

The Future of the EU

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Politics of the EU

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When you think about the Future of the EU,
what comes to mind?



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“‘Crisis’ is the word we have come to associate with the EU.”
(Zielonka, 2014, p. 1)

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European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker (2016) referred to these compounding crises as the *polycrisis*.

- The term was further spread by the work of economic historian Adam Tooze (e.g., Tooze, 2021).
- It was the FT's *Year in a word* for 2022 (Derbyshire, 2023).

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- The response is instead based on a patchwork approach, which in turn undermines the EU's output legitimacy.

But is this a bug or a feature?

“I have always believed that Europe would be built through crises, and that it would be the sum of their solutions.”

(Monnet, 1978, p. 417)

Jones et al ([2016](#), [2021](#)) offer one way of translating this aphorism into a more thorough theory:

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- Intergovernmental bargaining results in incomplete, lowest common denominator outcomes.
- The incompleteness of these outcomes eventually leads to crisis.
- Intergovernmental bargaining again results in lowest common denominator solutions that address the crisis but only incompletely.
- These incomplete solutions accumulate over time.

Failing Forward II

But Jones et al ([2021](#)) acknowledge that ‘failing forward’ is not the only way European integration advances.

- Most of the major steps in European integration were not responses to crises or a ‘quick fix’ but a coherent, proactive, and forward-looking project (Parsons & Matthijs, [2015](#)).

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Three important scope conditions:

- ① Intensity of the crisis
- ② Existing EU competence in the policy area
- ③ Cost of unwinding existing (incomplete) EU arrangements

Failing Forward & Politicisation I

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Relatedly, where does this leave politicisation?

Failing Forward & Politicisation II

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- But these expanded rights triggered increased politicisation, with two outcomes:
 - 1 Backlash that fed into the domestic debate in Britain, supporting the Leave campaign.
 - 2 Persistently incomplete citizenship rights which prevented EU citizens in Britain and many Britons abroad from voting.

Politicisation and Post-Functionalism

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- A comprehensive solution is difficult to attain not simply because of diverging preferences among Member States but because intergovernmental bargaining is now constrained by public preferences.
 - National governments must “look over their shoulders when negotiating European issues” (Hooghe and Marks, 2009, p. 5).

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- Two moments of intense politicisation.
- But the former led to further integration while the latter led to disintegration.

Eurozone Crisis

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Member States continue to partially suspend the Schengen regime

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- Börzel and Risse (2018) argue that depoliticisation and further integration was possible in the Eurozone crisis but not the Schengen crisis because they were framed as a question of 'order' and 'borders', respectively.
- A neofunctionalist perspective instead suggests that transnational interdependence was stronger in the Eurozone rather than the Schengen crisis (Schimmelfennig, 2018).

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- It must be mobilised by political entrepreneurs - chiefly populist radical right parties (Hooghe & Marks, [2009](#)).

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It interacts with policy interdependence:

- Interdependence is a driver of integration; politicisation is a brake (Schimmelfennig et al., [2015](#)).

Differentiation is seen not as a temporary or accidental feature of the EU but as “essential and, most likely, enduring” (Schimmelfennig et al., [2015](#), p. 765).

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- **Vertical differentiation:** Different levels of centralisation across policy areas.
- **Horizontal differentiation:** Different levels of territorial extension across policy areas.
 - **Internal horizontal differentiation:** Some Member States not participating in all EU policies.
 - **External horizontal differentiation:** Some non-Member States participating in some EU policies.

Differentiated Integration II

Table 2 Policy characteristics and integration outcomes

	Interdependence	Politicization	Asymmetry of politicization	Integration outcome
1	High	High	High	High & (internally) differentiated
2	High	High	Low	Low & uniform
3	High	Low	–	High & internally uniform (or externally differentiated)
4	Low	High	High	Low & (internally) differentiated
5	Low	High	Low	Low & uniform
6	Low	Low	–	Low & uniform

Table 2, in Schimmelfennig et al. (2015)

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Variation across policy areas:

- Market regulation vs core state powers (Genschel & Jachtenfuchs, [2013](#), [2018](#)).
- Order vs borders (Börzel & Risse, [2018](#)).

Downsides of Differentiated Integration

Members that have opted out *de jure* face strong functional incentives to re-join (Genschel et al., [2023](#)).

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- Differentiated integration assumes club goods with clear membership boundaries.
- In practice, spillovers and externalities turn club goods into common goods.

The Future of European Integration

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- But they might also heighten interdependence.

Politicisation is critical:

- Where politicisation is high, integration is constrained or differentiated.
- But might Pro-Europeans “strike back” (Carrieri, [2021](#))?



Zielonka (2014)

IS THE EU DOOMED?

JAN ZIELONKA

MARK TWAIN AMUSED.
Humorist Says He Even Heard
on Good Authority That
He Was Dead.

"The report of my death was an exaggeration."

Zielonka (2014)

Thank You!



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