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Coordinative Europeanization and Russia's war of aggression: how crises shape Europeanization dynamics in EU foreign policy

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Abstract

The European Union's response to Russia's war of aggression has run contrary to expectations of EU foreign policy inaction and incoherence as well as warnings of de-Europeanization and renationalization of foreign policy. Drawing on the concept of coordinative Europeanization, we argue that the response to the war has allowed for a more horizontal, cooperative decision-making process involving both member states and EU institutions, as well as a reversal of traditionally Western European-centric dynamics of horizontal Europeanization. With the aim of investigating these changes further, this paper relies on the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine as a case study to explore how crises shape Europeanization dynamics in EU foreign and security policy. Relying on primary and secondary sources as well as interviews with EU and national officials, we show how the coordinative Europeanization we have witnessed since the start of the war can be attributed to the characteristics of the crisis itself. In so doing, the paper contributes to the literature on Europeanization of foreign policy as well as to studies focusing on the effect of crises on the process of European integration.

Keywords Coordinative Europeanization · Crisis policymaking · EU foreign and security policy · Russia · Ukraine

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Introduction

Over the past years, academics and practitioners alike have warned about the dangers of increasing renationalization of European Union (EU) foreign and security policy (Müller et al 2021; Tassinari 2016). In the midst of growing politicization and contestation, scholars have suggested that internal and external crises are likely to weaken bonds of solidarity among EU member states and result in intergovernmental bargaining logics (Biedenkopf et al 2021; Petri et al., 2020; Thomas 2021). The strong unity that has characterized the EU's response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, however, runs counter to these expectations (Maurer et al., 2023; Laffan, 2023; Orenstein 2022). Drawing on the concept of coordinative Europeanization (Ladi and Wolff 2021), we argue that rather than accelerating the de-Europeanization of EU foreign and security policy, the war has instead fostered stronger cooperation dynamics *between* EU institutions and member states and *amongst* member states themselves.

Specifically, we understand coordinative Europeanization as a reconfiguration of traditional Europeanization mechanisms: Horizontal patterns of cooperation between member states and EU institutions come to transcend vertical downloading or uploading dynamics, revealing a shared threat assessment, a constructive approach to negotiations—which encourages burden-sharing and strongly disincentivizes lowest-common-denominator bargaining—as well as joint policy-making between capitals and EU institutions. Other than a move towards more cooperative and horizontal decision-making, coordinative Europeanization also captures a shift in power dynamics between member states, whereby the lead in the negotiations is taken by capitals with the greatest expertise, rather than falling by default in the hands of the big member states (i.e. France and Germany). These changes, we posit, can be explained by the nature of the crisis: Its intensity and the direct threat posed to European societies and to European integration.

This study advances two main claims. First, we provide a fine-grained conceptualization and operationalization of coordinative Europeanization in foreign and security policy. We argue that the notion of coordinative Europeanization captures more horizontal modes of cooperation between member states and EU institutions, as well as changes in the direction of cross-loading dynamics among member states themselves. Second, we contend that this distinct form of Europeanization can be linked to the nature of the war: That is, a symmetric and all-encompassing crisis that has had a severe impact on all member states and has cut across several policy areas.

The paper contributes to several strands of literature. The scholarship on the Europeanization of foreign policy suggests that external shocks can indeed impact Europeanization processes. The EU's failure to effectively face the Balkan wars in the 1990s, for instance, led to an intensified institutionalization and integration in foreign and security policy (Juncos 2013). The war in Iraq and the American 'divide and rule' policy of the Bush administration, instead, resulted in a temporary breakdown of cooperation (Hill 2004). However, there has been little effort to advance generalizable claims about the relationship between crises



and Europeanization dynamics. Focusing on the impact of crises on EU foreign policy decision-making, we contribute to the scholarship on the 'crisisification of European policymaking' (Rhinar, 2019).

Moreover, this paper joins others (e.g. Laffan, 2023; Maurer et al., 2023) in rebuking realist arguments according to which crises result in a reversal back to intergovernmental bargaining, unilateral responses, or solutions outside the EU's framework (Hyde-Price 2006). Focusing on the impact of crises in the Common Foreign and Security Policy/Common Security and Defence Policy (CFSP/CSDP) only helps strengthen our argument. To be sure, the expectation in the literature is that, in a crisis, policy areas governed by unanimity voting are especially prone to hard bargaining and lowest-common-denominator solutions and that EU institutions will have a more limited role (Ferrara and Kriesi 2022; Thomas 2021; Falkner 2016). Instead, we contend that, when a crisis is as symmetrical and all-encompassing as Russia's war against Ukraine, the coordination logic between member states and EU institutions becomes all the much stronger, leading to more, rather than less, Europeanization. We make a novel contribution to the scholarship on the Europeanization of foreign policy by arguing that, instead of resulting in a breakdown of cooperation, crises can actually strengthen the cooperative nature of EU foreign policy negotiations. More broadly, we dispute any dichotomous approach to crisis policymaking that would have it either in the hand of member states or EU institutions (see also Smeets and Beach 2023).

The article is structured as follows. We first review the literature on the Europeanization of foreign policy and the effect of crises on Europeanization dynamics. We then present our conceptualization of coordinative Europeanization and propose a more fine-grained understanding of the impact that crises have on these mechanisms. Drawing on documentary analysis of both primary and secondary sources as well as sixteen semi-structured interviews with EU officials and national diplomats to the EU, the empirical section starts by examining the nature of the crisis and then proceeds to investigate how the war has allowed for coordinative Europeanization. We conclude with a discussion of the remaining obstacles to coordinative Europeanization in the specific case of Russia's war of aggression, including turf battles among EU institutional figures and Hungary's reluctance to support the EU's collective response. Exploring the impact of transformative, exogenous events on Europeanization, the paper contributes to the central theme of this Special Issue, which re-thinks the relationship between member states and EU institutions in times of crisis.

Crises as drivers of coordinative Europeanization

Recent crises such as Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine have challenged our understanding of traditional (i.e. vertical) Europeanization dynamics of uploading and downloading. For instance, when discussing the EU's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Ladi and Wolff (2021) have argued that crises have had a significant impact on the nature and direction of Europeanization processes. While in the past Europeanization was often associated with top-down and more 'coercive' forms of adaptation of national policies, structures and politics,



in the age of permacrisis, we might expect to see more bottom-up and horizontal policymaking processes. Ladi and Wolff (2021: 32) define coordinative Europeanization as ‘a bottom-up process where the member states are actively involved in the policymaking process early on in order to guarantee the highest level of implementation possible’.

European foreign policy cooperation has long been characterized by the type of active involvement from the capitals that Ladi and Wolff (2021) and Ladi and Polverari (2024) associate with coordinative Europeanization. Since its establishment in the late 1960s, European foreign policy decision-making was all about consultation and policy cooperation, two mechanisms at the heart of coordinative Europeanization. To be sure, the so-called coordination reflex was identified as one of the main achievements of European Political Cooperation (Nuttall, 1992). This norm, which requires coordination and information-sharing prior to formal meetings, remains a core component of CFSP/CSDP negotiations to this day (Juncos and Pomorska 2021). Subsequent studies further underscored the unique socialization dynamics and peer-pressure characterizing EU foreign policy (Cross 2007; Juncos and Pomorska 2006; Tonra 2001). In spite of that, most Europeanization studies of foreign policy to date have focused on vertical Europeanization, taking either a top-down or bottom-up perspective (e.g. Wong and Hill 2012; Hadfield et al 2017). That is, they have studied either how national foreign policies or institutions changed because of the EU or how European foreign policy and EU institutions evolved because of the national projection of interests, ideas, or norms. A novel conceptualization of the more horizontal aspects of Europeanization was proposed by Major and Pomorska, who captured ‘the exchange of ideas, norms and “ways of doing” things *between* countries or other entities for which the EU sets the scene’ (2005, p. 1, *emphasis added*). Contrary to vertical Europeanization, this form of horizontal Europeanization (or cross-loading) implies that the member states learn from one another and become socialized in the same norms through their participation in CFSP and by working together outside of EU institutions (Müller et al 2021, p. 552).

Recent crises have shed light on unexplored research avenues that the existing literature on the Europeanization of foreign policy has yet to consider. For one, studies of horizontal Europeanization have been confined to member states (Czułno 2021; Rivera Escartin 2020), disregarding the mutual learning that may occur across institutions and between EU institutions and member states (including—or perhaps most especially—in times of crisis). Further, not enough attention has been devoted to power dynamics in horizontal Europeanization processes where the direction of the exchange is not primarily from larger (and/or Western) member states to smaller (and/or Central and Eastern European) countries. In short, in foreign and security policy, the emergence of a coordinative mode of Europeanization appears to be a less novel phenomenon than in other EU policy areas. However, the way Europeanization has manifested in recent years, and particularly in relation to Russia’s war on Ukraine, can be understood as a reconfiguration of traditional Europeanization dynamics, which is captured by the notion of coordinative Europeanization (see also Ladi and Polverari, 2024). As we show below, what is distinctive about coordinative Europeanization in the context of CFSP/CSDP is the shift in the type of actors involved—resulting in a more horizontal, cooperative type of policymaking



between EU institutions and member states—as well as in the direction of cooperation dynamics *amongst* member states themselves.

Crucially, this article argues that these shifts are intrinsically linked to the nature of this crisis, which serves as trigger for the activation of distinctive socialization and cooperation mechanisms. Scholars have generally focused on the dangers of crises for Europeanization dynamics, stressing their disintegrative effects—so-called ‘breaking down scenario’ (Riddervold et al 2021)—and their role in accelerating the (de)Europeanization and renationalization of member states’ foreign policies (Smith 2021; Chrysogelos 2019; Tassinari 2016). In these circumstances, member states disengage from EU-level foreign policymaking, opting for other multilateral frameworks or go-it-alone strategies, which might in turn undermine collective EU foreign policy (Müller et al 2021). The Eurozone crisis, for instance, prompted a renationalization of Greek and Portuguese foreign policies towards China (Raimundo et al 2021). The Trump Presidency also explains de-Europeanization trends in the cases of Polish foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Hungary’s opposition to the Global Compact for Migration (Dyduch and Müller 2021; Badell 2020). There is, however, a wide range of literature that has emphasized the more transformative impact of crises, including in foreign and security policy (Freudlsperger and Schimmelfennig 2022; Laffan, 2023; Falkner 2016).

Naturally, not every exogenous shock amounts to a crisis, nor are all crises the same (Ladi and Polverari, 2024). Different crises, in turn, trigger ‘distinct patterns of crisis policymaking’ (Ferrara and Kriesi 2022: 1368) and have varying effects on Europeanization dynamics. For instance, slow- and fast-burning crises, two notions first introduced by ‘t Hart and Boin (2001), result in different learning mechanisms and decision-making outcomes (Kamkhaji and Radaelli 2017). Ferrara and Kriesi (2022) provide a welcome contribution to the debate by distinguishing crises—and their effects—in terms of their *policy heritage* and *spatial distribution*. That is, the level of EU-level competences in a particular policy domain (policy heritage) and the degree to which the crisis’ effects are equally distributed across member states (spatial distribution). The repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic, for instance, hit all member states indiscriminately. Scholars have also turned their attention to the *scope* of a particular crisis, coining the term of ‘compound crisis’ to describe a shock to one system or in one policy area that cascades into adjacent areas and becomes a much bigger crisis (Turner 1978) or that of ‘transboundary crises’ to capture crises that cut across traditional policy domains (Boin 2018).

We build on the crisis and Europeanization scholarships to show how the war triggered coordinative Europeanization in EU foreign policy. The specific nature of the crisis is key for the type of policymaking that will be adopted in response to it. In the case of Russia’s war of aggression, the two fundamental crisis pressures to consider in relation to the EU’s response are its symmetrical impact and scope. By ‘symmetrical crisis’, we do not mean that the impact of the war is felt equally by all EU countries. Some member states are undoubtedly facing a more immediate national security threat and/or have welcomed more refugees from Ukraine. However, every EU country shared the same concerns about Russia’s violation of international law and the potential use of nuclear weapons by Putin’s regime. The war also presented all member states with a moral obligation to act



Table 1 Indicators and observable implications of coordinative Europeanization in EU foreign policy.
Source: authors' own formulation

Indicators of coordinative Europeanization in CFSP/CSDP	Operationalization
Horizontal coordination	Member states and EU institutions engage in joint-up decision-making from the onset of the crisis. This includes: - Visible, abrupt change in language used to describe a threat/policy issue; - Concerted effort to adopt more costly measures and to show solidarity to the most directly affected member states; - Member states volunteering resources, information, and expertise; - EU institutions are more open to inter-institutional collaboration; - Member states find constructive ways to voice any potential reservations and feel a strong pressure against hindering common policies.
Changes in power dynamics	New actors set the agenda, impress momentum to the negotiations, provide leadership to the EU-27 (reversal of traditional horizontal dynamics, from centre to "periphery", from big to small member states).

and make a show of unity and solidarity. What is more, the crisis affects a wide range of EU policies (scope), some entailing higher EU-level competences than others. The comprehensive nature of the crisis, in turn, forced a closer cooperation among capitals and EU institutions across all policy areas. In short, such a comprehensive and symmetrical crisis can serve as a turning point, allowing for coordinative Europeanization to take place.

As mentioned, a close involvement of the member states early on in the decision-making process has long been a defining characteristic of Europeanization dynamics in CFSP/CSDP, with capitals 'uploading' their interests onto the EU level to shape other capitals' positions and ways of doing things ('downloading'). However, given the unprecedented nature of the war (both in scope and impact), we expect traditional Europeanization dynamics to undergo significant changes (see Table 1). For one, we anticipate a close level of coordination and information-sharing between member states, as well as *between* member states *and* EU institutions. This results in member states and EU institutions engaging in joint-up decision-making from the onset of the crisis; member states volunteering resources, information, and expertise; and EU institutions being more open to inter-institutional collaboration. Concomitantly, we hypothesize that as the decision-making process itself becomes more collaborative, a shared threat assessment and policy response across member states and institutions is likely to emerge. Lastly, given that this crisis concerns the Eastern neighbourhood, we would also expect Central and Eastern European member states (CEEs) to capitalize on their unique expertise on the region. As a result, we anticipate changes both in power dynamics between member states and in the direction of horizontal Europeanization processes (from countries with the greatest expertise to the rest, rather than from larger to smaller or from the centre to the "periphery").



We test these assumptions in the case of the EU's response to Russia's aggression in Ukraine, given the symmetric and comprehensive nature of this particular crisis. In so doing, we follow an abductive research design (see also Smeets and Beach 2023): while our overall argument concerning the impact of crisis pressures on decision-making dynamics is derived deductively from the literature, we inductively refined the observable implications of coordinative Europeanization based on the empirical evidence (Table 1). In the final section, we also examine evidence that challenges some of these assumptions, including the case of Hungary and problems of inter-institutional coordination.

Given the general assumption that foreign and security policy is especially prone to intergovernmental bargaining, particularly in times of crisis (Ferrara and Kriesi 2022; Thomas 2021), the EU's response to the war provides a least likely case for coordinative Europeanization (Levy 2008). Our analysis focuses on the first fifteen months after the invasion (February 2022–May 2023) and draws on evidence gathered by means of semi-structured interviews conducted both in person and online with national diplomats and EU officials. In building our interview sample, we strove for geographical diversity across member states, as well as variation in terms of seniority and institutional affiliation (in the case of EU officials). Interviews are cited with a number to respect the anonymity of our sources. Interview evidence was triangulated with primary and secondary sources. Primary documents include conclusions from the European Council and Foreign Affairs Council meetings both before and after Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. The aim is to show the shift in language, threat assessment and policy response by the EU-27. Secondary sources, including press releases and media, offered additional insights into the change in EU leaders' attitudes on the war after the invasion (see Appendix for full list of documents).

The nature of Russia's war of aggression: a symmetrical and comprehensive crisis

After the outbreak of the war, we witnessed an unprecedented show of unity and solidarity on the part of the member states, leading to concerted action and joint decision-making. We argue that this distinctive form of Europeanization was triggered by the unique nature of the crisis.

On the one hand, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has had a *symmetrical effect* on EU member states. The crisis is symmetrical both in terms of the actual impact of the conflict across the EU, and because it generated a feeling of unity vis-à-vis Russian threat, instilling a sense—shared both at the national and EU level—that collective action was necessary. This is illustrated by EU leaders' declarations in the weeks following the invasion (e.g. European Council, 2022a, 2022b).¹ As one interviewee pointed out, 'the aggression has shown that Russia is still an aggressive state that can be a danger to its vicinity and *we are all neighbours of Russia!*'

¹ See Appendix for a list of primary documents showing to what extent capitals framed the war as a collective threat affecting the whole of the EU.



(Interview 6). The EU-27 shared the view that the invasion ‘was unacceptable. A war in Europe [...] was [...] unfathomable. We had to react’ (Interview 6). Another official explained that the war posed an ‘existential threat’ to the EU as a whole (and not just to frontline states), the most significant threat to European security since World War II (Interview 13).

On the other hand, the *comprehensive* nature of the crisis is attested by the wide range of EU-level and national actors involved. For months following the invasion, nearly every aspect of European Council agendas dealt with the war, from security and defence, to energy and economic issues.² Within the Foreign Affairs Council, virtually every working group and committee worked on some dimension of the EU’s response to the war. RELEX focused on sanctions, the EU Military Committee and the Political-Military Group covered the European Union Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM) to Ukraine and military issues, CODEV-PI worked on the post-war rebuilding of Ukraine, COELA focused on enlargement, COEST followed political developments in the Eastern Neighbourhood, and higher-ranking committees, such as the PSC and COREPER II, were heavily involved across all policy areas (Interviews 2, 5).

The nature of the crisis, in turn, helps explain the unity and resolve of the EU-27 during the period covered by this study, their steady commitment, constructive attitude, solidarity, as well as the speed of the decision-making process. The degree of consensus among the member states to mobilize the European Peace Facility (EPF) in the very early stages and the subsequent decision to launch a military training mission would have not been possible without the impetus provided by a crisis of such magnitude (Interviews 6, 7, 9, 10). Similarly, the scope and comprehensiveness of the sanctions imposed on Russia were unprecedented (Meissner and Graziani 2022). Crisis pressures also help account for the very fast pace of the negotiations. For instance, for a mission as complex as EUMAM to be deployed in less than three months was ‘quite unique’ and could ‘not have happened without the commitment from the member states’ (Interview 10).

Coordinative Europeanization in response to Russia’s war of aggression

Specific crisis pressures lead to distinct types of crisis policymaking. In the case of Russia’s war of aggression, not only was the decision-making process faster, but the degree and scope of coordination (at national and supranational levels), the constructive spirit with which capitals—even the more ‘problematic’ partners—worked with one another, their commonality of purpose, and sense of burden-sharing, all went beyond traditional notions of Europeanization as we know it.

² See Appendix for details (especially European Council meetings between February and October 2022).



All for one and one for all? Horizontal cooperation dynamics between member states and EU institutions

Since the start of the war, many have remarked upon the unprecedented level of unity, cooperation, and joint policy action by the EU (e.g. Maurer et al., 2023; Laffan, 2023; Orenstein 2022). This close coordination among member states—and between capitals and EU institutions—is attested most evidently by a *shared threat assessment* and *agreement on the adequate policy response*, with little need for prolonged negotiations. One EU official, for instance, recalled being completely taken aback when, while attending the first FAC meeting after the invasion, ministers spontaneously brought up (and quickly agreed on) measures that had not even been mentioned in the preparatory briefings, including sanctions against Lavrov and Putin (Interview 16). In other words, the policies adopted were less the result of a member state (or subgroup of member states) uploading their views to the EU level, and more the consequence of a joint, almost instinctive, convergence around a shared policy response.

The sudden and radical change in policy was also reflected in a seismic *shift in the 'agreed language'* used at the EU level before and after the invasion. In the January 2022 FAC conclusions, for instance, Russia was still identified as a 'party' to the conflict, whereas after the special European Council meeting on 24 February, member states agreed that Russia bore 'full responsibility' (see [Appendix](#) for details and more examples). Following the invasion, discussions surrounding a future peace agreement were underpinned by a common understanding that 'peace should be in Ukraine's terms. There is a shared understanding on who is the aggressor' (Interview 3). Several interviewees noted how the EU now uses wording that had not been acceptable before the start of the war (Interviews 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 15). Over the Fall of 2022, for instance, PSC ambassadors agreed on the need to talk of an 'approach' to—rather than a 'relationship' with—Russia, a solution previously favoured only by some (Interview 4). Early on there was also a common understanding that the EU should speak of the 'Russian war of aggression' instead of 'conflict' (Interviews 5, 15). Language in official documents also moved from 'military aggression' to 'war' (see [Appendix](#)).

This shared understanding of the threat and the appropriate policy response translated into unprecedented levels of *unity*, commonality of purpose, burden-sharing, and ambition in terms of the EU response. As mentioned by an EU official, in 2021 very few would have dared to say to Russia 'this is unacceptable', but after the invasion it was a 'common feeling', allowing for a 'refreshing' level of unity within the EU (Interview 9). Capitals quickly realized that the 2014 sanctions were not sufficient and that relations with Russia could not go on as usual. As one diplomat put it, 'It was definitely clear to everyone that we needed more sanctions, the discussions were then just about the details: what specific role should EUMAM fulfil? What specific type of sanctions should we implement? What type of weapons?' (Interview 3). More broadly, the war imposed a significant shift in perceptions about Russia in some capitals, allowing for a more like-minded negotiation dynamic to emerge at committee and working group level (e.g. COEST) (Interview 13).



This is not to say that all the member states agreed to participate in every policy initiative or that there were not disagreements on some issues. However, even when discussions did take place, member states strove for consensus without falling back on lowest-common-denominator bargaining. To be sure, all capitals felt a *strong pressure against disagreement*, even on previously polarizing issues. In the Fall of 2021, some member states still opposed a military training mission, as requested by Kyiv earlier in July, viewing it as a potential provocation vis-à-vis Russia. Enduring corruption in Ukraine was sometimes brought up as an argument to oppose the launch of the mission (Interview 6). After February 2022, all these reservations disappeared, however. When it came to adopting decisions such as mobilizing the EPF to provide support to Ukraine, consensus suddenly was very easy to achieve, since ‘on Ukraine, no one wants to say no’ (Interview 7, also Interviews 9, 10, 11, 12). Aware of the strong pressure towards consensus, member states did not dare question the need to increase military assistance to Ukraine or the launch of a military training mission (Interviews 8, 9, 11, 12). Especially when it came to CSDP decisions, consensus prevailed through the use of constructive abstention (Interview 11). For instance, only 21 member states provide lethal weapons through the EPF. Some countries could not contribute because the size of their defence industries or stocks did not allow for it, but they still helped to finance the delivery of lethal weapons (including Hungary) (Interview 7).³ And while neutral member states, like Austria or Malta, did not finance lethal weapons, they did contribute to other non-lethal assistance to Ukraine (Interview 11). They did so ‘in a spirit of mutual EU solidarity’ and made it clear that they would ‘refrain from any action likely to conflict with or impede’ military assistance.⁴ A similar dynamic was at play in the case of the EU’s Military Training Mission. As one official noted, ‘there were some disagreements on command and control structures, what to finance under common costs and what not, but overall [...] there was a strong willingness to achieve an agreement (Interview 9, also Interview 10). EU member states who were not able (neutral countries) or willing (Hungary) to participate made use of constructive abstention (Interviews 7, 10, 11, 12). In a way, the crisis undermined arguments that in order to have a functional CFSP/CSDP, the EU needs to move towards QMV (Interview 6). Critically, the sustained support for these initiatives largely came down to the nature of the crisis:

For other missions, we have seen sometimes discussions and that might mean that the goals will be lowered [and the mandate] less ambitious. But here [...] the EU could not afford for this to be a mistake or a failure [...] (Interview 9).

This ambition also characterized cooperation between member states and EU institutions (primarily the Commission and the European External Action Service, or EEAS). One official even went as far to say that the war inaugurated a ‘completely new era’ with regard to the EU policy towards both Russia and Ukraine (Interview 2). For their part, EU institutions also adhered more quickly to a common position

³ See Appendix for a comprehensive list of constructive abstentions.

⁴ See Appendix for details.



on the war and common EU policy measures. Back in 2014, the EEAS had been fairly conservative, advocating for a measured European response. EEAS officials had been reluctant to call out the terrorist nature of Russia's actions in Ukraine. After February 2022, however, the Service did not hesitate to talk about war crimes (Interview 1). The High Representative/Vice President (HRVP) and the EEAS had a substantial role in the decision to launch the EPF and subsequent move to ramp up military support to Ukraine and increase the funds for the EPF in December 2022 (Interviews 7, 9, 10, 11, 12). *Burden-sharing* was an important part of this common, horizontal, approach to the war, with EU institutions and member states working closely together. A national diplomat explained that capitals were happy to see a coordination mechanism established by the EEAS and 'to see the Commission cooperating and participating in all these efforts' (Interview 6). Working and agreeing on sanctions also required 'cooperative effort' between the Commission, the EEAS and the member states. According to one official, the Commission was well-prepared in advance, so it moved very quickly after the war erupted: 'Our reaction was fast, substantive, quick. Stronger than Russia anticipated.' (Interview 15). In a significant 'burden-sharing exercise' (Interview 3), the EEAS coordinated 22 member states as they worked together to review over 1,400 individual sanction listings. Member states also contributed significantly to institutional capabilities and resources at the EU level. Capitals provided national experts for the EEAS Sanctions Division and, in turn, the Service worked with the Sanction Divisions in (some) member states' Ministries of Foreign Affairs (Interviews 2, 16). Moreover, there was an 'extraordinary' exchange of information between EU institutions and member states: EEAS officials from the Intelligence and Situation Centre (INTCEN) regularly updated national delegates, while capitals shared their expert knowledge of the conflict and Russia with the rest of the EU-27 (Interviews 2, 3).

Who's following whom? The shift in horizontal Europeanization dynamics among member states

Apart from the type of horizontal cooperation just described, another notable change following the invasion was the shift in power dynamics among member states. Back when restrictive measures against Russia were first negotiated in 2014, much of the leg-work and informal coordination was done by a core group of member states, which was mainly restricted to the bigger EU countries, notably Germany, France and, back then, the UK. In 2022, however, there was a sense that policy decisions could not be taken without including the CEEs. For instance, the principles guiding the EU's relation with Russia, the so-called lines to take, which HRVP Borrell announced in November 2022 (Brzozowski 2022), were negotiated in full transparency between the EEAS and all member states (Interview 1). In particular, the Service would not dare take action 'without consulting the Baltics, Poland and even the Czech Republic' (Interview 2).

More generally, the CEEs came to exercise greater authority within both the Commission and the Council compared to 2014, taking a leading role in the discussions and becoming 'moral leaders of the EU's response' (Interview 15, also Interviews 5, 12, 13, 16). As mentioned by a national diplomat:



[The 2022 crisis] increased the weight of those that have been saying that we cannot trust the Russians [...] they have now an opportunity to dominate the agenda and they are doing so. (Interview 6)

In 2022, all capitals agreed on the need to respond to Russia's aggression, but the CEEs played an important role in mobilizing other member states into action (Interview 13). In this sense, Poland and the Baltics had been coordinating closely, taking initiative, authoring their own non-papers, and moving the discussion forward in the Council. During their Presidency term (July–December 2022), the Czechs were also extremely active on certain areas of EU policy towards Ukraine, most especially enlargement (Interviews 5, 15). Previous experience and expertise on the region certainly facilitated a stronger role of CEE countries (Interview 13).

The capitals that drove the Union's response to the annexation of Crimea back in 2014, on the other hand, had to shoulder the consequences of years of underplaying and misreading Russia's intentions. One interviewee noted that the 2022 crisis was 'a reality check to those that believe that it was possible to talk to Russia, that it was possible to achieve some kind of agreement in terms of security guarantees' (Interview 6). According to one EU official, back in 2014 the EU's response was driven by 'a naïve Western approach that business was important and that the newcomers [the CEEs] couldn't think straight' (Interview 15). While Paris and Berlin still played a pivotal role in Council negotiations in 2022, their presence was more subdued and their attitude—especially Germany's—more defensive. Given their reputation as 'backtrackers' and their history of 'Putin-friendly policies' (Interview 4), German negotiators found themselves in a delicate position: they were not prepared to share exactly the same positions as the CEEs, but they also did not want to be perceived as hindering a common agreement (Interview 4). France and Germany's caution, in turn, gave Baltic and Polish negotiators more leverage because they saw their French and German counterparts as being more amenable to support their proposals.

Old habits die hard: the remaining challenges to coordinative Europeanization

Despite the notable changes in traditional Europeanization dynamics, obstacles to an even more concerted action among member states and EU institutions remained.

For one, we observed a certain level of competition among EU-level leadership figures. Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Council President Charles Michel and HRVP Borrell all jockeyed for influence over the decision-making process. Admittedly, the Commission President seemed to be most incisive actor, while the HRVP largely failed to set the agenda during the period under investigation (Interviews 1, 3, 4, 5). Michel, for his part, tried to speak on behalf of the EU since the outbreak of the war, which costed him a certain amount of criticism for neglecting his main duties of preparing and running European Council summits (Moen and Lynch 2023).

Moreover, the EEAS and the European Commission were still somewhat bogged down in institutional turf battles. Most crucially, the Commission jealously sought to



guard its competences over sanctions policy as well as financial aid policy towards Ukraine, which sometimes hindered a smooth coordination with the EEAS (Interviews 1, 2, 16). On the CSDP side, cooperation was generally better, though clarifying institutional competences when it came to the design and implementation of EPF measures proved challenging (Interviews 10, 11, 12). As one official acknowledged, 'institutionally there were always going to be issues, especially since the EPF is deemed to be successful' (Interview 11).

While it is true that consensus prevailed regarding the EU's response to Russia's aggression, member states occasionally criticized specific initiatives and the role played by institutions. For instance, in relation to the use of the EPF, 'some member states came to resent the HRVP initiatives' (Interview 11). Among other things, they felt cornered into agreeing to additional disbursements with last minute meetings, which led to some disgruntlement with the process and the politics surrounding it (Interviews 7, 11).

Lastly, while our findings do not support Anghel and Jones' claim that the EU 'progressively showed signs of decentralization' (2023, p. 8), there were some capitals that were reluctant in their support for Ukraine. Most notably, despite eventually tagging along with the other member states in each round of sanctions, Hungary stood out as an outlier within the Council (Interviews 4, 5, 15). For the first year after the invasion, Hungary's behaviour simply amounted to 'political posturing', given that they did not resort to their right to veto and ultimately agreed to fund the delivery of lethal weapons to Ukraine (Interviews 11, 12). Similarly, Hungary did not prevent 'any of the packages to become a reality' (Interview 6). However, the country was known to leak discussions on sanctions measures, creating significant trust issues within Council working groups and higher-level committees. Delegates were wary about sharing information in meetings before their Hungarian counterparts, whom they knew to be politically aligned with Orbán's government (Interview 5). And while Hungary did not block any of the sanctions packages or policy initiatives during this period, it was a difficult negotiator at times, dragging on discussions to extract concessions. One EU official even pointed out that Orbán 'got things for himself or for Putin, like taking the patriarch Cyrill off the sanctions list' (Interview 15). Budapest's stance has however become more obstructive over time with threats to veto the delivery of military aid and the opening of accession negotiations with Ukraine. Beyond the case of Hungary, lingering prejudices stood in the way of stronger cooperation. The growing prestige and leadership role of CEEs also met some resistance on the part of Western member states. When it came to the training of Ukrainian forces as part of EUMAM, for instance, Germany was reluctant to follow Polish leadership. As a result, Warsaw was in charge of coordinating training for all EU member states, except Germany (Interview 14).

Conclusion

Drawing on the literature on crisis policymaking and Europeanization of foreign policy, we relied on Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine as a case study to explore the effect of crises on Europeanization dynamics. We argued that the spatial



distribution and scope of the crisis were the key conditions for the activation of coordinative Europeanization. Such an all-encompassing and symmetrical crisis allowed for an unprecedented sense of unity and solidarity across the EU. This nuances the notion that the changing international environment may necessarily lead to reduced EU cohesiveness (Costa and Barbé, 2022). Since the start of the war, member states and EU institutions moved beyond strictly vertical forms of Europeanization, converging around a shared threat assessment and response, radically revisiting existing policies, contributing constructively to the negotiations, and refraining from lowest-common-denominator compromises. This is in line with findings by Coman (2024), who concluded that coordinative Europeanization ‘has the virtue of infusing dialogue, and cooperation, as well as legitimacy, transparency and acceptability’. As part of this process, member states and institutions worked on joint-up decision-making early on, sharing best practices, agreeing on ground-breaking common language and joint policy measures. Moreover, we witnessed a change in the direction of cross-loading horizontal Europeanization dynamics among member states: That is, the leadership role was no longer predominantly in the hands of Western European member states, but the CEEs were able to set the pace of the negotiations, share their experiences, act as policy entrepreneurs, and accumulate more agency and understanding for their positions on Russia than ever before. The notion of coordinative Europeanization allows precisely to capture this specific form of cooperation in CFSP/CSDP, which transcends vertical up- and downloading mechanisms, as well as Western Europe-centric horizontal dynamics.

Our findings allow us to rebuke dichotomous approaches that would have crisis policymaking either in the hands of member states or EU institutions, thus failing to capture instances of cooperation and mutual influence. We also nuance accounts that assume that crises lead to a reversal back to intergovernmental bargaining, leaving EU institutions with little power. Our claims are only strengthened by virtue of our focus on CFSP/CSDP—a policy area that is traditionally more prone to intergovernmental negotiations. Within this Special issue, Wolff and Zardo show that in other policy fields traditionally reserved for states, such as asylum and public health, crises have also led to the emergence of coordinative Europeanization.

Finally, this paper opens up new avenues for research when it comes to the effects of crises on the Europeanization in policy areas beyond foreign policy. To test the proposed framework more systematically, future research could engage in comparative studies showing how some crises create the conditions for coordinative Europeanization, while others do not. Further research will also need to explore whether the dynamics identified in this article endure over time, especially as the impacts of the crisis recede.

Interviews

Interview 1. EU official, videoconferencing platform, 25 November 2022.

Interview 2. EU official, videoconferencing platform, 7 December 2022.

Interview 3. National official, videoconferencing platform, 19 December 2022.

Interview 4. National official, videoconferencing platform, 20 December 2022.



- Interview 5. National official, videoconferencing platform, 3 January 2023.
Interview 6. National official, videoconferencing platform, 19 December 2022.
Interview 7. EU official, videoconferencing platform, 19 December 2022.
Interview 8. EU official, videoconferencing platform, 21 December 2022.
Interview 9. EU official, videoconferencing platform, 19 January 2023.
Interview 10. EU official, videoconferencing platform, 19 January 2023.
Interview 11. EU official, videoconferencing platform, 17 February 2023.
Interview 12. EU official, videoconferencing platform, 22 February 2023.
Interview 13. National representative, videoconferencing platform, 28 March 2023.
Interview 14. EU official, in person, 10 March 2023.
Interview 15. EU official, in person, 28 March 2023.
Interview 16. EU official, in person, 16 November 2023.

Appendix

Primary documents and press releases

The table below includes primary sources that present evidence of coordinative Europeanization (e.g. in the form of constructive abstention, shows of unity, sustained consensus for military/financial support to Ukraine). As the goal of the paper is to show the change in modes of decision-making after the invasion, the documents focus largely on the months immediately preceding and following 24 February 2022. However, a few more recent documents are included to show the sustained support to the EU's response and resilience of constructive abstention even by more "problematic" member states like Hungary.

Date	Document title	Link	Evidence of
05.05.23	END OF WRITTEN PROCEDURE for the adoption of Council Decision on an assistance measure under the European Peace Facility to support the Ukrainian Armed Forces	https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/CM-2613-2023-INIT/en/pdf	Constructive attitude even by neutral member states and HU (through constructive abstention), in the spirit of EU solidarity (at least in the cases of MT and AT)
13.04.23	END OF WRITTEN PROCEDURE for the adoption of Council Decision on an assistance measure under the European Peace Facility to support the Ukrainian Armed Forces	https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/CM-2408-2023-INIT/en/pdf	Constructive attitude even by neutral member states and HU (through constructive abstention), in the spirit of EU solidarity (at least in the cases of MT and AT)
21.10.22	European Council Conclusions	https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2022/10-20-21/	Comprehensive nature of the crisis



Date	Document title	Link	Evidence of
24.06.22	European Council Conclusions	https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/06/24/european-council-conclusions-23-24-june-2022/	Comprehensive nature of the crisis
07.06.22	Draft Minutes, General Affairs Council (23 May 2022)	https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9390-2022-ADD-1/en/pdf	Constructive abstentions by AT, MT and IRE, in the spirit of EU solidarity
21.04.22	Summary record, Extraordinary meetings of COREPER (22, 23, 25 March)	https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8284-2022-INIT/en/pdf	Constructive abstentions by AT, MT and IRE, in the spirit of EU solidarity
13.04.22	EU support to Ukraine: Council agrees on third tranche of support under the European Peace Facility for total €1.5 billion (Press release)	https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/04/13/eu-support-to-ukraine-council-agrees-on-third-tranche-of-support-under-the-european-peace-facility-for-total-1-5-billion/	Unity, resolve and commitment: The Council adopted two assistance measures under the EPF that will allow the EU to further support the Ukrainian Armed Forces (€ extra 500 million, bringing total assistance to € 1.5 billion)
25.03.22	European Council Conclusions	https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/03/25/european-council-conclusions-24-25-march-2022/#:~:text=On%20a%2025%20March%202022,President%20of%20the%20European%20Council	Comprehensive nature of the crisis
23.03.22	EU support to Ukraine: Council doubles funding under the European Peace Facility (Press release)	https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/03/23/eu-support-to-ukraine-council-doubles-funding-under-the-european-peace-facility/	EU unity, commitment, and scale of the response: The Council adopted two assistance measures under the EPF that will allow the EU to further support Ukrainian Armed Forces (additional €500 million, for a total of € 1 billion under EPF)
16.03.22	Summary record, Extraordinary meetings of COREPER (22, 24, 27, 28 February and 1, 3, and 4 March 2022)	https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7282-2022-INIT/en/pdf	Constructive abstentions by AT, MT, and IRE concerning the Council Decision on the Assistance Measure under the EPF Willingness to contribute in other ways and explicit reference to EU solidarity



Date	Document title	Link	Evidence of
11.03.22	Informal EU Leaders' meeting in Versailles: Remarks by HRVP Josep Borrell upon arrival	https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/informal-eu-leaders%E2%80%99-meeting-versailles-remarks-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-upon_en	EU unity around European Peace Facility: Upon arriving in Versailles, HRVP answered a few questions on the additional € 500 million contribution in military support to Ukraine (which member states were supposed to vote on shortly after). The following answers are particularly relevant: "Was it hard to convince Member States to support this expansion of the [European] Peace Facility? <i>No, not at all. Everybody was completely aware that we have to increase our military support to Ukraine, to continue putting pressure on Russia and to increase our military support to Ukraine</i> "; "How difficult is to unite Europe these days? <i>On that issue, not at all</i> "
11.03.22	European Council Conclusions (Versailles Declaration)	https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/03/11/the-versailles-declaration-10-11-03-2022/	Shift in threat perception (e.g. "Russia's war of aggression constitutes a tectonic shift in European history") and in baseline language ("war of aggression", instead of "military aggression" from European Council Conclusions from 24/02/22)
28.02.22	EU adopts new set of measures to respond to Russia's military aggression against Ukraine (Press release)	https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/02/28/eu-adopts-new-set-of-measures-to-respond-to-russia-s-military-aggression-against-ukraine/	Unity, willingness to set a new precedent: The Council adopted two assistance measures under the European Peace Facility (EPF) to support the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The assistance measures (€ 500 million) would finance the provision of equipment and supplies to the Ukrainian Armed Forces, including— <i>for the first time</i> —lethal equipment

Date	Document title	Link	Evidence of
24.02.22	European Council Conclusions	https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2022/02/24/	Comprehensive nature of the crisis Shift in language: the EUCO identifies Russia as the sole responsible perpetrator of the aggression (“Russia bears full responsibility for this act of aggression and all the destruction and loss of life it will cause”)
24.01.22	FAC Conclusions	https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/53949/st05591-en22.pdf	Shift in language: While the EU condemned Russia’s escalation and threatened unprecedented retaliatory action, the language is not as unequivocal as it would be after the invasion Russia is identified as a “party” to the conflict (rather than the sole cause of it) The EU expresses support for Ukraine, but is also more cautious in its support as it would be post-invasion

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