Crises are ambivalent. As ‘a serious threat to the basic structures or the fundamental values and norms of a system’, crisis ‘necessitates making vital decisions’ ‘under time pressure and highly uncertain circumstances’ (Rosenthal et al. 1989, p. 10). Crises thereby also offer a ‘creative opportunity for realizing [the] potential to redefine aims at a higher level of consensus’ (Haas and Schmitter 1964, p. 716). The threat of break down and disintegration helps ‘align interests within and across member states, mute conflict, and create feelings of community and solidarity’ (Genschel 2022, p. 1887).

²²<https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/full-text-putin-s-declaration-of-war-on-ukraine/>, last access 11 August 2023.

²³Standard Eurobarometer 99 – Spring 2023, <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3052>, last access 18 July 2023.

At the same time, crises makes member states ‘more concerned with securing their own interests, borders, and citizens’ instant security, which could thus limit their ability to reach agreement on common policies or to delegate authority and capacity to EU institutions’ (Riddervold et al. 2021, p. 9). Failing to realize the potential of moving integration forward by upgrading the common interest can result in disintegration or stagnation (cf. Schmitter 1970). This becomes all the more likely, when mass politicization and identity politics create ‘downward pressure on the level and scope of integration’ (Hooghe and Marks 2009, p. 21).

The tipping point towards deeper integration is the combination of functional pressure generated by interdependence and political support facilitated by an order-based identity discourse. They are each necessary and together sufficient conditions for deepening integration. In the Ukraine crisis, the identity discourse provided the permissive consensus necessary for upgrading the common interest. Yet, the functional pressure was not sufficient to induce supranationalizing reforms as it was asymmetric (Freudlsperger and Schimmelfennig 2022, p. 1877; Mcnamara and Kelemen 2022, p. 1920). In the absence of a direct attack against the EU and its member states, the perceived security threat has been limited and asymmetrical (Genschel 2022, p. 1888). Moreover, the member states bordering Russia and Ukraine can rely on the safety net provided by NATO (Genschel 2022, p. 1890). Finally, the Permanent Structured Cooperation of the EU already allows member states to engage in joint security and defense projects to strengthen their military capabilities [Art. 42(6) TEU].

Whether Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine is just another crisis or a ‘Zeitenwende’ depends on whether member state governments that see national sovereignty as a condition for effective and democratic governance in the EU realize that the best way to safeguard peace, wealth and security in Europe is acting together rather than going alone. So far, the Ukraine crisis has done little to change Poland’s refusal of solidarity in relocating migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers within the EU. Neither have other foot-draggers of a Schengen reform. On issues of borders, exclusive nationalist identity constructions are likely to continue to prevent the upgrading of the common interest necessary to overcome deadlock in the EU’s supranational governance of asylum and migration.

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