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# From the euro to the Schengen crises: European integration theories, politicization, and identity politics

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## ABSTRACT

This contribution argues that the three dominant approaches to European integration cannot fully explain why the two most recent crises of the European Union (EU) resulted in very different outcomes. Liberal intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism can account for why the euro crisis resulted in more integration, but fail to explain why the EU has been stuck in a stalemate in the Schengen crisis. With regard to postfunctionalism, it is the other way around. To solve the puzzle, we have to consider that depoliticization through supranational delegation during the euro crisis has ultimately led to more, not less politicization. Moreover, both crises were about identity politics. Political controversies over the euro crisis have centred predominantly on questions of order, i.e., what constitutes Europe as a community and how much solidarity members of the community owe to each other under which conditions. The mass influx of migrants and refugees changed identity politics, since Eurosceptic populist parties framed the Schengen crisis in terms of borders, advocating for an exclusionary ‘fortress Europe.’ In contrary of a more inclusionary discourse, the dominance of exclusionary positions in the politicization of EU affairs has impaired an upgrading of the common European interest in the Schengen crisis.

**KEYWORDS** European Union; euro crises; EU migration and asylum policy; politicization; European identity; European integration theories.

Even the most enthusiastic supporter of European integration cannot deny that the European Union (EU) has been going through a series of crises during the past 10 years, which culminated in the ‘Brexit’ referendum in the summer of 2016. Many argue that these crises pose an existential threat to the future of the EU. This begs the question for students of the EU whether existing theories of European integration, which have mostly been used to account for progress in integration, are also suited to explain backlash and the diverse responses of the EU and its member states to the various crises.

This contribution focuses on two of the EU’s most severe crises. The euro crisis resulted in the creation of new and a strengthening of existing

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supranational institutions such as the European Stability Mechanism, the enhancement of fiscal surveillance powers of the Commission, and the construction of the Banking Union. The Schengen crisis, by contrast, has been marked by the EU's continued inability to respond effectively and in a co-ordinated manner to the unprecedented influx of refugees and migrants. The different outcomes of the two crises constitute the puzzle, which backs explanation.

We argue in the following that standard theories of European integration such as liberal intergovernmentalism (Moravcsik 1998), neofunctionalism (Haas 1958) or postfunctionalism (Hooghe and Marks 2009) only partially explain the differing EU responses to the euro and the Schengen crises. Liberal intergovernmentalism points to a common member state preference for the preservation of the euro, asymmetrical interdependence, and German bargaining power (Schimmelfennig 2015). Neofunctionalism is also well positioned to explain the substantial deepening of European fiscal and financial integration resulting from the euro crisis (Niemann and Ioannou 2015; Schimmelfennig 2014). But neither liberal intergovernmentalism nor neofunctionalism give satisfactory answers to why member states have preferred the status quo or even disintegration in dealing with the refugee challenge, despite a common interest in preserving Schengen to avoid welfare losses incurred by the reintroduction of internal border controls.

As to postfunctionalism, it has posited that the 'permissive consensus' in mass public opinion supporting the EU integration project has been gradually replaced by a 'constraining dissensus' that limits decisions of EU friendly élites seeking to deepen European integration (Hooghe and Marks 2009). This argument offers a plausible account for the paralysis of member states and EU institutions during the Schengen crisis, but it cannot explain that the euro crisis resulted in a deepening of integration despite the constraining dissensus and the rise of Eurosceptic parties.

Postfunctionalism would not have expected the EU reaction to the euro crisis. Nevertheless, it rightly emphasizes the political mobilization of mass public opinion as a constraining factor in EU politics. Rather, we argue that élite reactions to the constraining dissensus during the euro crisis attempted to depoliticize highly salient issues by delegating fiscal powers to non-majoritarian supranational institutions without changing the treaties. However, this neofunctionalist response to the postfunctionalist challenge came with a heavy political price tag by empowering populist Eurosceptic parties on the left in Southern Europe and on the right in Northern and Eastern Europe.

While attempts to shield EU-level decisions against the constraining dissensus in the euro crisis were not sustainable, the EU initially tried the same strategy when faced with a massive influx of refugees in 2015. This time, depoliticization through supranational delegation failed from the very beginning. It fuelled the politicization of EU affairs in many member states, which had already begun

during the euro crisis. Moreover, politicization mobilized different identity components. During the euro crisis, identity politics concerned mostly constitutive features of the EU – solidarity vs budgetary discipline in a common currency zone. It was about ‘who are we as a union?’ (order). We argue that the depoliticization efforts of European élites were at least partially successful, because they could rely on the acceptance of the majority of European citizens with inclusive national, i.e., Europeanized, identities. Moreover, the politicization of the euro crisis by left-wing populist parties in Southern Europe challenged order issues (solidarity and community), not the EU as such. In contrast, the refugee flows and the resulting Schengen crisis were about ‘the others’ and ‘who belongs to us?’ (borders). Here, politicization by – in this case – mostly right-wing populist parties activated and mobilized citizens holding exclusive nationalist identities, while the majority remained silent and inactive in the absence of a transnationalized and liberal/cosmopolitan ‘communicative discourse’ of the élites (Schmidt 2010).

To develop these arguments, our contribution proceeds in four steps. We first introduce the concepts of politicization and collective identities and discuss how theories of European integration deal with them. Second, we describe our ‘dependent variable,’ i.e., the different outcomes of the two crises. Third, we discuss why the three standard theories of European integration can only partially account for the variation in crisis results. Fourth, we add our own account, which we understand as an amendment to postfunctionalism.

## European integration theories, politicization and identity politics

We start by discussing how three mainstream integration theories – (liberal) intergovernmentalism, neofunctionalism and postfunctionalism – deal with politicization and the Europeanization of identities or lack thereof. We define *politicization* of the EU along three dimensions (e.g., De Wilde *et al.* 2016; Grande and Hutter 2016; Risse 2015):

- Increasing issue salience of European affairs in the various public domains;
- Increasing levels of polarization pertaining to the EU in general, EU institutions, or EU policies;
- Increasing mobilization and expansion of actors in the various public domains.

Liberal intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism have been criticized for not being able to come to terms with politicization because of a common focus on functionalist drivers of European integration (Hooghe and Marks 2009). While they do consider socioeconomic problem-solving as the core

rationale for élites to pool or delegate national sovereignty, they do not necessarily ignore public opinion and domestic conflict (Hobolt and Wratil 2015). For both neofunctionalism and liberal intergovernmentalism, European integration enables effective governance by insulating policy-making from politicization at the domestic level. Liberal intergovernmentalism explains the pooling of sovereignty at the European level by the attempt of national governments to rescue the nation-state (Milward 1992) and strengthen their decision-making capacity through dealing with domestically controversial issues at the EU level (Moravcsik 1998). States delegate political authority to the EU so that they can take decisions necessary to solve societal problems that are likely to be blocked or delayed by domestic opposition. Neofunctionalism sees the transfer of national authority to the EU level as a means for transnationally organized élites and supranational bureaucrats to circumvent domestic resistance against the loss of national sovereignty necessary to open up national markets.

The politicization of domestic politics serves as driver for pooling national sovereignty and delegating authority to the supranational level in the two major theories of European integration. However, liberal intergovernmentalism stops here, while neofunctionalism expects a feedback loop from European integration to domestic politics leading to increasing politicization, this time of *European affairs* in the domestic politics of the member states (e.g., Haas 1958; see also Hooghe and Marks 2012; Schmitter 1969). This feedback loop is expected to be positive, since it leads to the ultimate political spillover whereby loyalties and collective identities are completely Europeanized.

In contrast, postfunctionalism contends that politicization is a constraining (Hooghe and Marks 2009) or even paralyzing (Scharpf 2009) rather than a driving factor of European integration. Intensified political conflict in public media and party competition changes the quality of European integration because élites can no longer control it. Eurosceptic attitudes of citizens in national elections and referenda on EU affairs limit the room of manoeuvre for national governments and European élites searching for functional solutions to Europe's pressing problems. The shift from élite-driven interest group politics to mass politics goes hand in hand with a growing salience of a new cleavage that is cultural rather than material and related to identities (see contribution by Hooghe and Marks to this collection; see also Hooghe and Marks 2009). Rather than being a driver of European integration, mass as well as identity politics becomes a major cause of crisis constraining the extent to which member states can pool or delegate national sovereignty at the EU level.

The euro and the Schengen crises seem to constitute such a 'postfunctionalist moment' (Schimmelfennig 2014). Austerity measures sparked mass protest in the debtor countries and public controversy about compliance and solidarity in the eurozone in the creditor countries. Likewise, the influx

of over a million refugees have fuelled demonstrations and debates about the cultural and economic accommodation capacities of national societies and the fortification of the EU's external borders.

The second concept relevant for this contribution pertains to *collective identities*. Social identities relate individuals to specific social groups including 'imagined communities' such as the nation-state or Europe (Anderson 1991; for the following see Risse 2010). Political identities describe, first, what is special about a particular political community ('order') and, second, define its borders, i.e., who is 'in' and who is 'out'. The scholarship on European identity has focused on the Europeanization of national (and other) identities and emphasized that individuals hold multiple identities combining identification with Europe with other identities. The empirical literature on the Europeanization of collective identities has shown that the most salient division on the level of mass public opinion is between those who exclusively identify with their nation-state ('exclusive nationalists'), on the one hand, and those who add Europe to their national identification, on the other (Citrin and Sides 2004; Hooghe and Marks 2005; Fligstein *et al.* 2012).

Mainstream European integration theories relate differently to the Europeanization of identities. Liberal intergovernmentalism has little to say about it, since it takes interests and preferences (and, thus, identities) as given and exogenous to its main causal mechanisms. In contrast, Haas's neofunctionalism defined integration in identity-related terms,<sup>1</sup> but he assumed – in a similar way as with the politicization of European affairs – that the transfer of loyalties toward the European level would take place at a later stage in the process. Moreover, Haas had a rather uni-directional view of how identification levels would affect European politics, namely in the direction of further integration. As with politicization, neofunctionalism did not foresee that nationalist identities could be politically mobilized *against* the EU.

Last but not least, postfunctionalism, as formulated by Hooghe and Marks (2009), argued that the 'GAL/TAN' cleavage ('green/alternative/libertarian' vs 'traditional/authoritarian/nationalist')<sup>2</sup> is about identity and community and that the political mobilization of the TAN segment is likely to strengthen the constraining dissensus.<sup>3</sup> In other words and against neo-functionalism, postfunctionalism claims that the political mobilization of collective identities can cut both ways. It can promote integration, but it can also hamper it. We concur that the 'GAL/TAN' cleavage is all about the difference in collective identities, namely between 'exclusive nationalists' and 'inclusive' ones who add Europe to their national identities (Börzel and Risse 2009; Risse 2010). Building upon postfunctionalist theorizing, we argue in the remainder of the article that the politicization of identification patterns with regard to community membership by (mostly right-wing) political parties largely accounts for how the constraining dissensus has prevented a common European response to the refugee inflows. However, postfunctionalism is less suited

to explain why European and national élites managed to circumvent the constraining dissensus through de-politicization during the euro crisis, as we will show in the following.

### **(De-) politicization and the euro crisis: deepening integration through supranational delegation**

While the euro crisis may not be over yet, most would agree that it resulted in a substantial deepening of European fiscal and financial integration. To prevent the breakdown of the euro zone, the euro countries established a whole set of new supranational institutions (for a more detailed analysis of the following see Börzel [2016]). The Fiscal Compact, the European Stability Mechanism, the Banking Union, the Macro-Economic Imbalance Mechanism and the European Semester constitute a far-reaching deepening of European integration – without even touching the European Treaties.

First, the emergency credit to Greece in April 2010, the European Financial Stability Facility in May 2010, and the ESM, a permanent international financing institution with a capital stock from the eurozone countries and a lending capacity of 500 million euro, undermined the no-bail out clause of Article 125 TFEU.

Second, the Macroeconomic Imbalance Mechanism and the European Semester substantially strengthen the budgetary and macroeconomic surveillance capacities of the Commission (Savage and Verdun 2016). Economic, fiscal and budgetary policies formally remain the political authority of the member states. Yet, the tightened rules for fiscal discipline of the Stability and Growth Pact and the Commission's power to monitor member state fiscal activities and sanction excessive deficits severely limit member state discretion.

Third, the Banking Union creates supranational banking rules and centralizes banking supervision in the hands of the European Central Bank (ECB) to avert market failure by banks. The so-called Single Supervisory Mechanism provides for the monitoring and enforcement of a common regulatory framework formed by a series of directives adopted under supranational decision-making. The ECB obtained comprehensive surveillance powers, which comprise full access to bank data and the right to carry out onsite inspections. The new system takes away member state authority for financial supervision under the Lamfalussy Process, which provided at best a 'light touch' regulation (Quaglia 2010).

The deepening of European fiscal and financial integration resulted from domestic resistance in key member states, including Germany, against a functional spillover granting the EU the redistributive authority necessary to overcome the diverging economic performance between Northern surplus and Southern deficit countries. As expected by postfunctionalism, politicization

prevented the adoption of functional policy options, such as a fiscal union with an independent tax and spending capacity, commonly issued debts or a fiscal equalization scheme (Ioannou *et al.* 2015; Scharpf 2015). At the same time, however, the euro countries wanted to preserve the common currency. In order to insulate the necessary redistributive EU decisions, such as national bailouts or purchasing government debt on secondary markets, from public pressure and domestic conflict, the European Commission and the member state governments masked them as regulatory issues (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2016). As a result, member states have found it less difficult to transfer regulatory authority to the EU level and to agree on common regulatory policies. Not surprisingly, then, the creditor countries framed the euro crisis as a regulatory issue (Chang 2016: 495). The solution is not fiscal transfer but compliance with stricter austerity rules and structural reforms enforced by the Commission and the ECB, which enables debtor countries to become self-sufficient. Financial assistance is only a temporary means to buffer adjustment costs and help build reform capacities. The delegation of new regulatory authority to non-majoritarian supranational institutions empowered the Commission and the ECB to take decisions with redistributive consequences while being shielded against political and electoral accountability (Chang 2016; *cf.* Chalmers *et al.* 2016; Schimmelfennig 2014: 493).

The European Council has played a key role in this deepening of European fiscal and financial integration adopting a series of extra-legal measures (Scicluna 2014) and legitimizing them by the exceptional circumstances of the euro crisis (Kreuder-Sonnen 2016). The process of euro crisis management was intergovernmental, characterized by a shared preference for the preservation of the euro, asymmetrical interdependence, and German bargaining power (Schimmelfennig 2015). Yet, the outcome is not 'new intergovernmentalism' or an 'intergovernmental union' where member states 'stubbornly resist further supranationalism' (Bickerton *et al.* 2015; Fabbri 2013; Puetter 2012). We find a substantial empowerment of supranational institutions and actors (Bauer and Becker 2014; Dehousse 2016; Schimmelfennig 2014). This is in line with neofunctionalist expectations of a spillover resulting from 'functional dissonances' (Niemann and Ioannou 2015) between supranational monetary policy and intergovernmental co-ordination of fiscal and financial policy: In order to preserve the benefits of a common currency, member states had to transfer additional fiscal competencies to the EU level. Yet, rather than politicization, it was the attempt of member state governments to minimize conflict and depoliticize controversial issues that drove integration forward (Börzel 2016; Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2016; Schimmelfennig 2014). The member states did this without changing the European Treaties. In order to circumvent domestic opposition and conflict that could block or delay reforms in the ratification process, the Commission was tasked to transform decisions of the European Council into technical proposals for legislative



measures that were then adopted by the ordinary or special legislative procedure. An intergovernmental treaty established the Fiscal Compact. The same holds true for the ESM, which was then brought into the European Treaties through the 'simplified revision procedure' (Article 48(6) TEU).

In sum, and irrespective of whether these measures effectively tackle the euro crisis in the long run (we doubt that they will), the euro crisis resulted in a substantial transfer of authority to supranational institutions. This has not been the case during the Schengen crisis, which followed immediately.

### **(De-) politicization and the Schengen crisis: supranational delegation and the failure of integration**

In seeking to cope with the historical influx of refugees in 2015, the Commission and the member states resorted to the same strategy that helped them stabilize the eurozone despite growing politicization. Yet, this time, they have not been able to use supranational delegation to depoliticize redistributive issues (for a more detailed analysis of the following, see Börzel [2016]).

Interestingly, the governance failure of the EU in coming to terms with the refugee flows was at first not related to deadlock in decision-making. Between the end of September 2015 and the end of April 2016, the member states agreed on a whole set of joint measures aiming at 'sharing the responsibility' (Council of the European Union 2015) for the refugees who had already entered the territory of the EU, on the one hand, and managing future refugee flows, on the other. Action was taken by drawing on the EU's legal framework for a common asylum and migration policy. Core measures include several billion euros for various funds for supporting member states and third countries in managing and accommodating migration flows; the adoption of a common list of safe countries of origin; the relocation of 120,000 'persons in clear need of international protection'; and the establishment of additional hot spots in Italy and Greece.

The co-ordinated European response, however, has failed to reach a fair sharing of responsibility for 'registering and processing people in need of protection and who are not returning to their home countries or safe third countries they are transited through' (European Commission 2016: 3). Maybe more than €10 billion and a series of legal measures are insufficient to accomplish these goals. But we will never know because member states have squarely refused to put most of them into practice. They have not met their various funding pledges, nor have they sent the promised numbers of additional experts to FRONTEX or the European Asylum Support Office (EASO). Most importantly, at the time of writing only a little more than 15,000 of the altogether 160,000 refugees have been relocated from Greece and Italy.<sup>4</sup>

In the absence of a working European solution, governments took national measures tightening border controls. The German government negotiated an agreement between the EU and Turkey introducing a 'one in, one out' policy. In exchange for each 'irregular' migrant that Turkey takes back from Greece, the EU will resettle one Syrian refugee from Turkey. Moreover, the EU allotted altogether €6 billion to help Turkey provide temporary protection for Syrians (European Commission 2016). The number of new refugees arriving on Greek islands dropped sharply. However, more than 60,000 are stranded in the country after the closure of the Western Balkan route. Greek authorities are overwhelmed with processing their applications for asylum and providing the applicants, who have the right to appeal in court, with a place to stay. The EU and the other member states have promised to provide experts and to foot most of the operation's bill. Yet, the legal responsibility and administrative burden have been placed on Greece instead of sharing them equally among the member states. Finally, while the number of migrants crossing the Aegean from Turkey into Greece has declined, those crossing to Italy has more than doubled since the EU–Turkey agreement entered into force.

In response to member states' non-compliance with existing EU laws and decisions, the Commission – once again – pushed for supranational centralization. Next to turning the EASO into the 'European Union Agency for Asylum', with new powers to monitor and evaluate member states' policies, its original proposal called for the creation of an EU Border and Coast Guard Agency (EBCG) to replace FRONTEX (European Commission 2015). Most important, and similar to the ECB under the Single Supervisory Mechanism, the EBCG would be able to require member states to take timely corrective action. The proposed distribution key system would have to be activated whenever a member state faced a disproportionate number of asylum applications. It should reflect the relative size, wealth and absorption capacities of member states. Member states refusing to accept asylum seekers should have to pay a 'solidarity contribution' to the hosting member state. The computerized relocation would break with the core rule of the Dublin regime that the member state through which asylum seekers and refugees first entered the EU, have to handle their applications on behalf of all other member states (European Parliament and European Council 2013).

These efforts at supranationalizing the EU's response to the refugee challenges have so far failed almost completely. Member states reverted to national solutions, non-compliance with EU policies during the Schengen crisis has been prevalent, and calls for changing the treaties to exempt asylum and immigration rules from common European policies grew louder.

## The shortcomings of major integration theories

Unlike in the euro crisis, attempts at depoliticization by strengthening the powers of supranational institutions resulting in a deepening of integration have not been successful during the Schengen crisis. We argue that the three major integration theories discussed above – liberal intergovernmentalism, neofunctionalism and postfunctionalism – can only partially explain the variation in the outcomes of the two crises.

To begin with, liberal intergovernmentalism expects integration to move forward when the member states share a preference for avoiding welfare losses caused by negative interdependence. The breakdown of the euro would not only have driven the Southern European crisis countries into sovereign default. For Germany, Austria, Finland or the Netherlands, it would have meant a deep appreciation of their currencies, a slump in exports and a general recession (Schimmelfennig 2015). The collapse of Schengen, however, would equally incur welfare losses on both the major destination countries, such as Germany, Sweden or Austria, and other member states unwilling to accept a fair relocation scheme. The annual economic costs in terms of trade, commuting, tourism and border controls could be as high as €63 billion (Auf dem Brinke 2016). The political costs could be even more consequential. Public support for the freedom of movement and a common European migration policy is still high among EU citizens (see below).

In both crises, a 'common interest in avoiding the costs of non-integration ... [is] accompanied by distributional conflict about the terms of integration' (Schimmelfennig 2015: 181). Similar to the euro crisis, the destination member states have pushed for a common European solution (mutualization) during the Schengen crisis. In contrast, particularly the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries have insisted on shifting the adjustment costs on to the Southern European countries of first entry, on the one hand, and the Northern European member states as the preferred destination of the refugees and migrants, on the other (nationalization). German bargaining power and asymmetrical interdependence may explain why the member states managed to overcome their distributional conflict in the euro crisis. But why has the German government, with the support of Italy, Spain and Greece, not been able to push the CEE member states towards accepting some sort of relocation mechanism? Arguably, the CEE countries have a lot to lose in the case of a Schengen breakdown. Finally, the Schengen crisis has been framed as much as an enforcement problem as the euro crisis. Why are the member states, then, not willing to delegate monitoring and sanctioning powers to the Commission and the European Border and Coast Guard to ensure that member states at least comply with existing EU laws and decisions?

In sum, the conditions hypothesized by liberal intergovernmentalism to induce further integration were present in both crises. Hence, the theory

cannot account for the variation in outcomes. The same holds true for *neo-functionalism*, which would emphasize spillover mechanisms, transnational interest group pressures and supranational entrepreneurship to explain the integration steps during the euro crises (Ioannou *et al.* 2015; Niemann and Ioannou 2015; Schimmelfennig 2014). Yet, similar processes were underway during the Schengen crisis. Functional pressures to strengthen the common asylum and migration policy in order to preserve Schengen by establishing a centralized relocation mechanism or by creating a common border control have been strong. Public support for a common asylum and migration policy is still high and growing. Supranational actors have sought to ‘cultivate’ spillovers, e.g., when the Commission proposed an automated relocation mechanism and a European Border and Coast Guard with hard powers to interfere with national sovereignty rights on border control.

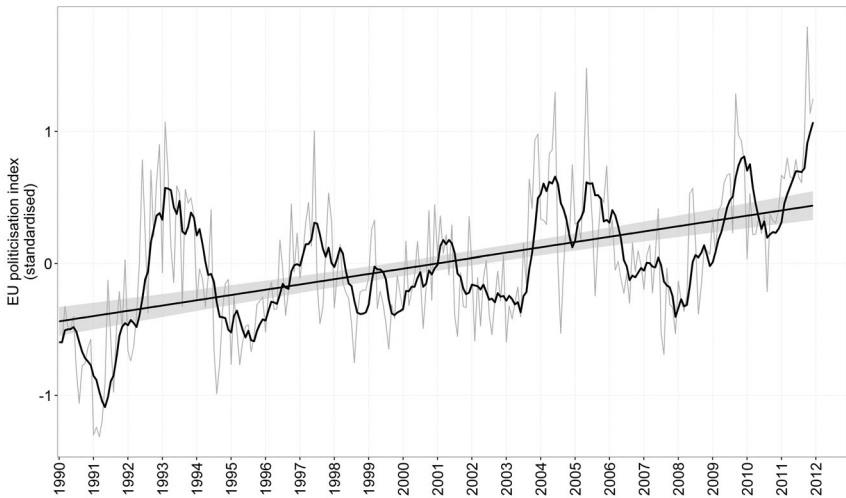
One could argue that the strong institution of the ECB explains the different outcomes between the euro and the Schengen crises. However, it was not just the ECB that made a difference here, but the euro member states themselves agreed to further integrate monetary and even fiscal policies.

As to *postfunctionalism*, it is the one theory which can account for the failure of European integration during the Schengen crisis. The constraining dissensus and the ensuing politicization driven by Eurosceptical parties, particularly on the right, explain why the member states governments have not been able to find a common solution and why they continue to renege on measures agreed upon in the Council of Ministers and during European summits. Yet, postfunctionalism has a hard time explaining why member states and the EU Commission were able to successfully shield their decisions on deepening integration during the euro crisis from the constraining dissensus.

So, what explains the variation? We argue in the following section that the depoliticization efforts by political élites during the euro crisis backfired during the Schengen crisis, and that the politicization dynamics at play during the two crises mobilized collective identities, but in different ways.

## **The politicization of European politics and the mobilization of identities**

European politics are by now strongly politicized if we use the conceptualization presented above (see e.g., De Wilde *et al.* 2016; Hutter *et al.* 2016; Risse 2015). Rauh and Zürn observe a steady increase in the politicization of EU affairs since 1990 (Rauh and Zürn 2016; see Figure 1). The peaks in the graph correlate with major integration steps such as the Maastricht Treaty. Rauh and Zürn mainly analysed newspaper articles in various EU member states, as well as data about EU-related protest events. Grande and Kriesi use slightly different measurements and cover different countries. They find a similar degree of politicization during the euro crisis, but not much

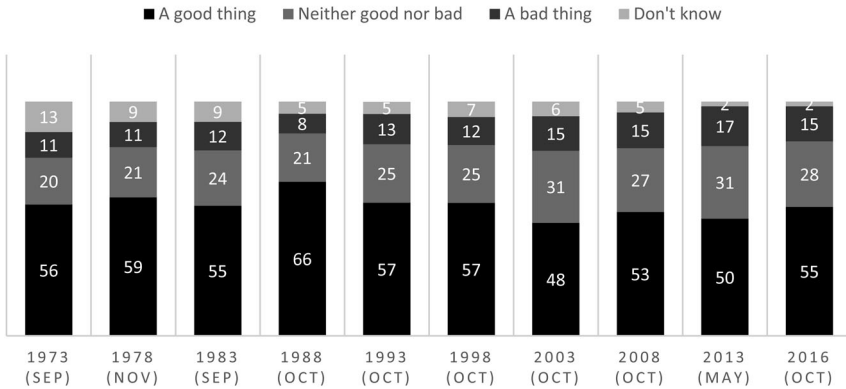


**Figure 1.** The politicization of EU affairs. Source: Rauh and Zürn (2016: 8). Courtesy of Christian Rauh; see also Rauh (2016, ch. 1, 2).

difference as compared to previous major integration events (Kriesi and Grande 2016: 250–4). Both datasets do not go beyond 2012, so they do not cover debates about the second Greek bailout nor the politicization surrounding the migration and refugee challenges. Taken together, though, we can safely infer from these data that the politicization of EU affairs has mainly affected the eurozone countries where it has reached higher levels than before.

Let us now look at some public opinion figures. To begin with, on an aggregate level, support for EU membership has not substantially declined between 2005 and 2015. **Figure 2** reveals a surprising degree of stability despite the various crises. A majority of EU citizens (around 50 per cent on average over the years) continues supporting EU membership, while only little more than 15 per cent hold EU membership to be a bad thing. The EU has taken a beating, though, with regard to trust levels, which have substantially dropped (Debomy 2016: 16), even though trust in EU institutions is still higher on average than trust in national institutions. These aggregate data hide, however, substantial variation among member states ranging from more than 80 per cent support for EU membership in Luxembourg, more than 70 per cent in Germany, the Netherlands, and Ireland (!) to less than 40 per cent in the Czech Republic and Austria (2015 data, Debomy 2016: 51). Interestingly, there has not been much variation between 2005 and 2015 in support levels for the EU in most member states. But there are notable exceptions. In Germany, Sweden, Finland, Poland, Croatia and the United Kingdom(!), support for EU membership increased by more than 10

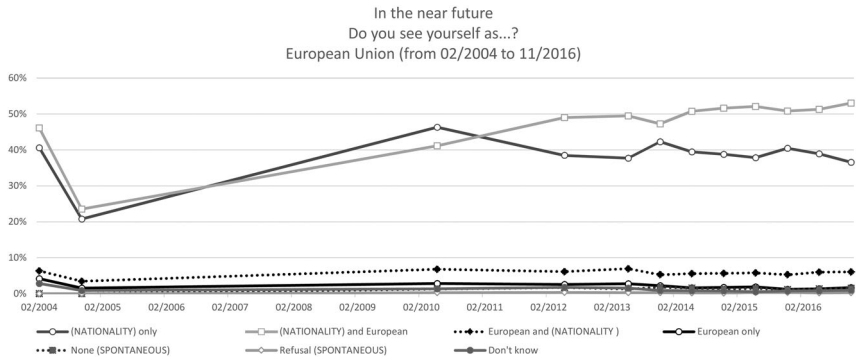
**GENERALLY SPEAKING, DO YOU THINK THAT (YOUR COUNTRY'S) MEMBERSHIP OF THE EU IS ...?**



**Figure 2.** Assessment of country membership in the EU (EU average, 2005–2015). Source: Debomy (2016: 12).

per cent between 2005 and 2015, while we can observe an equally steep decline in Portugal, Greece, Italy and the Czech Republic (Debomy 2016: 74). Apart from the latter, these are all debtor countries (Ireland and Spain also suffered from a decline in support for EU membership, but less dramatic).

The stability of mass public opinion is even more remarkable with regard to the Europeanization of identities. Contrary to the claims by some observers (Polyakova and Fligstein 2016), the various crises have not resulted in nationalist backlashes in mass public opinion.<sup>5</sup> Most Europeans still believe that the euro and the Schengen crises require European rather than national solutions (see Risse [2014] for the following). In early 2016, a majority of 57 per cent of EU citizens continues to support European Monetary Union (EMU) and more than two thirds of EU citizens still want a common European policy on migration.<sup>6</sup> Nor do survey data support a surge of nationalist identities, i.e., growing numbers of Europeans who identify exclusively with their nation state (see Figure 3). With the exception of summer 2010, the identification levels with the EU have increased or remained stable during the euro crisis, including the debtor countries. In 2015, Germans with dual or 'inclusive' national identities – Germany plus Europe or the other way round – outweighed those with 'exclusive nationalist' identities almost 2:1. Large majorities of the Spanish and of Italians (more than 60 per cent) held dual identities, while Greek citizens were almost equally split between exclusive and inclusive nationalism (Risse 2014: 1208–9). In sum, the various EU crises might have led to decreasing trust in European institutions and even to a decline of membership support in some countries. But they have had little effects on identification levels with Europe among the citizens.



**Figure 3.** Identification with nation and/or EU (EU average, 2004–2015). Source: Eurobarometer, <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/chartType/lineChart/themeKy/41/groupKy/206/savFile/47> (accessed 3 January 2017).

Moreover, the difference between those citizens holding Europeanized identities versus those with exclusive national identities maps onto the GAL/TAN cleavage (Hooghe and Marks [2009]; see also contribution by Hooghe and Marks in this collection). And it has been salient during the euro crisis. Kuhn and Stoeckel (2014) found that the distinction between those identifying exclusively with their nation-state and those adding Europe as a secondary identity matters with regard to support for economic governance in the EU, even though the state of the national economy has a conditioning effect here. The more people identify with Europe, the more they are prepared to support economic governance with redistributive consequences. As to the eurozone, majorities of citizens supported giving financial help to another EU member state facing economic and financial difficulties (European Parliament 2011: 20). Interestingly enough, there were no differences between Northern and Southern Europeans (except for the United Kingdom [UK]), while East Europeans were less prepared to show solidarity. But solidarity is not unconditional. Surveys among German citizens demonstrate that their solidarity with Southern Europe depends on whether measures are taken to insure budgetary discipline (Bechtel *et al.* 2012; Lengfeld *et al.* 2012). Gerhards and Lengfeld (2013) have shown that social integration in the EU is on the rise. Time-series data from Poland, Germany and Spain confirm that EU citizens grant each other equal political and social rights, including access to social benefits and the welfare state. The majorities supporting social citizenship do not disappear when people were asked to respond to concrete scenarios rather than expressing abstract values. In sum, the more people hold Europeanized identities, the more they are prepared to show ‘solidarity among strangers’ (Habermas 1996). In contrast, citizens with exclusive national identities strongly reject such transnational welfare schemes.

The difference between those holding Europeanized identities and those with exclusive nationalist identities is even more pronounced with regard to attitudes toward migration and tolerance toward foreigners. Exclusive nationalism is a strong predictor for hostile and even xenophobic attitudes toward migrants (Citrin and Sides 2004; McLaren 2001). Hiscox and Hainmueller have demonstrated some time ago that fears of labour-market competition does not drive anti-immigration sentiments in Europe, but values and beliefs fostering animosity toward foreigners (Hainmueller and Hiscox 2007; see also Lahav 2004; overview in Risse 2010: 220–4). In contrast, as Curtis has shown, those identifying with Europe, at least to some extent, hold positive views toward immigrants and this effect is particularly strong in countries with longer EU membership and cross-cutting cleavage structures (Curtis 2014).

Thus, the postfunctionalist era is not about a widening gap between public and élite support for European integration *per se*. The gulf between the publics and élites of Europe has always been wide (Hooghe 2003). What has eroded the ‘permissive consensus’, which used to enable European élites to push integration forward without much domestic resistance (Hooghe and Marks 2009), is that the EU has become increasingly politicized (De Wilde *et al.* 2016; De Wilde and Zürn 2012; Hutter *et al.* 2016). Eurosceptic populist parties and movements, particularly on the right, less so on the left (see below), have increasingly succeeded in mobilizing those citizens with exclusive national identities along the TAN/GAL cultural cleavage (see contribution by Hooghe and Marks to this collection). As we argue in the following, they have deliberately used identity politics to turn latent attitudes among citizens into manifest political behaviour, e.g., voting. Rather than creating anti-EU sentiments or changing collective identities toward a rise of exclusive nationalism, Eurosceptic parties have tapped into and mobilized pre-existing attitudes among minorities of Europeans. The pro-European élites in Brussels and the EU member states tried to shield their response to the euro crisis from the forces of politicization. This was partly successful, since a majority of EU citizens continues to hold Europe as a secondary identity supporting economic governance with redistributive consequences. In the Schengen crisis, by contrast, politicization shifted towards identity issues of borders rather than order, which led to political paralysis.

Let us start with the euro crisis. Kriesi and Grande show that executive actors – both national and European – framed the euro crisis predominantly in economic terms (Kriesi and Grande 2016; Picard 2015). Their data do not confirm the widespread assumption in the literature that the euro crisis gave rise to increasing nationalism and that ‘nationalist cultural’ frames dominated the debates (Kriesi and Grande 2016: 271). Debates about economic governance heavily involved identity talk – as in Merkel’s ‘The euro is our common fate, and Europe is our common future.’<sup>7</sup> Moreover, right-wing populist parties in Northern Europe tried to mobilize nationalist feelings



against the 'lazy Greeks,' and others. A German magazine titled 'Crooks in the Euro-Family' depicting Aphrodite giving the finger in 2010.<sup>8</sup> Note that Greece is still treated as part of the 'family,' a reference to community. Finally, (mostly) left-wing populist parties and social movements in Southern Europe employed Nazi symbols and images to counter the perceived German hegemony during the crisis.

In general, though, the identity discourse during the euro crisis rarely used 'self/other' distinctions to demarcate between debtor and creditor countries. Rather, it centred on constitutive features of the EU as a political community, its *differentia specifica* (as the content of European identity, see Risse [2010: 25–6]). The identity debate was mainly about how much solidarity is required in a multilevel political community to keep it together and what members of the community owe to each other in terms of duties and obligations to keep the order. In other words, the political and social identity of the EU was at stake relating to questions of its political and economic order rather than its borders.

Moreover, political leaders across Europe rallied around the preservation of the euro zone as the core of the European integration project early on. Chancellor Merkel and German Finance Minister Schäuble repeatedly called the rescue of the euro zone 'without alternative' (*alternativos*) and both the French president and Italian Prime Minister Monti declared 'their will to do everything ... to defend, preserve, and consolidate the euro zone' (both quotes in Schimmelfennig 2015: 182). These political declarations went against the views of many economists and others who argued that the euro zone was not an optimal currency zone and, thus, not sustainable.<sup>9</sup> When Schäuble favoured the – albeit temporary – suspension of Greece from the euro zone in the summer of 2015, Chancellor Merkel overruled him.<sup>10</sup> In other words, the decision to maintain the euro zone at almost any cost – including the famous ECB decision to preserve the euro 'whatever it takes' in the summer of 2012 – was primarily a political decision, not an economic one. In our view, this decision makes little sense without taking identity politics and a sense of community into account. From its very beginning, the euro has been a political community project (Risse *et al.* 1999). It remained so during the euro crisis.

At the same time, however, Eurosceptic parties started mobilizing. Politicization was largely driven by Eurosceptic parties rallying along the TAN/GAL divide, as argued by Grande and Kriesi (2015; see also contribution by Hooghe and Marks, this collection). They were only partially successful at the time (Meijers and Rauh 2016), since governing élites managed to shield their political decisions from politicization, not least because they could still rely on some degree of permissive consensus regarding economic governance of the eurozone. Their depoliticization strategy met with sufficient public acceptance of deepening fiscal integration in creditor countries of

Northern Europe. At the same time, however, it fuelled support for (mostly) left-wing populist parties in the crisis-stricken countries of Southern Europe.

Moreover, the 2014 elections for the European Parliament (EP) showed the first European-wide voter reactions to the crisis by strengthening Eurosceptic parties left and right. Election studies demonstrate that the rise of Eurosceptic parties not only resulted from voter reactions to the crisis. It also has to be explained at least partially by identity politics. As Hobolt and de Vries argue, 'citizens who were personally negatively affected by the crisis and who disapproved of EU actions during the crisis were more likely to cast a ballot for a Eurosceptic party' (Hobolt and de Vries 2016: 510). Moreover, their study showed that voter attitudes affected left-wing Eurosceptic parties (mostly in Southern Europe, see Kriesi [2016]) differently as compared to right-wing populist parties. Voters who were personally affected by the crisis and who supported EU-wide redistributive policies were more likely to vote for left-wing Eurosceptic parties, while citizens opposed to financial transfers and to liberal immigration policies (see below) were likely to cast their ballots for right-wing populist parties (see also van Elsas *et al.* [2016] for a similar argument). Left-wing Eurosceptic parties predominantly cue voters toward opposition toward the EU as a neoliberal project (De Vries and Edwards 2009). As Hooghe and Marks have argued before (Hooghe and Marks 2005), it is very difficult to disentangle economic interests and social identities in these cases, since economic framings of the issues at stake inevitably contain identity arguments about what kind of community a polity ought to be (see above). Redistributive policies, North–South solidarity in Europe, and one's stance toward neoliberal policies are not just economic issues, but they are also about identity in terms of core features of a community. Right-wing and left-wing populist parties come down on opposite sides of these issues, and so do their voters, as the studies quoted above show.

The 2014 EP election results served as a first indicator that strategies of de-politicization no longer worked and that the 'constraining dissensus' elaborated by post-functionalism was about to strike back. When millions of refugees reached the EU borders during the Schengen crisis, particularly right-wing Eurosceptic parties seized the moment and mobilized anti-immigration sentiments among those identifying with exclusive nationalism. The debates about migrants and refugees were perhaps even more politicized and Europeanized than the controversies during the euro crisis. The difference concerned the identity components mobilized. As argued above, issues of migration and refugees tap into identitarian and cultural feelings (e.g., Bruter 2004; Curtis 2014; McLaren 2001, 2007). Debates about migrants and refugees are dominated by cultural frames focusing on the 'self/other' or 'ingroup/outgroup' distinction. Discourses about migrants are primarily about who 'we are' and 'who belongs to us,' i.e., the borders of the EU. The main conflict line in the debate about refugees and migrants is not about

national priorities and the like, but about visions of Europe: it puts ideas about a multicultural, open and cosmopolitan Europe, on the one hand, against an alternative vision which we term 'nationalist Europe,' for lack of a better term (Risse 2010: 245–6). 'Nationalist' or 'Fortress Europe' is exclusionary, anti-migrants and contains religious undertones (e.g., anti-Islam). The latter ideas are promoted particularly by right-wing populist parties, such as the French *Front National*, the FPÖ, the Polish PiS or the German AfD. Interestingly enough, and unlike UKIP, most of these right-wing parties do not promote leaving the EU, at least not yet. Rather, they favour a different EU as compared to the liberal and cosmopolitan one that is reflected in the EU treaties.

The debates about refugees and migrants were fully politicized and Europeanized, mapping almost completely on the cultural cleavage (see Hooghe and Marks's contribution to this collection). There is ample empirical evidence that support for right-wing Eurosceptic and populist parties across Europe is driven by exclusive nationalism and culturally based anti-immigrant attitudes (e.g., Dunn 2015; Lucassen and Lubbers 2012; Werts *et al.* 2013). Dunn uses different indicators for exclusive nationalism than Hooghe and Marks (Hooghe and Marks 2005; see above), focusing primarily on whether somebody is a born national or has lived in the country for a long time. He nevertheless shows that such exclusive nationalism is a strong predictor for support for right-wing populism. The same holds true for culturally based anti-immigrant attitudes (which again correlate highly with exclusive nationalism, see above), as Lucassen and Lubbers (2012) and Werts *et al.* (2013) show. Last not least, De Vries and Edwards argue that 'extremist parties on the right tap into feelings of cultural insecurity to reject further integration and to defend national sovereignty from control from Brussels. These parties mobilize national identity considerations against the EU' (De Vries and Edwards 2009: 9).

This is exactly what happened during the Schengen crisis. The public discourses about refugees in particular were less driven by economic or political issues, but should be understood as a clash of competing (European and national) identities. While the intensive politicization might be new, debates about immigration have always been about the 'other within' (Risse 2010: 222–4), pitting 'modern liberal Europe' as a pluri-cultural entity that is tolerant toward people of different religions, races and cultural backgrounds, on the one hand, against 'nationalist Europe', which is openly hostile to non-European immigrants, on the other. Those promoting an exclusionary vision of Europe and the EU strongly oppose the increasing visibility of Islam in Europe. And they prefer sharp restrictions on immigration and refugees in violation of the international refugee regimes (see Lahav 2004; Lahav and Messina 2005). Interestingly enough, the debate about Turkish EU membership during the 2000s, that is, prior to Erdogan's recent autocratic turn, was structured precisely along the same lines. Ruth Wodak and her team have

analysed in detail the right-wing populist discourse on immigrants and Europe (Wodak 2015; Wodak *et al.* 2013), documenting how these parties mobilize exclusive nationalist identities for their purposes.

The mobilization of these identities by right-wing populist parties during the Schengen crisis explains to a large extent why élite efforts at reverting once again to de-politicization through supranational delegation failed this time. Merkel's 'we can do it' (*wir schaffen das!*), the initial Austrian liberal response and the friendly citizens welcoming refugees at train stations were no match against these efforts, for two reasons. First, what remained of the 'permissive consensus' had been used up during the euro crisis (see Wodak [2016] on the Austrian change in discourse and policies). Second, the liberal élites did little to start a counter-discourse to the right-wing populist framing. They have largely abstained from engaging in a 'communicative discourse' (Schmidt 2008) with a counter-vision of a pluri-cultural Europe to legitimize policies open to immigrants and refugees, thereby appealing to inclusive national identities held by the majority of European citizens. Take Angela Merkel, for example. She followed up her 'Wir schaffen das!' speech with appearances in some German talk shows to explain her policies. But when the right-wing populist AfD and the Bavarian branch of Merkel's CDU, the *Christlich Soziale Union*, chimed in articulating the exclusionary anti-foreigner discourse, the all-powerful German chancellor largely remained silent.

## Conclusion

We have argued in this article that the three dominant approaches to European integration have trouble fully explaining why the euro crisis resulted in more integration, whereas in the Schengen crisis the EU has been stuck in a stalemate and even suffered some disintegration with the collapse of its common asylum and migration policy. Liberal intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism can account for the responses to the euro crisis, but fail to explain the Schengen crisis. Postfunctionalism at least got the overall story right and its emphasis on the 'constraining dissensus' offers a good account of the EU failure to respond to the refugee flows with a co-ordinated response. Yet, postfunctionalism has a hard time explaining the successful shielding of European decisions against the forces of politicization during the euro crisis.

In order to solve the puzzle, we argued that the sequence of the two crises is crucial. Depoliticization through supranational delegation has ultimately led to more, not less politicization. Eurosceptic parties, mostly on the right in Northern and Eastern Europe, successfully mobilized exclusive nationalist identities and anti-immigrant sentiments against a Union in which detached élites took decisions defying national sovereignty and democracy. Moreover,

we claim that both crises were about identity politics, which changed however. The political controversy in the euro crisis has been, and still is, predominantly framed in terms of questions of order, i.e., what constitutes Europe as a community and how much solidarity members of the community owe to each other under which conditions. The influx of migrants and refugees changed identity politics, since populist forces framed the Schengen crisis in terms of 'us' vs 'them' and propagated an exclusionary 'fortress Europe'. The most dramatic result so far has been 'Brexit'. As expected by post-functionalism, the dominance of exclusionary positions in the politicization of EU affairs has impaired an upgrading of the common European interest in the Schengen crisis necessary to tackle the migration and refugee challenges rather than merely seeking to externalize them. The consequences of this change in identity politics do not only challenge the freedom of movement as one of the core principles of European integration. Right-wing populism contests the liberal foundations of the European project as a whole, advocating an illiberal, exclusionary and nationalist Europe, which the EU had thought to have overcome.

So, what do these claims tell us about the bigger picture with regard to theories of European integration? We would conclude that the more existing approaches take insights from social constructivism with regard to identity politics and the framing of issues in politicized public spheres into account, the better they can deal with the subsequent European predicaments from the euro and Schengen crises to 'Brexit'. For example, if liberal intergovernmentalism were to endogenize identities, it could deal with the seemingly 'irrational' member states responses to the various crises (note that Moravcsik called it 'ideational liberalism' back in the late 1990s; see Moravcsik [1997]). If neofunctionalism accepted that the mobilization of mass identities and the politicization of transnational public spheres might have adverse consequences for integration under specific conditions, it would be able to explain rather than describe 'spill back' effects (for an early attempt, see Schmitter [1970]). Last not least, postfunctionalism was '(almost) right' (Grande and Kriesi 2016), since the élites' attempts to de-politicize the euro crisis strongly backfired, in the crisis-affected countries in Southern Europe, in the 2014 EP elections and then also in Northern Europe during the Schengen crisis. Moreover, as we have argued in this article, neither the 'permissive consensus' nor the 'constraining dissensus' are a given in their effects on European affairs. Mass public attitudes toward Europe and the EU have not changed much. What has changed are the domestic and transnational politics of EU affairs, which no longer allow for the silencing of public debates. If we are right, the 'constraining dissensus' will not be the end of European integration as we know it. Majorities in most member states are still supportive of the EU and hold 'inclusive national' identities. They can be mobilized, too, as the recent 'Pulse of Europe' demonstrations in many European cities show.

## Notes

1. '(T)he process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new centre, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states' (Haas 1958: 16).
2. For slightly different conceptualization of the same cleavage see Kriesi *et al.* (2008).
3. We thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out to us.
4. [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state\\_of\\_play\\_-\\_relocation\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state_of_play_-_relocation_en.pdf) (accessed 30 March 2017).
5. Polyakova and Fligstein (2016) use the 2010 Eurobarometer data to make their point. However, 2010 was the only year since the late 2000s where 'exclusive national identities' were stronger than 'inclusive national' identities (nation plus Europe). See Figure 3.
6. <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/PublicOpinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/29/groupKy/180> (accessed 29 February 2016).
7. 12 December 2010, quoted from <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/16/business/global/16union.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed 10 March 2012).
8. <http://p5.focus.de/img/fotos/origs916560/2412301311-w1280-h480-o-q72-p4/focustitel08-10.jpg> (accessed 10 January 2017).
9. E.g., [https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/03/opinion/paul-krugman-europes-many-disasters.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/03/opinion/paul-krugman-europes-many-disasters.html?_r=0) (accessed 10 January 2017).
10. <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/wirtschaft/eurokrise/griechenland/schuldenstreit-schaeuble-von-merkel-abgekanzelt-13631341.html> (accessed 10 January 2017).

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