1   Introduction

This book is about the crisis management of the European Union (EU) and its member states during the refuge crisis of 2015–16 and its aftermath. We focus on crisis policymaking and crisis politics during this crisis, which reached its peak in 2015–16, but continued to occupy European policymakers for several additional years. This was not the first refugee crisis in Europe, and its coming was not entirely unexpected. The inflow of asylum seekers into the EU had already started to rise before 2015, but in the first half of 2015, the number of arrivals accelerated, and it virtually exploded in the fall of that year. The asylum seekers crossed the Mediterranean between Turkey and Greece in ever larger numbers, proceeded along the Balkan route, and arrived in Hungary, from where they continued their journey toward Austria, Germany, and the Scandinavian countries. The crisis's emblematic event occurred on September 4, 2015, when thousands of asylum seekers decided to leave the central train station in Budapest, where they had been stuck for some time, and to march on along the Hungarian highways in pursuit of their stated goal of reaching German soil. The Hungarian government, all too pleased by the asylum seekers' decision to move on, facilitated their arduous trek toward the Austrian border by sending buses to accommodate them and bring them to the border. Faced with the prospect of the approaching caravan, the Austrian government urgently sought the help of the German government. It was during the night of this Saturday in September 2015, under the immediate pressure of the refugees proceeding toward the Austrian–Hungarian border, that the German chancellor made the critical decision to suspend the Dublin III Regulation and to admit asylum seekers to Germany, although they had already passed through several other member states of the union. This decision was later to haunt her as she tried to find a joint solution to the crisis with her fellow heads of government in the EU. It proved to be very hard to come to a joint approach to the crisis, and it was impossible to share the burden among the EU's member states.

The puzzle we are trying to elucidate in our study of the refugee crisis is why the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, had come to be trapped

in such a desperate situation in early September 2015, and why she and her fellow heads of government together with EU agencies proved to be unable to reform the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). It is not as if the European policymakers did not see the crisis coming. But although they were aware of what was brewing, they did not jointly prepare to meet the inflow of asylum seekers in the short term. Nor did they, once the policy failure of the CEAS was there for everyone to see, get their act together to reform the system in the long term. They only came up with a stop-gap solution, which made them dependent on less-than-reliable third countries. Answers to this puzzle do not just speak to the refugee crisis 2015–16 (from now on referred to as "the refugee crisis"); the way the EU and its member states faced this crisis goes a long way toward clarifying how the EU works more generally.

In the two-year period 2015–16, the member states of the EU received no less than 2.5 million asylum applications, mainly – but not exclusively – from Syrian refugees who had fled the civil war in their country. Under the pressure of this exceptional inflow of asylum seekers, the prevailing EU asylum policy and the asylum policies in the member states were put under enormous pressure, and existing conflicts within and between member states relating to the management of refugee flows and asylum requests were exacerbated. The pressure varied, however, from one member state to another, with important implications for policymaking. The way the EU and its member states reacted to this pressure demonstrates how cooperation is difficult in a situation, where they are not all hit in the same way, and in a policy domain where the EU and its member states share competences. In asylum policy, cooperation is rendered even more difficult by the fact that it is highly contested in the member states themselves. Already before the refugee crisis 2015–16, the humanitarian imperative to accommodate asylum seekers had been challenged by the European radical right in the name of national sovereignty and the protection of national cultural traditions. The refugee crisis served to increase the salience of migration issues and to reinforce the resistance of the radical right to the reception and integration of refugees.

It is important to study the refugee crisis because it has been most salient among the European publics, as we found in a survey put into the field in summer 2021. Asked about the "most serious threat to the survival of the European Union" in the decade before the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic,[1] almost a third (32 percent) of the citizens from

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[1] The question was formulated like this: "Thinking about the past decade before the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Union has faced a number of challenges. Which of the following challenges do you think represented the most serious threat to the survival of the European Union?"

sixteen countries considered the refugee crisis to be the most important threat,[2] outdistancing the other recent EU crises, such as the Euro area and Brexit crisis. Importantly, the assessment of the threat to the EU's survival varied by region: It was particularly in the northwestern European member states where most asylum applications were registered and in the eastern European member states where resistance to joint burden-sharing was the most intense that the population deemed the refugee crisis to be the most threatening to the EU. By contrast, while the refugee crisis was ranked highly by a significant portion of the population there, too, southern Europeans considered the threat of the financial and economic crisis and of the poverty and employment crisis as considerably more important than the refugee crisis, and the citizens of the UK and Ireland perceived the Brexit crisis as the biggest threat.

As a matter of fact, the way the refugee crisis was managed has left behind conflicts between member states, which have been further exacerbated in subsequent crises and which are likely to haunt the EU in times to come. Moreover, against the background of the underlying integration–demarcation conflict in the national European party systems, asylum policy constitutes a latent time bomb that might explode at any moment if inflows of asylum seekers increase again and the issue becomes once again more salient. Asylum policy remains a potent means for electoral mobilization on the left and on the right. The large opposition to immigration in some member states is bound to constrain the future options available to policymakers, as it is likely to constitute a major obstacle to joint solutions.

At both the EU level and the level of the member states, we investigate the kind of conflicts that were triggered by the problem and political pressure the EU and its members were exposed to during the crisis, how these conflicts influenced the way they attempted to deal with the pressure, and the kinds of policy solutions they adopted in the short and longer term. At the EU level, cooperation between the member states was, if anything, even more demanding than at the national level, because of the fragmented competence structures in asylum policy and because both the intensity and the type of problem pressure varied significantly between the member states. While the member states that were directly hit by the crisis in one way or another sought the cooperation of the others, the more fortunate among the member states were not prepared to contribute to joint solutions, or at least not to lasting joint solutions. We

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[2] The countries are: Austria, France, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden (northwestern Europe); Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece (southern Europe); Hungary, Latvia, Romania, and Poland (eastern Europe); and the UK and Ireland (Anglo-Saxon Europe).

investigate the attempts to overcome the initial unilateral scramble to the exit by the member states and ask what kind of transnational conflicts were exacerbated or newly created by these attempts and to what extent they prevented joint solutions. We pay particular attention to the inter-action patterns between the national and the transnational conflicts in policymaking during the crisis.

As we shall see, conflicts within and between member states during the refugee crisis were very intense, and the prevailing EU asylum policy proved to be impossible to reform during the crisis. This does not mean that any joint solution was impossible. We demonstrate that the member state governments found provisional stop-gap solutions that did reduce the problem and political pressure in the short and medium term, even if they did not produce a long-term policy solution. As a result, asylum policy remains an unfinished construction site that constitutes a latent threat to the resilience of the EU polity to the date of writing.

To answer our key puzzle, we intend to embed the refugee crisis in a broader theoretical framework that allows us to situate crisis policymaking and crisis politics more generally in the EU polity and in Europe's underlying conflict structures. In order to understand the difficulty of coming to joint decisions in asylum policy, we need to first grasp the fragmented and nontransparent decision-making structure in the multi-level EU polity in general and in EU asylum policy in particular. Second, we need to get a sense of the already existing fractures in the member states and between them – fractures that were then exacerbated in the crisis or complemented by newly created divides as a result of the way some member states attempted to come to terms with it.

A General Framework for the Analysis of Crisis Policymaking and Crisis Politics

At a first glance, the refugee crisis threatened at most the resilience of the Schengen area and the principle of free movement. Designating it as a "deep" crisis that threatened the survival of the polity as a whole might, therefore, seem somewhat overblown. However, we claim that it should be at least considered as such a crisis, because it revealed fundamental tensions undermining the resilience of the EU polity and its capacity for designing joint EU policy. To understand this, we build on Stein Rokkan's structural approach to the formation of the European state system as it has been applied to the process of European integration by Stefano Bartolini (2005). This approach has the advantage of being situated at the intersection of the literatures on European integration and comparative politics. We complement this macro-structural approach

with insights from the grand theories on European integration and concepts of policy analysis, which will allow us to link the macro-structural context to policymaking in general and to policymaking under crisis conditions in particular.[3]

Our framework is not generally applicable; rather, it is specifically focused on the context of the EU polity, since we are interested in how the refugee crisis was managed in Europe. As is well known, of course, the EU is quite an exceptional polity, which has important implications for the way the refugee crisis – or, for that matter, any Europe-wide crisis – is managed. The EU is composed of a set of heterogeneous member states that are constituted as nation-states – that is, polities characterized by the successful integration of their economic, cultural, administrative, and coercive boundaries (Bartolini 2005). Over a period covering several centuries, in each member state, the closure of external boundaries has created three processes of internal consolidation: center formation (the creation of authority structures), system maintenance (the creation of loyalty, identity, and solidarity among the locked-in population), and political structuring (the creation of organizations, movements, and institutional channels for the articulation of the population's voice). The combination of boundary building (bounding), center formation (binding), and system maintenance (bonding) – the three B's of the "polity approach" to the EU integration process (Ferrera, Kriesi, and Schelkle 2023) – has provided the member states with an idiosyncratic structure of opportunities and constraints for the internal political structuring.

In the nation-state, external closure and internal structuring (voice) are intimately linked, as are opening and destructuring (exit)[4]: As the people in a given territory can no longer escape the binding decisions of the political authorities at the center, they demand participation in the political process and organize collectively in order to make their claims known and to impose themselves against opposing claims. The external closure induces social interactions among the locked-in actors, which increases the likelihood of collective action among them, "domesticates" the actors' strategies, and focuses them on central elites (forcing them to become responsive to pressures from below). Political structuring within the nation-states results from the strategic interaction of collective actors and the stabilization of these interaction patterns, which produce

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[3] This general framework has been developed for the study of crisis management in the EU more generally (Ferrera, Kriesi, and Schelkle 2023).

[4] Ferrera (2005) called this the "bounding-bonding" mechanism, Giddens (1985: 202) referred to this link as the "dialectic of control," while Poggi (1990: 76) has pointed to the intimate link between the concentration of power and participation in the exercise of power in the process of political modernization in Europe.

national policies. Importantly, this structuring has occurred in a way that is specific to each nation-state and has focused policymaking and politics on the national center.

Compared to the nation-state, the EU and its member states constitute a new type of polity with a rather unique character that we attempt to capture by the notion of the "compound polity of nation-states" (Ferrera et al. 2023). At its core is a fundamental tension that the European integration process has introduced in the European system of nation-states (Bartolini 2005: 368, 375), a tension that is exacerbated by the fact that it is the governments of the nation-states that are the drivers of the integration process. On the one hand, the process of European economic (and other forms of) integration is predicated upon the removal of boundaries between the European nation-states. On the other hand, the national, democratic, and welfare features of the union's member states (the features that were left outside the initial integration project) are predicated upon the continued control over redistributive capacities, cultural symbols, and political authority by the member states. The integration project progressively represents a direct challenge to these other features of the member states. The integration process breaks up the three-layered coherence between identities, practices, and institutions; dismantles the coincidence among the different types of state boundaries; and leads to the dedifferentiation of European nation-states after five centuries of a progressive differentiation in their legal and administrative systems, social practices and cultural and linguistic codes, economic transactions and market regulation, and social and political institutions. As Bartolini (2005) points out, the integration process is causing the destructuring of national polities without sufficient restructuring at the EU level.

This was never more evident than in the period of the refugee crisis. The fundamental tension between the integration process and the destructuring of the national polities becomes particularly critical in crisis situations, above all in a policy field like asylum policy, where some, albeit not all, member states are jealously defending their national sovereignty against the encroachment of European integration. Routine policies in established polities (such as nation-states) have only marginal implications for the maintenance of the polity itself. However, the combination of the lack of a joint policy on border control, outdated asylum policies that were concocted at a different juncture, the ability to follow beggar-thy-neighbor approaches, isolated national policies, and finally a resistance to share the common burden meant that what should have been a routine policy problem challenged the bounding, the binding, and ultimately the bonding of the EU member states, revealing the fundamental tensions in the EU's architecture. In other words, policymaking

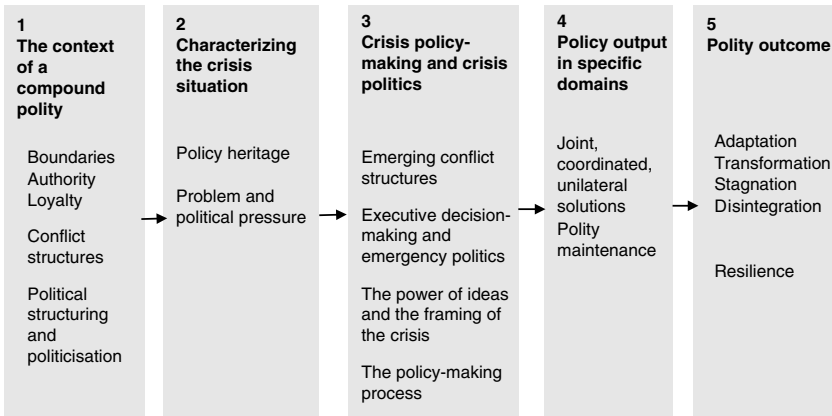| 1 The context of a compound polity	2 Characterizing the crisis situation	3 Crisis policy-making and crisis politics	4 Policy output in specific domains	5 Polity outcome
Boundaries Authority Loyalty	Policy heritage	Emerging conflict structures	Joint, coordinated, unilateral solutions	Adaptation Transformation Stagnation Disintegration
Conflict structures	Problem and political pressure	Executive decision-making and emergency politics	Polity maintenance	Resilience
Political structuring and politicisation		The power of ideas and the framing of the crisis		
		The policy-making process		

Figure 1.1 The analytical building blocks of the theoretical framework

in crisis situations is more likely to impinge on the maintenance of the polity as such, and this applies in particular for a compound polity like the EU, where a stable underlying structure has not (yet) been established. As a compound polity, the EU is constantly testing new modes of combining its three constitutive elements, that is, boundaries, binding authority, and bonding ties.

Taking this into account, Figure 1.1 (taken from Kriesi, Ferrera, and Schelkle 2021) presents the five building blocks of our general analytical framework. The three B's and the preceding discussion are located as the initial "block" of our model and structure the policy space afforded to European policymakers. The actual policymaking, which lies at the heart of our analysis, is constrained by this "compound" EU structure and the conflicts it generates and, furthermore, by the policy heritage begotten by this structure, that is, the lackluster border control coordination and the semifunctional joint asylum framework, and also by the immediate problem and political pressure. In turn, the crisis policymaking reshapes the bounding, binding, and bonding status quo as new institutions and actions attempt to face the crisis, contributing to or hindering polity maintenance and eventually leading to one of the outcomes indicated in our final building block.

The challenge of the refugee crisis focused on bounding, that is, on the internal and external bordering of the EU, with important implications for binding and bonding. In the EU, the master tension is exacerbated by the fact that the integration process breaks down internal borders without, at the same time, providing for commensurate joint external border controls. Accordingly, migration governance currently has two

components in the EU: free movement internally, and a common migration and asylum policy with regard to third country nationals (TCNs). Put simply, the EU has an open borders framework internally (the Schengen area) but external migration restrictions (Geddes and Scholten 2016). However, while EU member states have little control over internal movements,[5] they remain in charge of regulating admission of TCNs, a prominent group among whom have been asylum seekers.[6] Though matters of asylum are notionally a shared competence between the EU and national governments (article 4 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union [TFEU]), at the end of the day, it is the member states themselves that determine access to their territory and whether and how they will abide by international norms (Schain 2009), the amount of resources they are willing to invest in the assessment of asylum claims, policing efforts against irregular migration, deportation procedures, and the integration of successful asylum applicants. Moreover, the ability of the EU to control its external borders extends only as far as the capacity of the member states at its external borders to fulfill this task. As a result of insufficient control of external borders, the refugee crisis was first an instance of the breakdown of external borders in the southern European border countries most exposed to the inflow of refugees. Greece, in particular, had border control issues, which created tensions that jeopardized the Schengen area's continued existence.

As they struggled to regain control, decision-makers both in the EU supranational institutions and in the member states, particularly those most affected by the refugee crisis due to their country's exposure, implemented a set of measures that amounted to what Schimmelfennig (2021: 314) calls "defensive integration," that is, a combination of measures of mainly internal rebordering (the resurrection of barriers between member states or their exit from common policies or the EU altogether) with external rebordering, that is, the creation and guarding of "joint" external EU borders, policed partially by a common armed force, that are institutionally recognized as the union's borders in treaties and agreements with third countries. Combined with internal debordering, external rebordering contributes to "effective integration" (Schimmelfennig 2021: 314), as the bounding process of the EU acquires meaningfulness at the expense of the national bounding. By contrast, the combination of internal and external debordering would lead to an outcome of "disintegration." From

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[5] On free movement, there are some limits (public health and security) that have become more relevant as a result of asylum/refugee arrivals, terrorism, and Covid-19.

[6] Note, however, that labor and family migration have been – and will likely remain – the main migration flows into the EU.

the perspective of the European integration process, "defensive integration" appears as a second-best solution that is basically one step forward, one step backward – or a "failing forward" (Jones, Kelemen, and Meunier 2016, 2021; Lavenex 2018) – approach with regard to integration, an outcome that combines elements of stagnation and adaptation in our framework. While our description of the outcome of the crisis is in line with the failing forward approach, we focus on the policymaking process, which is given short shrift by this approach.

Our Argument in Brief

Our focus on the policymaking process puts the making of binding decisions at the center of the analysis. Our basic argument is that, against the background of the underlying conflict structures at the EU and the national levels, the policy-specific institutional context within the compound polity (the competence distribution in the policy domain and the institutionalized decision-making procedures governing crisis interventions) and the characteristics of the crisis situation (the intensity and distribution of the problem and political pressure among member states) jointly determine to a large extent the way policymakers attempt to come to terms with the crisis.

Generally, the crisis-induced distribution of problem and political pressure may be more or less symmetrical. Crucially, in the refugee crisis, the incidence of the crisis across EU member states was asymmetric. Some member states were hit hard by the crisis, while others hardly experienced any problem pressure at all. Uneven exposure to a crisis creates a differential burden of adjustment, which increases the salience of national identities and limits transnational solidarity. In other words, an asymmetric crisis activates the underlying integration–demarcation conflict. In the case of the refugee crisis, the activation of this conflict was enhanced by the fact that it concerned, above all, external and internal boundaries. By contrast, the presence of a common, symmetrical threat experienced by all the member states of the EU multilevel polity is likely to be a powerful driver of expanded solidarity between member states. As in the Covid-19 crisis, the shared experience of a crisis may reduce the salience of constraints imposed by national identities and facilitate an extension of transnational solidarity. The uneven incidence of the refugee crisis among the member states makes for a complex configuration of transnational interests and facilitates the creation of "circles of bonding," that is, coalitions of member states that are strengthened by the crisis and that lead to divisive bonding instead of systemic bonding that enhances the integration process.

In the absence of a joint approach to the looming threat of the crisis, unilateral actions on the part of some member states become more likely, with individual member states reacting to their specific crisis situation and relying on their own policy legacies. In the compound EU polity, such unilateral actions lead to externalities or spillover effects for other member states. Because of the dysfunctionality of the CEAS and the interlocking of EU and national policymaking in European asylum policy, the refugee crisis has engendered a large number of such spillover effects, giving rise to numerous cross-level and transnational interactions and conflicts, which, in turn, have rendered policymaking not only more complex but also more vulnerable to obstruction by some member states.

With respect to the institutional context of policymaking, we highlight four aspects. First, we take into account the policy-specific distribution of competence in the EU polity. In policy areas where the EU has high competence, it is more likely for European institutions to be situated at the heart of the crisis resolution process. Instead, where EU competences are low, European institutions lack the capacity to make an independent impact on crisis management. In the asylum policy domain, the EU has rather low competences and depends heavily on intergovernmental coordination among member states. In this domain, responsibility is shared between the EU and the member states, and the mixture of member-state interdependence and independence imposes reciprocal constraints on policymakers at each level of the EU polity. The limited competence of the EU in the asylum domain posed a great challenge for policymaking in the crisis, a challenge that was enhanced by the diversity of policy heritage as well as by the uneven incidence of the crisis in the various member states.

Second, we consider the institutional power hierarchy between member states. Depending on their size and resources, member states have more or less institutional power in the EU and are expected to contribute a larger share to the common public good. Moreover, informally, large states may also provide leadership for crisis resolution. This more or less institutionalized power hierarchy may be reinforced (as in the Euro area [EA] crisis), but also undermined (as in the refugee crisis), by crisis-induced power relations, which depend, in turn, on the distribution of the crisis incidence. Thus, Germany, the most powerful member state, was unable to play the role of a stabilizing hegemonic power in the refugee crisis because its institutionally strong position was undermined by the joint effect of the EU's limited policy-specific competences and the crisis-induced spillover processes between member states.

Third, as regards the decision-making mode, we insist on the importance of what we call executive decision-making. Building on new

intergovernmentalism, which stresses that intergovernmental coordination has become the key decision-making mode in the EU in general and in crisis situations in particular, we focus our attention on executive decision-making in the crisis. In the EU, this decision-making mode involves the heads of governments of the member states in a dual role – that of head of state or government representing a country in European negotiations and that of member of the European Council representing Europe back home. As a result of this dual role, the chief executives of the member states become the pivotal actors in the two-level game linking domestic politics to EU decision-making. Accordingly, we expect the governments of the member states and their key executives to play a pivotal role not only in domestic policymaking but also in policymaking at the EU level.

Last, but certainly not least, the focus on heads of member state governments crucially introduces partisan contestation into the management of the refugee crisis, since, at the level of the member states, the national governments are exposed to party competition. Building on postfunctionalism, we argue that the refugee crisis lent itself to the activation of the integration–demarcation divide in national party competition, providing a golden opportunity for the radical right to mobilize against the governments' and the EU's asylum policies. Exploiting the political explosiveness of asylum policy, in some member states, not only the radical right opposition but even government parties seized the opportunity of the crisis situation to create divisive coalitions of member states, which rendered the search for joint solutions extremely difficult in the refugee crisis. This final point of our argument indicates that we do not exclude the possibility of endogenous political sources of a crisis. But we maintain that strategies of "crisisification" (Rhinard 2019; Boin, 't Hart, and McConnell 2009; Rauh 2022) are not at the origin of great crises such as the refugee crisis, even if they can exploit such crises once they have come about. Such crises have largely exogenous origins that create a situation of urgency and uncertainty for policymakers, who are taken by surprise – although they might have seen the crisis coming. Policymaking in the crisis situation takes place under great pressure and produces policy-specific conflict configurations, constraints, and opportunities that may have consequences for the maintenance of the polity itself.

The Focus on Policy Episodes

For our analysis of the policymaking processes, we break down the management of the refugee crisis into a set of key policymaking episodes, which are triggered by salient policy proposals at both the EU and the

national levels. Overall, we consider six EU-level episodes and five episodes each in eight member states. A policy episode covers the entire policy debate surrounding specific policy proposals that governments put forward, from the moment the proposal enters the public realm to the moment it is implemented and/or the related debate peters out. We carefully select the most important policy episodes during the refugee crisis at the EU level and in the individual member states. Episodes constitute more or less clearly delimited political developments that allow for "a disciplined and limited kind of dynamic research," which, as Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1968[1944]: xxi) suggested in the preface to the second edition of their classic study *The People's Choice*, holds the greatest promise for the future development of the social sciences.[7] Episodes are composed of actions by a stylized set of individual and collective actors. The focus on policy episodes makes it possible to systematically analyze and compare the policymaking process across levels and countries during the crisis. We have developed a new method – policy process analysis (PPA) – that is specifically suited to the comparative analysis of such episodes.

For the analysis of political conflicts within the episodes, we use some key concepts, which we briefly introduce here: political structuring, politicization, and conflict intensity. As conceptualized by Bartolini (2005: 37), *political structuring* refers to the structural preconditions that allow the expression of voice. Bartolini uses this term "to point to the formation of those institutional channels, political organizations, and networks of relationships that allow for individual voice to achieve systemic relevance." Conflicts are politicized within such structural preconditions. In addition, we adopt the broadly shared understanding of the concept of *politicization* (e.g., de Wilde, Leupold, and Schmidtke 2016; Hoeglinger 2016; Hutter and Grande 2014; Rauh 2016; Statham and Trenz 2013), which builds on Schattschneider's (1975) notion of the "expansion of the scope of conflict within a political system" (Hutter and Grande 2014: 1003). More specifically, we distinguish between two conceptual dimensions that jointly operationalize the concept of politicization: salience (visibility) and actor polarization (conflict, direction). Conflicts are politicized to the extent that they are both salient and polarized. Politicization can characterize an entire episode or the

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[7] Among the examples of such promising research, Lazarsfeld and colleagues included systematic analyses of political campaigns, which are, of course, what they used in their own research. We have previously studied another type of episodes – contentious episodes that were initiated by government policy proposals (see Kriesi, Hutter, and Bojar 2019; Bojar et al. 2023).

actor-specific contribution to the politicization of the episode. *Conflict intensity* provides an additional aspect of the conflict in a given episode. While the polarization measure does take into account the direction of the actors' position on the policy in question, it says little about the nature and intensity of the conflict. The conflict intensity concept takes these additional aspects into account.

In relying on the concept of *politicization* in particular, we assume that, under contemporary conditions of "audience democracy" (Manin 1997), policymaking is generally taking place under the close scrutiny of the media and of the attentive public. In addition, we assume that public scrutiny is particularly close in instances where policymaking is no longer confined to policy-specific subsystems but becomes the object of "macro-politics" (Baumgartner and Jones 2002), as is typically the case in crisis situations. Even under such conditions, however, not all policymaking is equally likely to become the object of the expansion of the scope of conflict in the public sphere. Some policymaking remains in the realm of "quiet politics" (Culpepper 2011), confined to experts and technocratic problem solvers, and sometimes even top brass politicians succeed in avoiding the limelight of the public, at least for a few decisive moments. To be sure, we consider only key episodes of policymaking during the crisis, which are particularly likely to get politicized. But, as we show, even within this highly selective set of episodes, there is great variation in the extent to which they have become politicized. We inquire into the factors determining the level of episode-specific politicization.

Overview of the Volume

The volume is divided into four parts. The first introduces our theoretical and empirical approach in more detail and presents the context of the crisis – the crisis situation and the variety of episodes of policymaking to which it gave rise. Part II covers the actors and conflict structures at the two levels, while Part III analyzes the dynamics of policymaking and pays particular attention to the interaction between the two levels. Part IV addresses two types of political outcomes – the public opinion with respect to key policies in the asylum policy domain in the aftermath of the crisis, and the electoral consequences of the crisis. It also draws some conclusions from our findings.

Part I includes four more chapters. The next two chapters present our theoretical and empirical approach. Chapter 2 introduces our theoretical framework. Chapter 3 presents the eight countries we are focusing on and the forty-six episodes that we are studying in detail. In addition, it provides an introduction to our main tool for the analysis of crisis

policymaking and crisis politics in these episodes – policy process analysis – and to the complementary methods of analysis, which we apply to the study of electoral outcomes and outcomes in terms of policy-specific public opinion. Chapter 4 introduces the three aspects of the crisis situation – policy heritage, problem pressure, and political pressure. It shows that at the EU level, as a result of the lack of harmonization of minimum standards between member states and of the deficient capacity of some national systems, the asylum policy rested on an "organized hypocrisy" (Krasner 1999), which, predictably, led to the breakdown of this policy in the course of the crisis. At the domestic level, the details of the heritage of the eight member states of our study serve to justify their categorization into four distinct types, as does the country-specific variation in the problem pressure in the crisis situation. Chapter 5, which concludes Part I, turns to the details of the policy episodes. It presents their timing and their substantive content. The association between politicization and the two types of pressure proves to be less close than expected – a finding that is discussed in terms of endogenous political dynamics during the crisis. As for the substantive content of the policy responses, the chapter documents that continuity prevailed – the crisis did not prove to be an opportunity to reform the existing system. Instead, failure to reform at the EU level and retrenchment at the national level characterized the predominant responses.

Against the general background characterizing the crisis situation and the policy responses adopted during the crisis, Parts II and III analyze in detail the actor configurations, conflict structures, and political dynamics of policymaking during the crisis. In these chapters, we combine quantitative characterizations of the various aspects of crisis management by the EU and its member states with qualitative narratives illustrating our more general points with specific cases. This strategy results in a rather long account, but we hope that the reader will appreciate our attempt to make the complex policymaking processes come alive.

Part II includes four chapters. Chapter 6 focuses on the actors and conflict structures at the national level, while Chapter 7 turns to the actors and conflict configurations at the EU level. At the national level, partisan and international conflicts were most common. Mainstream opposition parties emerged as the most important adversaries of national governments, although on occasion they were aided by challenger opposition from the left and, especially, from the right. At the EU level, member states and their key executives played a crucial role in the two-level game of EU crisis management. In terms of conflict configurations, the analysis shows that, at this level, international conflicts prevailed – vertical conflicts between the EU and its member states, transnational conflicts

between member states, and externalization conflicts between the EU/ member states and third countries.

Chapter 8 zooms in on the relationship between national governments and opposition, whereas Chapter 9 goes one step further and examines the right-wing discourse related to the refugee crisis. Chapter 8 highlights the importance of government composition in explaining the nature of domestic conflict in the refugee crisis. The analysis focuses on two aspects of government composition – fragmentation (as in coalition governments) and ideology. Fragmentation is associated with intragovernmental conflicts, while ideological distance accounts for the intensity of the partisan conflict between government and opposition. Tracing how right-wing actors responded to the crisis, Chapter 9 tries to uncover the elements that allowed these actors to become the main beneficiaries of this crisis (as shown in Chapter 14). The analysis shows that the right-wing parties tried to shift attention away from the initial humanitarian response to the crisis by framing it as a security issue. Concurrently, themes of perversity, jeopardy, and calls to tighten border and asylum policies dominated across the right-wing spectrum.

Part III, on the dynamics of policymaking, starts with Chapter 10, which seeks to uncover the determinants of elite support – broadly understood – behind government policies. The analyses build on the results of Chapter 8 and show how the governments' opponents systematically responded to each other's expressed level of support to the government's initiatives. The results indicate that far from the elite groups closing ranks behind government proposals – as the "rally-around-the-flag" perspective would lead us to expect – they, depending on the context, used the strategic opportunity offered by mounting problem pressure to signal opposition to these proposals and to governments.

Chapters 11 and 12 address the dynamics of policymaking across the levels of the multilevel polity. Chapter 11 takes a closer look at cross-level episodes, which involve an important amount of interaction between the two levels. They include roughly half of the national episodes of our study. This is a remarkably high share, which indicates that national asylum policymaking is taking place in the shadow of EU policymaking. Chapter 12 studies the different ways in which the most important episode of our study – the EU–Turkey agreement – was linked to national policymaking. In this chapter, we ask, based on the EU–Turkey agreement, to what extent the debate on EU policymaking has been domesticated and to what extent the conflict configuration at the EU level is transformed in the national debate about an EU policymaking process.

In Part IV, Chapter 13 looks at the transnational and domestic conflict configurations among the citizen publics of sixteen member states in the

aftermath of the refugee crisis. In terms of transnational conflicts, we find the expected opposition between the frontline states (Greece and Italy) and the Visegrad 4 (V4) countries (augmented by eastern European bystander states). At the domestic level, we find the equally expected opposition between nationalists and cosmopolitans that is politically articulated by the radical right and some nationalist-conservative parties on the one side, and by the left and some parties of the mainstream right on the other side. The domestic polarization appears to be more intense than the transnational one.

Chapter 14 examines the electoral repercussions of the refugee crisis in seven member states. As the refugee crisis wanes in memory, it has left some important and lasting marks in the European political landscape. However, the legacy of this crisis was not a wholesale transformation of party systems in some countries, as in the case of the Euro area crisis. Instead, it served as an opportunity for parties mainly from the right, which were able to strategically exploit the crisis for their own electoral purposes. Finally, Chapter 15 summarizes and concludes. To reiterate the general point we are trying to make: The refugee crisis constrained European policymakers, who tried to come to terms with it in ways that induced them to adopt short-term, stop-gap responses and prevented them from coming up with long-term, joint solutions. If, in a certain sense, we confirm the failing-forward assessment of the crisis outcome, we provide a much more specific account of the policymaking process in the crisis that allows us to pinpoint the crisis-specific conditions that, combined, led to this outcome. There is nothing inherent in the integration process that led to the outcome of the crisis. Instead, there is a lot of crisis-specific conditioning that, however, has path-dependent effects that will outlast this specific crisis.