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INTRODUCTION



Introduction: EU polity building after the Russian invasion of Ukraine*

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The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the unprecedented threat that it represents for the European Union (EU) in several policy domains (refugees, energy, security, foreign, and social policy) activated two logics of polity formation which this symposium proposes to unpack and *explore empirically*.

First, it could activate an *external security logic*: the threat of war and conflict can be conducive to unity in what is known as the ‘rally-around-the-flag’ effect and this could create pressures for the centralisation of collective capacities and policymaking in domains in which the EU has little to no competence such as defence and foreign policy (e.g., humanitarian aid, military aid, sanctions). The external security logic, largely absent from previous EU polity formation for some scholars (McNamara & Kelemen, 2022), now might take the driver’s seat and constitute a ‘Tillian moment’ (Tilly, 1975; see also Riker, 1964). Recent scholarship has revived this line of argument (Kelemen & McNamara, 2022) and while other recent contributions have explored the theoretical and empirical consistency of their claims (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2022; Freudlsperger & Schimmelfennig, 2022; Genschel, 2022), our aim is to further explore its empirical implications and unpack the long causal chain in diverse policy fields.

Second, dwindling energy resources, higher prices and related distributional conflicts between and within member states may accelerate the *social security logic* (Ferrera *et al.*, 2023), fuelling further demand for risk sharing and social safety among EU citizens. The EU and its member states need to step in to sustain the loyalty of their citizens and protect them from the economic consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, this triggers tensions

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between overlapping crises, can create inconsistent policy responses (e.g., sanctions and energy independence, securing LNG gas can undermine long-term climate policy goals), and can exacerbate the trade-offs with other ongoing crises (e.g., the environmental crisis, and increasing energy poverty).

Our papers explore these two logics through common questions, examining what political divisions emerged within and between member states. Did the invasion result in increased public demand for supranational interventions in different policy fields and thus, ultimately, in an opportunity for polity building? Did it increase European unity or spur divisions? In the beginning, all member states supported sanctions against Russia. However, once their cost became clearer, divisions started to appear. As member states face varying degrees of vulnerability over energy and display different fiscal firepower to respond to the social consequence of rising inflation, continued EU unity remains an open question.

We aim to offer at least a partial response to these questions, from three different perspectives. We investigate whether the crisis resulted in polity building through bonding (the rally-around-the-flag effect), but also capacity building (energy and social policy), and bordering (geopolitics). Using an original panel survey fielded in March and July, 2022 in 7 European countries (Germany, France, Italy, Portugal, Finland, Poland, and Hungary) with different sensitivities and exposures to the war in Ukraine, our debate section seeks to shed light on the preferences of EU citizens in different policy domains.

The first two contributions follow the *external security logic*. The first paper, Truchlewski et al. (2023) analyses the ‘rally-round-the-flag’ effect as an indication of whether the external security threat unites citizens and thus creates an enabling environment for a ‘Tillian moment’ in European polity politics, or whether it will reinforce the status quo through increased polarisation and conflict. Along these lines, we examine the temporal dynamics of the rally effect not only at the national but also at the EU level. We show that the rally effect fades only marginally over time. However, this trend stems primarily from polarisation, rather than salience, which implies an increased potential for conflict in the long-run.

The second paper, Wang and Moise (2023) considers foreign and security policy and its implication for capacity building: sanctioning Russia and helping Ukraine raises the question of how coordinated and centralised foreign policy should be. We show that a majority of EU citizens are not only willing to increase military capacity at the national and NATO level but also EU military capacity. We also find broad support for EU independence from US military protection and centralised foreign policy-making at the EU level. At the same time, differences persist across divides in ideology, EU identity, and threat perception.

Finally, following the *social security logic*, the third paper, Natili and Visconti (2023) shows that, after the Russian invasion, social and ecological

concerns increased demand for policy centralisation in the energy and social policy fields. Still, they have not helped to overcome divides between and within member states over further integration, leaving policymakers with some difficult decisions. Latent territorial, ideological, and socio-economic conflicts over these issues may threaten the feasibility of a supranational response, potentially leading to a new crisis of legitimacy.

Taken together, these three contributions examining varied policy domains offer a complex picture of how the Russian invasion of Ukraine shapes preferences for the European polity. All three papers find increased demand for centralisation but also territorial divides and increased domestic polarisation. First, the functional pressures of the external security logic are not translated automatically into polity building. The rally effect at both the national and EU levels is undermined by polarisation (Truchlewski *et al.*, 2023). Domestic ideological differences also drive divergent preferences over defence capacity and energy and social policy. Disunity could harm the post-functional condition (Genschel, 2022) necessary for state-building. Furthermore, while a majority of Europeans are in favour of delegating more power to the EU level, their support for national and NATO solutions is even higher (Wang and Moise, 2023). Second, the social security logic is also at play, as EU citizens demand protection against the social and environmental crises (Natili and Visconti, 2023). Failing to address the redistributive concerns may jeopardise the EU's efforts to reach energy security and a climate-neutral economy. All in all, if further politicised, these divides might undermine the unified and solidaristic EU response as well as the polity-building effort. On the other hand, the social security logic, if developed further, can counteract these centrifugal forces by compensating asymmetries within and between member states through redistributive mechanisms creating bonds of solidarity.

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