Understanding and explaining the European Union in a crisis context: concluding reflections

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"An outstanding volume edited by two leading scholars of EU studies, this is one of the most sophisticated and systematic treatments of Europe's 'age of crisis' that I have seen. Ecumenical in its approach, the chapters test old and new theories of European integration against the crises of the last decade. The editors have done an excellent job in ensuring the coherence of the volume. The final result is far more than just the sum of its parts."

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This book will be of key interest to scholars and students of European integration, European Union politics, political theory, and, more broadly, to European studies.

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1

INTRODUCTION

European integration (theories) in crisis?

Nathalie Brack and Seda Gürkan

1. Introduction

The European project has always been a contested one and may even be considered to be a polity in a quasi-permanent crisis. Indeed, European integration has faced, almost from the start, various crises: from De Gaulle's empty chair, to the recurring tensions over the budget and Margaret Thatcher's opposition to a political Union, to the constitutional crisis. Today, the EU again faces multiple challenges. It is still struggling with the economic and social consequences of the 2008 financial crisis, and economic governance remains a controversial issue. The migration crisis provoked various conflicts between the Member states and the Commission. The European Union's (EU's) scope of intervention and its legitimacy is increasingly called into question, and Brexit has triggered new existential debates on the purposes and forms of European integration. In some countries, the values underpinning the integration process, and more generally liberal democracy, are increasingly threatened. And following the results of the 2019 European elections, acknowledging the problems related to the functioning of supranational institutions and the citizens' distancing from the European project, the European Parliament, supporting the Commission President's proposal, called on Member states to launch a Conference on the Future of Europe by 2020. Finally, in the first semester of 2020, the outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID-19) not only posed serious challenges to the public health sectors of Member states but also uncertainties related to the pandemic might trigger deeper socio-economic impact in the EU in the medium term. This succession of crises, each different but all shaking the European project, is a unique opportunity to think about what crises are and what they mean for the European integration.

As noted by van Middelaar (2016: 436), a crisis is a moment of truth, from which we can learn much about the EU–, its nature, its resilience, and its reactions.

Whereas it seems there is a consensus in academic literature to characterize the recent past as a 'decade of crisis' (Schimmelfennig 2018) or the 'age of crisis' (Dinan et al. 2017), there are still many debates on the origins, drivers, and consequences of these crises. The field of EU integration theories has been reinvigorated, and new approaches have emerged to take stock of the latest developments. While for long, scholars have concentrated on specific features of the EU and its governance, there is a shift back to grand theories and understanding the transformation of the entire political system as a result of these crises.

Against this background, this edited volume aims at examining some essential questions about the relevance of integration theories in helping scholars to analyse, understand, or explain pertinent aspects of the current turmoil affecting the EU. How do European integration theories help us understand and explain current crises or the responses of the EU/Member states to these challenges? What are the strengths and shortcomings of these theoretical perspectives in studying crisis contexts? Which theoretical lenses help us better understand the EU in a crisis situation? In other words, can classical theories of European integration, which mostly try to explain the process of integration, work in reverse and/or explain this new context?

The ambition of this introduction is to re-examine a few fundamentals of the recent theoretical debates on the EU 'polycrisis' (Juncker 2016). More specifically, we will first discuss the peculiarity of this 'decade of crisis' through a comparison with previous crises European integration has faced. By doing so, we will offer a definition of the crisis and summarize the main features of the various crises of European integration. A second section will briefly survey the main European integration theories and their take on the crisis. The last section will then give an overview of the edited volume and the main arguments presented in the different parts.

2. Crisis of European integration: exceptional times or permanent state?

Since 2008, the EU has been facing a succession of crises: the Eurozone crisis, the Ukrainian crisis, the migration crisis, Brexit, the emergence of illiberal tendencies, and COVID-19 disease pandemic. But crises are nothing new in the trajectory of European integration. Moments of crisis are even central to the founding story of the European project and are often assumed to be instrumental in driving the project forward. While some argue that crises are a 'natural way of development for the EU' (Àgh 2014: 5), others go so far as to say that it has become the 'new normal (Haughton 2016: 15). If we choose the latter understanding, can we then consider that the concept of crisis has been overworked? Do we tend to use and abuse the term to describe challenging moments for European integration? These questions that lie at the heart of this volume are closely related to the conceptualization of the crisis.

What is a crisis?

A crisis can be considered to be an unexpected, abrupt shock, which compels political actors to take a new set of decisions with a sense of urgency. These events are specific points in time, a turning point in the history of European integration, characterized by unexpected, uncommon events demanding a political action. This political response is indispensable as the cost of non-action during this hottest phase of the crisis is high. But there is a second facet to the crisis, which starts once political decisions are taken as a response to the crisis. Drawing on previous distinctions between 'fast-' and 'slow-burning crises' (t' Hart and Boin 2001; Seabrooke and Tsingou 2019; Coman 2018), we define 'crisis' as an extraordinary, abnormal point in time, which alters subsequent decision-making procedures, and routine, ordinary, normal functioning of the polity.[1] In other words, we conceptualize a crisis not only as *a point in time* or 'an event of intense danger that requires an extraordinary response' (Hooghe and Marks 2019: 1118), but also as a *process* since this abnormal point in time or the (non-)response impinges subsequent modes of governance or 'ways of doing' in the EU. In other words, a crisis is a situation which cannot be resolved with existing rules or tools and which will lead to a change in the dynamics of integration or the shape of the system of governance in the EU. This crisis situation might in turn lead to disintegration (or horizontal political disintegration in Webber's words (2019) such as Brexit) or to further vertical political integration (Webber 2019) through the expansion of the formal competences of supranational institutions. Therefore, while the hottest phase of the crisis, where extraordinary procedures are required in t_1, has negative connotations, this phase might lead (in t_2) either to negative (disintegration or stagnation) or positive (further integration) outcomes or to the preservation of the status quo. In a nutshell, crises can lead to different outcomes ranging from major breakthroughs in the integration process (as suggested by the old functionalist adage) to a stagnation of the integration process or to a (political or sectoral) disintegration (with variations in scope and degrees (see Vollaard 2018; Webber 2019)).

Another feature of our definition is that it is general enough to encompass different empirical realities (ranging from Brexit to the Schengen crisis), while capturing changes between the EU and state level on the one hand, and between the EU and society level on the other hand. Last, this overarching definition builds on distinctive definitions put forward by each individual approach in this book. As discussed in Table 1.1, each chapter contributes to the definition of the crisis from its theoretical angle and applies it to single specific crisis or to several.

3. Contextualizing EU's crises

The European project has faced several crises in its history. As noted by Webber (2019: 3), 'almost every decade since the 1950s had witnessed a crisis that generated (as it transpired, ultimately unjustified) fears that the integration process would be

TABLE 1.1 Definitions of crisis from different conceptual/theoretical angles

Chapter	*Author*	*Concept/ Theory/Approach*	*Crises*	*Definition of the crisis (or sister concepts)*
1 Introduction	Brack and Gürkan	Overview of the main European integration theories	Overview of crises in a historical perspective	Crisis: a situation which cannot be resolved with existing rules or tools and which will lead to a change in the dynamics of integration or the shape of the system of governance in the EU.
2	Lord	Legitimacy	Legitimacy crisis	Legitimacy crises occur where a political order is unable to satisfy all necessary conditions for the justification of its powers simultaneously.
3	Brack, Coman, and Crespy	Sovereignty	Economic crisis, migration crisis, rule of law crisis	Conflicting claims to sovereignty: these claims occur across four dimensions (national, supranational, parliamentary, and popular).
4	Hutter and Schäfer	Cleavage politics and European integration	Eurozone crisis, migration crisis	A critical moment of politicization: crisis situations (like the financial, Eurozone, and migration crisis) may lead to publicly visible contestation about the right course of action (as indicated by higher levels of politicization), and this, in turn, may intensify (or alter) the long-term restructuring of domestic conflict. In this scenario, crises are potential triggers for conflict and cleavage restructuring.
5	Hodson	New Intergovernmentalism	Economic/financial and migration crises	Political disequilibrium: it arises because of the disconnect between the pro-integration consensus among policymakers and some sections of European society over the direction of the EU.
6	Lefkofridi and Schmitter	Neo-functionalism	Economic/financial crisis, Brexit, migration crisis	Crisis: a situation which cannot be resolved without a significant change in the rules of the game. Crisis is an integral part of the integration process.

7	Rauh	Neo-functionalism, liberal intergovernmentalism, post-functionalism	An overview of recent crises, including economic/financial crisis, migration crisis, and Brexit	Public politicization: high public attention to EU affairs, polarizing opinions in the citizenry, and active mobilization of European issues in domestic political competition
8	Saurugger	Liberal intergovernmentalism, neo-functionalism, classical constructivism, sociological approaches	Economic/financial crisis	Crisis: a phase of disorder in the seemingly 'normal' development of a system, which induces a sense of urgency
9	Manners	Critical Social Theory (CST)	Neoliberal economic, demographic social, climatic ecological, proxy conflict, and ethno-nationalist political crises of the twenty-first century	Planetary organic crisis as the broader context encompassing European communion
10	Gürkan and Tomini	(De-)Europeanization	Autocracy crisis	De-Europeanization: declining commitment to the EU's founding values, in particular to democracy and the rule of law; and their contestation in some Member states and in the EU's neighbourhood
11	Wunderlich and Gänzle	New regionalism	Disintegration in a comparative perspective and economic/financial crisis	Critical juncture: a period of political and institutional challenge during which an agency is decisive in setting an institution on a new developmental pathway
12	Leruth	Differentiated integration	Maastricht Treaty referendum; the Swedish opt-out of the Eurozone, Greece, and Iceland after the economic/financial crises; Brexit	Integrational stagnation or differentiated disintegration
13 Conclusion	Brack and Gürkan	An overview of European integration theories addressed in the book	COVID-19 crisis	The crisis is defined as a point in time (endogenous or indigenous shocks) *and* as a process (the impact of these shocks on the integration process).

durably impaired or damaged.' Indeed, from the very beginning, the European project has gone hand in hand with crises. The ink on the Treaty of Paris establishing the ECSC was barely dry that the next project, the European Defence Community, collapsed, leading commentators at the time to believe that the supranational project was over (see Parsons 2006). Then, in the mid-1960s, the famous empty chair crisis slowed down the integration process and fundamentally changed the way the EU institutions worked for quite some time, with a decline of the Community Method and the strengthening of intergovernmental procedures. The decade that followed was marked by the budgetary crisis, with a 5-year-long struggle between the UK and the other Member states over the financial contribution of the UK to the European budget. Again, commentators at the time believed the crisis was so serious it would be the end of European integration. Moravcsik (1991) for instance described it as the 'apogee of Europessimism' with an atmosphere of stagnation. While the Fontainebleau agreement relaunched the integration process and demonstrated the resilience of the European project, this crisis also paved the way for a utilitarian relation to the EU which is still more or less latent today in the debates on Europe in several countries (in the UK context, of course, but also in some Central and Eastern European countries).

In the 1980s, the integration process bounced back, with the Single European Act, but then the 1990s were marked by two major crises. On the one hand, the European Monetary System crisis cast doubt on the viability and desirability of the common currency (Salvatore 1996). On the other hand, the difficult ratification of the Maastricht treaty was a critical turning point in European integration. The transformation of the Community into a Union and the transfer of what is often perceived as core state powers to the supranational level triggered opposition, at both the popular and elite levels (Brack 2018; Usherwood 2005). Indeed, this period signals the end of the so-called permissive consensus, and scholars speak of a 'constraining dissensus' (Down and Wilson 2008; Hooghe and Marks 2009) as a result, from then on, of the growing politicization of European issues and the tense relations between the EU and citizens. Less than 15 years later, the EU faced yet another challenge: the constitutional crisis which lasted from 2005 to 2009. With the negative results of referenda in France and the Netherlands on the Constitutional treaty, the EU plunged into a new period of gloom and pessimism, leading some to argue that this was one of the deepest crises of the European project (Schwall-Düren 2006; Cohen-Tanugi 2005).

4. Distinctive features of the crisis context since 2009

Since 2009, several crises have emerged (see table 1.2). In 2009, the collapse of the financial market in the US, combined with structural problems in the Eurozone, led to the so-called Eurozone crisis or sovereign debt crisis which contributed to the Great Recession. The survival of the common currency and of the Eurozone was put into question between 2010 and 2015, and this was considered to be a very severe crisis, whose consequences are still felt today. In 2013 and 2014, the conflict

TABLE 1.2 EU's crises since 2009

Crisis	*Actors*	*Contagion*	*Crisis-management process*	*Sources*	*Content*	*Duration*
Eurozone crisis	Elite, political parties, society	Refugee crisis, Brexit, illiberal tendencies	Intergovernmental level crisis-management marked by a growing distance between the masses and the Brussels elite	Exogenous/ endogenous	Economics	2009–2015
EU's incapacity to respond to Ukraine/Russia	Elite	NA	Slow, divided, and lack of leadership	Exogenous	Foreign policy/ security	2013–14
Schengen crisis	Elite, political parties, society	Illiberal tendencies, Brexit	Divided and intergovernmental decision-making undermining the role of supranational institutions	Exogenous/ endogenous	Schengen area/ solidarity principle	2015- present
Illiberal tendencies	Elite, political parties, society	Refugee crisis	Slow and differentiated approach to Hungary and Poland	Endogenous	Rule of Law/ democracy	2010-present
Brexit	Elite, political parties, society	Unknown	Exception/united EU response	Endogenous	Borders/ Membership	2016-present

between Ukraine and Russia triggered the 'Ukrainian crisis' which required a position from the EU, and it could not put an end to the conflict.

In addition to these, the refugee crisis developed in the summer of 2015 as an increasing number of people fled the war zone in the Middle East and North Africa. It triggered the Schengen crisis as Member states were unable or unwilling to develop common solutions to this migration challenge. Instead, they resorted to unilateral measures, such as the temporary closure of internal borders, which threatened the survival of the Schengen zone. And since 2016, the EU has had to face two additional crises. On the one hand, as a result of the June 2016 referendum, a majority of British voters chose for their country to exit the EU. Since then, Brexit has been high on the European agenda and has triggered existential questions for the European project. On the other hand, the EU also faces the so-called illiberal challenge from several governments who defy the values underpinning European integration, and liberal democracy more generally, through constitutional changes undermining the rule of law (see Agh 2013; Coman and Leconte 2019; Gürkan and Tomini in this volume). And finally, in the first quarter of 2020, all the EU Member states were hit by the COVID-19 epidemic, whose socio-economic impact in the EU remains to be seen.

Although the seriousness of each crisis may fade over time, especially given the resilience of the EU, history books remind us how actors perceived these crises as threatening for the European project at the time. So is the polycrisis the EU currently faces really different? The 'certain mood of gloom and doom among EU scholars' (Börzel 2018: 476; Dinan et al. 2017) seems rather justified as the current crisis is indeed different and more severe due to several key features.

The first is its multidimensional nature (Webber 2019). As noted by Juncker in 2016, it is a polycrisis, that is a crisis that touches upon multiple sectors of European integration. Whereas previous crises would deal with one aspect, such as defense or budgetary issues, the current crisis affects numerous policies, ranging from migration to trade and economic governance. Second, core sectors are involved. This time, it is not about peripheral issues as all the sub-crises concern key elements of European integration: free movement (Schengen crisis and Brexit), common currency (Eurozone crisis), identity (Brexit and illiberal challenge), key values of European integration (illiberal challenge), and borders (Brexit and Schengen crisis). Third, and because of the complex character of the crisis, its longevity is one of the key features that distinguish it from previous crises. As noted by Webber (2019: 10–11), determining when a crisis has begun and ended is

> an inherently subjective exercise. There are no objective criteria by which it can be precisely determined at which point a political issue or conflict become a 'crisis', that is, reaches a moment of great uncertainty, at which a major change of direction could occur.

But never before could one speak of a decade of crisis. Since 2008, the EU has been experiencing crisis after crisis and even when the main threat seems over, the

consequences are long lasting. Countries of Southern Europe are still encountering dramatic economic and social issues after the Great Recession and the austerity measures adopted during the Eurozone crisis. The Schengen crisis has placed migration high on the political agenda, and it has provided a fertile ground for the mobilization of populist, radical right parties, some of whom were the winners of the 2019 European Parliament (EP) elections in their countries.

Fourth, because the polycrisis involves core issues of European integration, the costs of inaction are particularly high and could lead to disintegration (Mathijs and Parsons 2015; Webber 2019). It is therefore not comparable to crises seeking to reform or deepen the European project (like the European Defence Community (EDC) crisis or the constitutional crisis). Here, actions are required just to save European integration, its values, and its acquis. Another distinctive feature refers to the mass politicization of European issues throughout the crises. Whereas until the 1990s, the European project was elite-driven and characterized by a permissive consensus, the decade of crises saw a surge in mass mobilization. As the EU is facing a prolonged crisis, affecting several policy areas, it has fractured politics into a new and changing cleavage, with increased (although differentiated) politicization that opens up space for political entrepreneurs to mobilize citizens against the EU (Hutter and Kriesi 2019; Zeitlin et al. 2019). Fifth, as we will discuss more at length in the next section, the current polycrisis was triggered by both endogenous and exogenous shocks. Not only the unfinished nature of the European project made it prone to crises, but it also had to face multiple challenges from outside Europe (migration flows, globalization and the interdependence of financial markets, economic recession, conflicts in its Eastern neighbourhood).

Last, 'contagion' appears to be a distinctive element of the 'age of crisis'. Because of their length and their nature, it has been very difficult for decision-makers to contain these crises before they affect other areas of integration. For example, the refugee (exogenous) crisis evolved into a Schengen (endogenous) crisis. This, in return, fed populist discourses and indirectly contributed to the rise of illiberal rhetoric in EU member states. In some other cases, the responses of political actors to the crisis limited the EU's ability to react to other challenges. For instance, in the face of the increased number of refugees arriving at the EU's borders, the EU's attempt to save the Schengen regime led the EU leaders to conclude the so-called 'EU–Turkey deal' in two stages, first in October 2015 and then in March 2016. In this deal, EU Member states decided to revitalize Turkey's accession process regardless of Turkey's authoritarian turn. In other words, the EU's policy of externalizing the refugee problem through the agreement with Turkey weakened its conditionality policy and its ability to deal with the instances of autocratization in its neighbourhood.

We argue that because of this combination of characteristics, this polycrisis is different from the previous crises the European project had to face. So far, the EU has proven to be resilient and has survived numerous challenges, but the specific nature of the current crisis could change the very nature of the European project and certainly requires a careful examination to understand its causes and consequences.

5. Understanding the polycrisis

Crises can have multiple drivers (endogenous or exogenous) and lead to different outcomes. According to the old functionalist adage, crises act as pivotal moments and as catalysts for major breakthroughs in the integration process. However, crises can also lead to a stagnation of the integration process or to a (political or sectoral) disintegration (with varying scope and degrees, see Vollaard 2018; Webber 2019). Therefore, it is not surprising that a burgeoning literature recently emerged to account for the origins of the crisis and to understand the process of crisis management and the consequences of both the crisis and its management for the EU and European integration (a.o. Lefkofridi and Schmitter 2015; Ioannou et al. 2015; Niemann and Zaun 2018; van Middelaar 2016; Vollaard 2018; Hodson and Puetter 2019; Hooghe and Marks 2019; Börzel and Risse 2018; Kelemen 2019; Grimmel 2019). It seems that the current times of crisis have not only encouraged scholars from the relevant policy fields to understand them but has also been an incentive for EU scholars to re-engage with the (grand) integration theories.

It is impossible here to do justice to these rich discussions: we will therefore focus on a few theoretical approaches and leave the in-depth discussion to the specialists in each chapter of this volume. While coordinating this project on European integration theories and the crises, difficult choices needed to be made. One of them was to determine which theories and analytical frameworks to include. We decided first to incorporate the recent debates between several theoretical frameworks to take stock of the controversies that emerged in the context of the polycrisis, that is neo-functionalism, (new and liberal) intergovernmentalism, and post-functionalism. Second, we also wanted enough diversity to have a balanced overview of the different analytical frameworks, through contributions on sociological approaches, critical social theories, and new regionalism as well as to cover topical issues, such as differentiated integration and (de-)Europeanization. As a result, we had to leave aside numerous alternative theoretical frameworks such as governance approaches or federalism, which may have deepened our understanding of the crises (see respectively Börzel 2019; Kelemen 2019).

Neo-functionalism tends to see crisis as an inherent part of the integration process (Schmitter 1970). It can therefore be considered as the main go-to theory for explanations on the crisis, its course, and consequences. Indeed, neo-functionalists consider the crisis as largely endogenous, produced by functional deficiencies within the European project (Stone Sweet and Sandholtz 1997). The integration is incomplete and unstable, and when functional dissonances are not balanced through integrative steps, this can lead to shocks or crises (Niemann and Ioannou 2015). In the case of the Eurozone crisis, neo-functionalists assume that its origin is to be found in the unregulated behaviour of Member states, although the collapse of the financial markets in the US also played a role (Lefkofridi and Schmitter 2015). Regarding the crisis management and its outcomes, they tend to put

forward two key factors: variation in transnational interdependence and supranational capacity. We know that, for instance, the Eurozone crisis and the migration crisis had very different outcomes, the former leading to further integration, the latter not. Neo-functionalism then stresses that in the case of the Eurozone crisis, the linkages between transnational actors and the interdependence of financial markets were strong. Furthermore, the exit costs from the Eurozone were high for all Member states, and the European Central Bank had enough autonomy and resources to preserve and expand European integration. On the contrary, in the case of the migration crisis, transnational interdependence was lower, as migrants are weak transnational actors. Moreover, the most affected countries could deal with the crisis through unilateral means, the exit costs from Schengen were lesser than those from the Eurozone, and the EU (through Frontex and European Asylum Support Office (EASO)) lacked the proper capacity to manage the crisis at the supranational level (Schimmelfennig 2018). National leaders were unwilling to accept the authority of the Commission, and no Europeanized mechanisms to manage the migration flows could be put in place, despite the attempts of supranational institutions. Although it offers interesting insights, neo-functionalism struggles to fully explain the origins of the crisis (with recent work questioning the endogeneity of the crisis, see Lefkofridi and Schmitter 2014) as well as its outcomes, since according to its tenet, crises should strengthen the integration process. As noted by Niemann and Ioannou (2015), neo-functionalism lacks an account of countervailing or disintegrative pressures.[2] Also, both crises led to a politicization of European integration but against neo-functionalist expectations, this did not lead to more public support for the EU, quite the contrary.

Liberal intergovernmentalism is often considered as the competing theory. However, similar to neo-functionalism, it is rather a theory of integration, which does not have a specific account of crises. In both normal times and crisis situations, national preferences mirror the interest of powerful domestic groups (Schimmelfennig 2018). Thereby, liberal intergovernmentalists open the black box of domestic preference formation and look at national constraints to understand the course of the crisis (Niemann and Zaun 2018). Another key element is of course state bargaining power (Moravcsik 1998). During the crisis, Member states are affected in either a symmetrical or an asymmetrical way. In the latter case, those who are less afflicted have superior bargaining power, can prevent the communitarization of the crisis burdens, and shift adjustment costs to less powerful states. Indeed, the states that are hit the hardest have the most to gain from more integration; they are therefore in a weak bargaining position as they are most willing to compromise. In the case of the Eurozone crisis, Member states seemed to be on the same page, all considering that the disintegration of the Eurozone was a 'common bad', that is the costliest outcome for all. However, their preferences as to how to save the common currency depended on their fiscal and economic situation. These preference constellations paved the way to the formation of two camps: (i) Northern Europe, favouring austerity measures, fiscal and budgetary discipline

as well as minimal assistance to the states hit by the crisis; and (ii) Southern Europe, with strongly indebted countries, which favoured a mutualization of the debt and softer economic policies (Schimmelfennig 2018; Biermann et al. 2019). The negotiation between the two camps can be seen as a game of chicken (Schimmelfennig 2015): all are united around a common goal – saving the Eurozone – but Northern countries did not face the same costs if no agreement was found, so they were in a better bargaining position and could impose their preferences in terms of crisis management. Regarding the Schengen crisis, again, most Member states were determined to save the Schengen agreement, but state preferences varied according to the migratory pressure they faced. The countries most affected were in favour of reforms to redistribute the burden, whereas less-affected states (such as the transit states) were reluctant to any change. The lack of common constraint created a form of asymmetrical interdependence through which some states had to unilaterally deal with the migratory flows, whereas the non-affected states could continue to benefit from the legal status quo (Biermann et al. 2019). This offers interesting insights, especially regarding the stalemate during the migration crisis as well as some interesting explanations for the recent reluctance of national governments to allow supranational bodies to intervene in domestic reforms regarding the rule of law. But this theory is less convincing in explaining the integrative steps after the Eurozone crisis, with the empowerment of the Commission and the ECB, nor is it very convincing in explaining Brexit or the drivers of the various crisis.

Historical institutionalists argue that the growing longevity of the EU is supposed to lead to a sort of immunity from collapse, but critical junctures are still possible and could lead to an abrupt institutional change. However, it provides no criteria to identify a crisis or the conditions under which a crisis leads to a radical change.

Post-functionalists for their part postulate the primacy of domestic politics and, more particularly, highlight the politicization that has occurred. The increased politicization at the national level has led to a constraining dissensus: citizens have increasingly polarized opinions on EU affairs, and public opinion is now a constraining power on political elites. This politicization has limited the room for manoeuvre of national governments and EU elites (Hooghe and Marks 2009). Although scholars from various theoretical approaches agree that the politicization of economic issues and migration questions at the EU level has been high, post-functionalism is the only strand of research to consider that the framing of economic topics has been different than the migration ones and that this difference plays a key role in explaining the outcomes of the crisis. While both the debates on economic governance and on migration have revolved around the issue of identity, this very notion has been used differently. For the Eurozone crisis, talks of identity revolved mostly around the degree of solidarity required in a multilevel polity (Börzel and Risse 2018: 16). In this instance, politicization was framed around the idea of order within a political community, and culture was not so much at the forefront when debating the Eurozone crisis. National and EU elites managed to

depoliticize the Eurozone crisis by delegating power to regulatory instances such as the Commission and the ECB. In contrast, during the Schengen crisis, cultural issues were central to debates in many Member states, and attempts to depoliticize the issue through a delegation of power to a supranational structure failed. Indeed, Eurosceptic actors, especially on the right, saw an opportunity to fight against Brussels. Because the crisis touched a nerve in national identity (Hooghe and Marks 2019), they mobilized the public opinion around the dichotomy 'us versus them'. The politicization of migration with this cultural framing narrowed the options for mainstream parties, and there was almost no counter-discourse to legitimize inclusive policies (Börzel and Risse 2018).

6. Presentation of the book

Ten years after the start of the 'age of crisis' for the EU, this edited volume examines the relevancy of integration theories for studying and analysing the crises the EU has faced since 2009. The contributions in this book critically analyse the impact of this context of multiple crises on the EU polity and question the utility of each theory for grasping the peculiarities of various crises under study. There is undeniably a growing literature on 'European integration theories and the crises of the EU' (Webber 2019; Wiener et al. 2019; Vollaard 2018; Dinan et al. 2017; Hooghe et al. 2018; Hooghe and Marks 2019). This edited volume not only contributes to it, but also aspires to move forward recent debates on 'European integration theories in crisis context' in three ways as mentioned here.

First, the book provides a comparative overview of classical integration theories for studying and analysing the current crisis situations the EU faces. Each chapter summarizes the main arguments and achievements, and discusses the main shortfalls, of a chosen conceptual framework in explaining the crisis of integration. In this way, this volume not only takes stock but also contributes to theory development. This is not disconnected from empirics. All the contributors discuss their chosen theoretical approach by marrying theory and current debates through an in-depth discussion of recent crises that have hit European integration since 2009, with a particular focus on the financial crisis, Brexit, the refugee crisis, and illiberal tendencies in certain member states.

Second, this volume questions the nature of the EU polity in the aftermath of the age of crisis. Several scholars (Wiener et al. 2019; Börzel and Risse 2018; Hooghe and Marks 2019) have discussed the utility of grand theories in understanding different crises at length. However, apart from notable exceptions (Webber 2019; Vollaard 2018), the literature, mainly because of its limited scope, has not addressed the big picture, namely the impact of the crisis context on the EU. In an attempt to fill this gap, these chapters discuss the transformation of the entire political system as a result of these crises. This is particularly true for Part I 'The EU as a polity in crisis', where contributors discuss the fundamental challenges the EU faces today, around three topical issues, namely legitimacy, sovereignty, and

cleavages in European societies. This sets the scene for further discussion in subsequent chapters around the following central theme: to what extent and how has the crisis changed the nature of the EU?

Third, the volume engages with a thorough discussion on the conceptualization of the EU's crises. While several books and recent articles (Wiener et al. 2019; JEPP special issue on grand theories 2019; Börzel and Risse 2018; Hooghe and Marks 2019) discuss the utility of grand theories in explaining the different features of recent crises, individual chapters in this volume not only revisit these grand theories, but also discuss how distinct theories define and conceptualize the crisis. Each chapter in Part II and III devotes particular attention to the notion of crisis as well as to competing concepts. Each contribution also compares how the concept of crisis is defined by the theory which is at the heart of the chapter *and* by the other 'competing' or 'close' theories. In this way, the volume aims to stimulate academic discussion on the definition of 'crisis' across classical integration theories and more recent approaches to European integration.

Against this backdrop, some essential questions about the relevance of integration theories in helping scholars analyse, understand, or explain pertinent aspects of the EU's age of crisis will be at the core of this book: How do European integration theories help us understand and explain current crises or the responses of EU/Member states to these challenges? What are the strengths and shortcomings of these theoretical perspectives in studying the crisis context? Which theoretical lenses help us to better understand the EU in a crisis situation? In addition, to what extent, and how has the crisis changed the nature of the EU? Has it had any impact on its main features, on its legitimacy, and on the pooling of sovereignty?

This edited volume brings together twelve chapters, which combine a thorough discussion of European integration theories and an analysis of case studies. These twelve chapters are grouped under three essential research clusters, which, together, help grasp the relevancy of integration theories in the current crisis context. These three main parts are as follows.

The first part of the book 'The EU as a polity in crisis' addresses the fundamental challenges the EU faces today, including legitimacy, sovereignty, and cleavages in European societies with a view to portray the nature of this polity at this critical juncture of its history. The first chapter, by C. Lord, examines whether the EU has experienced, since 2008, a legitimacy crisis, understood as a crisis that calls into question its very ability to operate as a justifiable form of political power. It questions the idea whether the EU as political order can experience a legitimacy crisis and argues that, although the Union is a multi-state, multi-national, and multi-demos political order that makes policy and law within and beyond its component states without itself being a state, the EU also contributes to power relations that define its Member states as states. It further shows that the EU is supposed to reconcile two profound needs: a need, on the one hand, for the Union to continue to derive a significant part of its legitimacy from its

member state democracies and a need, on the other hand, for its member state democracies to manage externalities between themselves if they are to deliver on their own obligations to their own publics. C. Lord then proposes a generic concept of legitimacy crisis and a framework for identifying what it would be for the EU to experience a legitimacy crisis, and, finally, applies this concept to understand how the different crises since 2008 have also been a legitimacy crisis for the EU.

The second chapter, by N. Brack, R. Coman, and A. Crespy, addresses the issue of sovereignty in the EU from an original perspective. Although sovereignty has been a key issue in the integration project, the authors show that from 2010 onwards, issues related to sovereignty have been at the forefront of EU politics, not only in the midst of the Eurozone crisis but also during the refugee crisis in 2015 and the debates surrounding Brexit. This has triggered unprecedented levels of contention about the values underpinning the EU common policies and what is perceived by many as new sovereignty losses. In this chapter, they argue that sovereignty remains a powerful concept to understand European integration. However, claims of sovereignty today have been exacerbated and politicized: they take the form of conflicts of sovereignty which are multidimensional and more divisive than ever, challenging grand theories of the EU integration and revealing their limitations. To contribute to this debate, drawing on the sovereignty debate in EU's grand theories, the authors propose a novel approach considering how, beyond the traditional opposition between nation-states (national sovereignty) and the EU (and its embryonic form of supranational sovereignty), new conflicts of sovereignty involve two other key types of sovereignty rooted in the democratic tradition, namely parliamentary sovereignty and popular sovereignty.

The last chapter of this section, by S. Hutter and I. Schäfer, brings a dynamic perspective on cleavage politics and European integration. They emphasize processes of politicization and interpret conflicts over Europe as part and parcel of a broader restructuring of domestic politics. This involves ever-more salient political oppositions (within and across societies) between those who embrace further integration and those who retreat into nationalism and demarcation. Moreover, the chapter summarizes recent studies that have examined whether the Eurocrisis and migration crisis have contributed to politicizing European issues further and reinforced the new structuring conflict. Overall, the chapter highlights the fact that the crises' impact on domestic conflict mirrors long-term trends and varies considerably across Europe's macro-regions. This divergence should be considered when theorizing the current state of European integration.

The second part 'Explaining the EU's crises' discusses the relevance of European integration theories in explaining various crises that hit the EU as well as their consequences for the EU. The first chapter of this section, authored by D. Hodson, revisits the latest controversies on how to best understand and explain the crises

the EU has recently experienced in order to clarify and refine the new intergovernmentalism approach. It concentrates on the Eurocrisis and argues that it chimes with key claims of new intergovernmentalism. First, it illustrates the problems of preference formation in the post-Maastricht era, with governments' responses to the single currency's problems informed not only by business interests but also by Europe's legitimacy crisis. Second, the institutional choices of Member states during the Eurocrisis illustrate the importance of deliberation and consensus-seeking through bodies such as the European Council and the Euro Summit and the Members states' preference for empowering *de novo* bodies. Third, the crisis confirms the Commission's ambivalence over the ever-closer union, most noticeably not only under the presidency of José Manuel Barroso but also, in a more complex way, under that of Jean-Claude Juncker. In the end, Member states may have saved the Euro, but they did so by aggravating rather than alleviating the political disequilibrium within the EU.

The following chapter, by Z. Lefkrofridi and P. C. Schmitter, focuses on neofunctionalism as one of the most utilized and criticized theories or approaches to explain the dynamics of regional integration. They deny that the process of regional integration is merely 'reproductive' of the existing system of nation-states and rather argue that it is 'transformative' in that it not only results in the creation of a new 'supranational' political authority, but that it also affects the internal politics of its member states. In this chapter, they particularly focus on politicization and discuss how the theory-*cum*-approach helps understand the current state of crisis of the EU.

C. Rauh, in his chapter on politicization, continues this discussion between the various theories of European integration by assessing post-functionalism and neofunctionalism. The starting point is that the recent crises highlight that supranational issues can become highly salient in public debates where they encounter polarized opinions and mobilization from various political actors. He then questions how this public politicization affects further supranational integration in Europe. He shows that grand theories make very different predictions in this regard. Neo-functionalism would expect politicization, which would lead to a re-orientation of the wider citizenry towards further integration in the long run. Liberal intergovernmentalism, in contrast, expects citizens to remain rationally ignorant and emphasizes the insulation of supranational decision-making from short-term political pressures. More recently and most prominently, post-functionalist theory has turned EU politicization into a key variable that is expected to significantly constrain further integration. The chapter discusses the key assumptions and mechanisms of these integration theories and contrasts them with the recent conceptual and empirical literature on EU politicization. This exercise highlights specific theoretical gaps in integrating politicization into integration theory. The chapter concludes with modest suggestions for theoretical updates especially with a view to responses of supranational and national executives to different domestic configurations of the EU politicization.

The last chapter of this section, by S. Saurugger, shifts attention to sociological approaches and discusses their input to understand the recent crises. She examines to what extent sociological approaches to European integration help us better understand the EU in a crisis situation, and, more particularly, the EU's answer to the economic and financial crisis. This chapter argues that while sociological approaches are among the most agency-centred, which helps study the interaction and power games among individual and collective actors during the crisis, it is precisely this capacity that makes it so difficult for these approaches both to understand and explain the reasons behind the current crises. Although these difficulties remain, sociological approaches can offer tools to understand specific developments and decisions in times of turmoil as they introduce agency into structural analyses. They must however strive for broader explanations beyond the narrow case studies they are often applied to.

The last part, 'Theorizing the EU's (dis)integration', is an attempt at theorizing the EU's disintegration in its various forms. The chapter by I. Manners theorizes European (dis)integration using the Critical Social Theory (CST) of European communion within the context of 'planetary organic crisis'. The notion of communion defined by Manners as the 'subjective sharing of relationships' allows him to place the EU in a more global context and, in this way, to explain EU's crises as a part of a more general, deeper, and global crisis, which the author calls the capitalism's 'planetary organic crisis'. According to Manners, while his theoretical approach marks a radical break from classical integration theories, which tend to consider the crises as distinct from each other and peculiar to the EU, CST sheds light on the underlying causes of European polycrisis. These rather hidden sources of the polycrisis are embedded 'in the context of the neoliberal economic, demographic social, climatic ecological, proxy conflict, and ethno-nationalist political crises of the 21st century' (add page number). This is why Manners concludes that the response to the EU's crises requires a holistic approach and compels 'thinking planetary and acting translocally' to eradicate the root causes of the planetary organic crises.

In the following chapter, S. Gürkan and L. Tomini examine the limits of the Europeanization research agenda. Their starting point is that much of the literature on Europeanization has fallen short in explaining the recent form of rapid autocratization and norm contestation in some Member states (e.g. Hungary, Poland) and candidate countries (e.g. Serbia, Turkey). The authors argue that it is mainly because the (de-)Europeanization literature starts with the assumption that the EU is the main factor that induces change in a domestic context. Therefore, the literature rests primarily on top–down accounts of the EU's impact without analysing in-depth recipient-driven Europeanization. In the light of recent political events, the chapter shifts attention *from* top–down Europeanization *to* the domestic level and suggests studying how the agents of autocratization drive the (de-)Europeanization process. To do so, the chapter first revisits the Europeanization literature and its main postulates with a view to highlight its shortcomings; second, it examines

the problematic cases of Europeanization in Hungary (since 2004) and Turkey (since 2002) in order to illustrate that domestic context and agents remain the main determinants of the de-Europeanization processes; and in the final section, the chapter discusses the added value of studying the impact of the EU on Member states and candidates by putting recipient-driven Europeanization at the centre of the analysis.

U. Wunderlich and S. Gänzle take a less EU-centred approach in their examination of the recent crises. Indeed, starting from an approach of comparative regionalism, they question why similar crises often trigger different outcomes in different organizations of regional integration. Drawing from critical juncture research and historical comparative analysis, this chapter distinguishes between endogenous and exogenous factors determining the scope and depth of regional integration; using ASEAN and the EU as case studies, it focuses on the role of hegemonic states, institutional environments, and 'integration ideas' and examines how these regional organizations have responded to major external economic crises. The chapter shows that, in addition to the depth of regional integration, it is the role and attitude of external hegemonic states, such as the US, *vis-à-vis* the regional ones, which are of paramount importance.

In the end, B. Leruth examines the very topical questions of disintegration and differentiated integration in the light of the recent crises and of Brexit in particular. This chapter offers an overview of the existing mechanisms of differentiation and the role that such mechanisms can play in shaping the future of European integration. It outlines its causes by breaking down the 'supply' and 'demand' sides of differentiation and focuses on five case studies: the Danish opt-outs of the Maastricht Treaty, Sweden's non-participation in the Eurozone, Iceland's application for the EU membership, the so-called 'Grexit' scenario, and Brexit as a process of differentiated disintegration.

The conclusion of the book, in the light of the main findings of each chapter, revisits the two main research questions of this book: What is the impact of the multiple crises on the EU? And what is the utility of integration theories in studying and analysing current crisis situations the EU faces? It also briefly addresses the latest crisis that the EU has been facing, that is the COVID-19 pandemic, its management, and its consequences.

Notes

1 We are grateful to Philippe Schmitter for helping us to refine our conceptualization of the crisis.

2 The concept of spillback, as a reversal of integration, could offer interesting perspectives to understand the decrease in the EU's scope of action. According to neo-functionalists, spillback can be the result of exogenous shocks or integrative overstretch or a declining desire for EU solutions on the part of national leaders (Schmitter 1971; Lindberg and Scheingold 1970). However, it is not fully theorized or operationalized as a concept and, as noted by Vollaard (2018: 121), it is not clear 'how spillback is different from rearrangements of competences common to any multilevel systems'.

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Notes

1 On the distinction, see de Vries and Marks (2012).
2 While the different interpretations share a lot in common, they do differ regarding the explanatory power attributed to globalization processes, the (direct) link between the first and second wave of political change, as well as the ideological underpinnings of the two poles of the newly emerging opposition.
3 On the link between economic and cultural preferences in public opinion, see Häusermann and Kriesi (2015).
4 For an empirical assessment of the economic and political crises, see Kriesi and Hutter (2019).
5 For detailed accounts of the political dynamics in the four big Southern European countries, see Altiparmakis (2019), da Silva and Mendes (2019), Karremans et al. (2019), and Vidal and Sánchez-Vítores (2019).
6 Among the four CEE countries covered by Hutter and Kriesi (2019a), this pattern is stronger in Hungary, Poland, and Latvia than Romania (see Borbáth, 2019; Eihmanis, 2019; Gessler and Kyriazi, 2019; Sałek and Sztajdel, 2019)

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Notes

1 Scholars agree on the start date for the euro crisis but not on its end date. Jones (2014) treats 2012 as a terminal point, reflecting the ECB's decision to engage in large-scale bond purchases, but this was 3 years before a standoff between Greece's government and its international creditors. Greece exited its financial assistance programme in August 2018, the last eurozone member to do so, but concerns over Italy's membership resurfaced earlier that year.
2 The report made the case for a eurozone stabilisation instrument but remained vague about how it would work or where it would be situated in the EU's institutional architecture.
3 Pringle v Government of Ireland (2012) C-370/12, para. 109
4 Pringle, para. 158
5 The EFSM was briefly revived in 2015 to provide short-term loans to Greece but only as a last resort and amid considerable political controversy.
6 See Hodson (2015a) for a deeper discussion of the ECB as a de novo body.

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Notes

1 The so-called "post-functionalist" theory of European integration also stresses both politicization and transformation, but it asserts the claim that the very nature of both domestic and regional politics has changed from the pursuit of interests (which is intrinsic to neofunctionalism) to the expression of symbolic values (which is not contemplated by the earlier theory or recognized in its revised versions).
2 This section draws largely on Schmitter (2000).
3 Data: Eurostat.

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Notes

1 Having detected a 'permissive consensus' on European integration among the wider citizenry, also Lindberg and Scheingold (1970: 277–278) warned early that 'the level of support or its relationship to the political process would be significantly altered' if the supranational polity was 'to broaden its scope or increase its institutional capacities markedly'.

2 This is not to say that the theory has been tailored to the recent crises. To the contrary, Hooghe and Marks make a decidedly long-term argument that inductively builds on decades of empirical research on public opinion and partisan competition. But the reception of the argument clearly indicates that this theory struck a contemporary nerve. Since its original publication in 2009, the article has collected 1,813 citations on Google Scholar (as of 18 March 2019) meaning an average of more than 200 citations per year. By the same measure, Haas' 'Uniting of Europe' has collected around 110 citations per year while Moravcsik's 'The Choice of Europe' reaches around 315 per annum.

3 Rather politicisation research in international relations and EU studies was driven by a normative impetus: politicisation was seen as a possible remedy for assumed democratic deficits of purely elite-driven decision-making on levels beyond the nation state (e.g. Rauh and Zürn 2014; Hix 2006; Mair 2005; Zürn 2004). In comparative politics, in contrast, scholars became interested in the politicisation of EU affairs because they present a 'wedge issue' for mainstream parties that cuts across traditional structures of partisan conflict and thus unfolds possibly disruptive potential (e.g. Tzelgov 2014; Van der Eijk and Franklin 2004).

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Notes

1 In this chapter, we adopted the V-DEM dataset, for the possibility to use disaggregated indicators about each specific dimension under analysis. However, the global picture is largely unchanged using other competing democracy indexes such as Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI), Freedom in the World or Polity IV.
2 For the historical relations between Hungary and the European Union see, among others, Bánkuti et al. (2012); Ágh 2015 (2016a and 2016b).
3 On the contrary, as far as the EU–society dimension is concerned, we do not observe a decline of support from Hungarian citizens towards the EU. According to the Standard Eurobarometer surveys, Hungarian society's attachment to the EU is even increasing starting mid-2010.

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Notes

1 See Schimmelfennig (2018), Gänzle et al. 2020 and Leruth et al. (2019).
2 This is a point well made by hegemonic stability theory. See (Kindleberger, 1986; Gilpin, 1987; Keohane, 1984).
3 Examples of such primary institutions, other than hegemony, include sovereignty, territoriality, non-interference, balance-of-power, diplomacy, and international law.
4 The Anwar affair refers to the conflict between Malaysia's prime minister of the time, Mahathir, and his deputy, Anwar, over policy and governance issues. During the AFC, Ibrahim Anwar supported the IMF, while Mahathir opted for tighter capital controls instead, blaming external speculators for the crisis. In 1998, Anwar was dismissed from office and brought to trial on corruption and sodomy charges. The trial and Anwar's conviction provoked international criticism even from other ASEAN members. Mahathir reacted strongly by dismissing the international reaction as undue foreign interference.
5 See (Reinhart & Rogoff, 2013).
6 ASEAN flourished but was restricted to Southeast Asia. APEC, on the other hand, had emerged as a Pacific, rather than an East Asian forum, bringing together East Asian and trans-American economies. It was too large and unwieldy to develop a regional financial

rescue mechanism. Moreover, the dominance of the US was problematic, dividing the forum into a Western and an East Asian bloc.

7 According to the 2018 Eurobarometer, the EU is split here with a majority of respondents in fifteen members trusting the EU. In the other thirteen members, such as the UK and Greece, the majority of respondents tend not to trust the EU (European Commission, 2018, p. 13).

8 See also chapter 5 by Dermot Hodson in this volume.

9 See Fukuyama (1992) and Huntington (1996).

10 For *polycrisis*, see Zeitlin et al. (2019).

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