Emotional Politicisation of the European Union: Towards a New Framework of Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Politicisation of European issues in times of crises but this paper challenges the largely accepted assumption according to which the politicisation of these crises manifests itself only through three criteria: an intensification of the debate, a polarisation of opinion and an expansion of actors. While implied in this common definition of politicisation, emotions are neglected in most of the scholarship on the politicisation of Europe. As demonstrated by research on emotions in IR, emotions play an integral role in politics, and become most visible and salient in times of crises where they develop a disruptive force that uproots political attachments and exposes their emotional nature. Utilising these insights, this working paper analyses the German government's discourse on Europe in the context of migration in the years 2015 and 2016. To do so, an emotion discourse analysis is employed to investigate the usage of emotional terms and connotations, as well as metaphors, comparisons, and analogies. We find a significant shift in emotional vocabulary as the crisis progresses and is perceived to be salient and of European dimensions.

INTRODUCTION

While the discipline of International Relations (IR) has experienced an "emotional turn" that engendered a vibrant and burgeoning research field within the last 20 years or so, studies on the European Union (EU) and its politicisation have largely neglected the systematic study of emotions. However, as Van Rythoven and Sucharov (2020b: 1) put it in a recent edited volume, "The significance of emotions in world politics is pervasive" and ignoring the role of emotions is "an untenable estrangement of scholarship from how international life is experienced and practised by real human beings." Along a similar vein, we argue that neglecting actors' and audiences' emotions in the politicisation of Europe is a blind spot of the field that scholars ought to investigate in order to attain a more comprehensive understanding of the drivers and implications of politicisation processes. Therefore, this working paper suggests taping on the recent emotion turn in IR and applying it to EU studies in order to further our understanding of EU politicisation processes, specifically the role of emotions in these processes.

As critical voices will undoubtedly point out, studying emotions is not an easy endeavour. This predicament was also fiercely discussed in IR as "emotion is hard to define, hard to operationalise, hard to measure, and hard to isolate from other factors" (Mercer, 1996:1), as well as "too ephemeral to be evaluated analytically" (Hutchison, 2016:31). As Robert Jervis, one of the grey eminences of IR, put it, even though emotions are crucial in politics studying them poses a "challenge [that] is simply too great" (Balzacq and Jervis, 2004:565). These obstacles, however, have been overcome through sustained theoretical and empirical engagement with the subject matter and this working paper aims to constitute a first step towards such an engagement in the field of politicisation. Notably, multiple politicisation scholars have sporadically referred to emotions, however, without ever discussing their ontology, their empirical implications, or how to study them in the first place (see, for example, Hooghe and Marks, 2012; Hutter et al., 2016; Hegemann and Schneckener, 2019; Jabko and Luhman, 2019; Schmidt, 2019). This reflects the field of IR two decades ago when Neta Crawford (2000) criticised, in a now-seminal article, the field for using emotions in their explanatory models while treating them as "self-evidently important and [...] unproblematized." We argue that a similar

critique can be levelled against politicisation as its conceptual core aspects, polarisation, increase in salience, and expansion of actors (de Wilde, 2011 ; Hutter et al., 2016), are quintessentially dependent on emotions.

In other words, although studies on politicisation have been flourishing for many years, especially in the European context, no research has—to the best of our knowledge—systematically analysed and theorised the crucial role of emotions. This working paper seeks to contribute to this understudied phenomenon by analysing the use of emotions in times of crisis in Europe as an *implication* of its politicisation. As shown by the literature, the politicisation of European issues intensifies and spikes in times of crises as it has been demonstrated, for instance, by studies on the Euro-crisis of 2008 or the migration crisis of 2015 (Hutter and Kriesi, 2019). Years of research on the politicisation of Europe have suggested that political crises constitute "moments of truth" that lead to a "return of politics" (Van Middelaar, 2013). We argue that emotions should not be viewed as mere epiphenomena in the process of politicisation, or in politics more broadly, as they play a crucial role in politics at all times and become most visible and salient in times of crises (Crawford, 2000; Ross, 2006; Bleiker and Hutchison, 2008). We draw inspiration from this recent emotion turn in IR to argue that emotions are integral to understanding the implications of politicisation. Emotions are intrinsically linked with identity as well as with political processes of framing, projection, and propagation (Hall and Ross, 2019) and therefore significantly influence the outcomes of politicisation. Utilising these insights, this working paper empirically demonstrates the role of emotions as an implication of politicisation by analysing the German government's discourse on Europe in the context of migration in 2015. In order to do so, an emotion discourse analysis is employed to investigate the usage of emotional terms and emotional connotations, as well as emotion metaphors, comparisons, and analogies (see Koschut, 2018).

We find that the politicisation of the migration crisis as a European issue has had some particular implications, including an increase of the usage of emotional vocabulary in the government discourse surrounding the EU in the context of the refugee crisis. This is indicative of an invocation of emotions through the process of politicisation and thereby an increased

emotional involvement of German political elites. We, moreover, find that following an increased politicisation of Europe, German government discourse uses emotionally positive rhetoric about the EU, at times anchored in a common historical context, while other Member States, especially the Visegrád states, are viewed negatively and an array of negative emotions such as anger are expressed towards them. This emotion discourse is thus a clear implication of the EU's politicisation as it narrows down the discursive space, which ultimately privileges some policy options while excluding others. In other words, exclusively framing the EU in emotionally positive terms has been used as a means to justify the German leaders' decision-making during the crisis and to stabilise the relational structure of Germany as firmly established within the EU, as well as ways of (re) constructing German identity as explicitly European.

This working paper is divided as follows: first we review the literature on politicisation and the literature on emotions in EU studies; second we look into previous research on emotions, especially in the field of IR, and discuss its application to the study of politicisation; third we elaborate on how to operationalise the study of emotions through discourse analysis before finally discussing our main findings and conclusions.

POLITICISATION AND THE EUROPEAN UNION IN TIMES OF CRISIS

For over a decade now, scholars of European studies have been writing about the politicisation of the European Union (EU): what it entails, how it is shaped and, why it is a good (or a bad) thing for the future of Europe. One largely accepted definition in European studies is the one elaborated by De Wilde (2011) which postulates that politicisation can be understood through the observation of three criteria: intensification, polarisation and expansion of actors. Those criteria thus imply that for politicisation to occur in the EU, the following elements have to be found: a conflict or a reconsideration of what is politically or morally essential (Hay, 2014), an intensification of the debate, and a resonance amongst the public (Beaudonnet and Mérand, 2019). As shown by Hutter and his colleagues in their large-scale study from 2016, Europe has become politicised through the different events it experienced, whether it be at the European level around Treaty-related conflicts, or at the national level around party competition over

European issues. Furthermore, phenomena like the economic crisis or the migration crisis have also been critical moments of politicisation, during which the EU reached high levels of salience (Statham and Trenz 2015, Hutter and Kriesi 2019). Studying the implications of the politicisation of the so-called refugee crisis, scholars have for the most part found little trace of further European integration, but rather signs of deadlock and non-compliance from the Member States (Börzel and Risse 2018; Schimmelfennig 2018; Biermann et al. 2019; Hutter and Kriesi, 2019). Hutter and Kriesi (2019) also found evidence of higher inter-parties' conflict about Europe in times of conflict but argue that the consequences and implications of European crises need to be studied further.

One of the implications that has been largely neglected in the study of crises is the variation in the use of emotional discourse. Indeed, crises and critical moments lead not only to an increase of politicisation but likewise to an increase in emotions, which become acutely visible (Crawford, 2000; Ross, 2006). While for Bleiker and Hutchison (2008:129) emotions always matter, they argue that critical events such as the migration crisis tend to "challenge and often uproot related attachments, exposing their emotional nature in a particularly acute and visible manner." However, it is only through the process of representing that emotions gain a collective dimension (Hutchison and Bleiker, 2014; Hutchison, 2016) and these very representations are produced, circulated, and shared in processes of politicisation. The migration crisis of 2015 could only become an extremely emotional event through its politicisation in parliaments and media. Indeed, the crisis had an impact on the emotional response in Europe. As the situation worsened for migrants, the emotional discourse on the EU intensified. On the one hand, it called for more solidarity, and, on the other hand, for action (Adler-Nissen et al., 2020). Some scholars have also shown that emotions towards the European Union influence citizen's voting behaviour. For instance, Garry (2014) found that anxiety tends to be associated with EU issue voting—that is taking preferences about EU-related issues into consideration while casting a vote. Conversely, second-order voting, or voting on the government's evaluation and not on EU issues, tends to be mostly associated with angry voters (Garry, 2014). Generally, European integration is likely to elicit an emotional response from citizens (for a dissident in-depth study about indifferent and ambivalent citizens, see Van Ingelgom, 2014). Perceptions of negative impacts of the EU, of its

influence over domestic issues, and of the motivations of institutional actors can all lead to negative emotions, while feelings of solidarity and economic prosperity can lead to positive responses from individuals (Vasilopoulou and Wagner, 2017). For that reason, politicians have not hesitated to instrumentalise emotions towards the European Union to frame certain issues both in electoral and referendum campaigns as to gain voters (Atikcan, 2015; Vasilopoulou and Wagner, 2017).

Emotions towards the European Union have also had an influence on identity dynamics in Europe. Some individuals' emotional attachment to the EU has had an impact on them "feeling European" and on their wish for more unity (Delmotte, 2008). The politicisation of European issues has thus created a cleavage between two types of European identities: one calling for unity, solidarity and openness; another one calling for "Europe for Europeans" and protectionism (Checkel and Katzenstein, 2009). This cleavage is itself highly emotional, and links between identity and emotions has been observed by scholars before (Sasley, 2011; Mercer, 2014). For those reasons, we therefore posit that there is a link between emotions and politicisation.

THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS IN POLITICISATION PROCESSES

To understand the role of emotions in politicisation processes, we draw on the extensive theoretical and methodological literature on emotion research in IR (see Koschut et al., 2017; Clément and Sangar, 2018; Van Rythoven and Sucharov, 2020; Koschut, 2020, for overviews). However, the literature on emotions, in IR as well as in other disciplines, is extremely diverse in its ontological, epistemological, and methodological tenets due to the concept of emotion's extreme complexity and multidimensionality. As psychologist Carrol Izard (2010:363) puts it, the phenomenon of emotion "cannot be defined as a unitary concept" but is nonetheless of "critical significance to science and society." Divergences and diversity in the study of emotions in politics is thus nothing negative but essentially inevitable as different approaches emphasise different aspects of emotions while a complete and holistic appreciation of the phenomenon is impossible—especially within the constraints of social scientific research. This working paper cannot and does not aim to provide an exhaustive overview of the study of emotion, but rather

seeks to illustrate why emotions need to be considered as a crucial implication of politicisation processes. This we will do with a short theoretical discussion supported by empirical research. To reemphasise what has been said above, our operationalisation of emotions in politicisation constitute just one of an abundance of possible approaches.

To begin with, it is necessary to clarify a common misconception of emotions "As something that only produces irrationality, that is all consequence and never cause" (Mercer, 2006:299). Indeed, while there is a controversial debate on how emotions should be understood and studied, there is a consensus across academic fields as diverse as psychology, sociology, philosophy, anthropology, and feminist theory that it is necessary "to oppose two stereotypical views of emotions: that they are purely private and irrational phenomena" (Bleiker and Hutchison, 2008:123). Instead, emotions are an indispensable part of human experience without which normal, let alone political, life is impossible (Hall and Ross, 2015). This view is supported by insights from other disciplines. In a now seminal study, neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (1995), for example, found that while emotions do not "make" decisions for individuals themselves they are essential for rational thinking as "certain aspects of emotion and feeling are indispensable for rationality. At their best, feelings point us in the proper direction, take us to the appropriate place in a decision-making space, where we may put the instruments of logic to good use." Understanding why political actors decide to engage in debates and thereby ultimately politicise certain issues over others, thus, requires more than an examination of the "cold" cognition of the concerned actors as mere ideas and knowledge do not incite actors to take action (Koschut, 2018a). On a societal level, emotions are a prerequisite for social mobilisation (ibid; see also Ross, 2006) and therefore constitute an important link between politicisation processes and their far-reaching political, social, and policy implications.

This leads to a crucial issue in the study of emotions in politicisation: the question of the ontology of emotions and the operationalisation of the concept. Emotion, it seems, is what Walter Bryce Gallie (1956) referred to as an essentially contested concept due to the intricate and multifaceted characteristics of the phenomenon itself, as well as the diverse academic disciplines engaging with it. Instead of directly translating an approach from one academic field

to another, IR scholars tend to merge several approaches from different fields to fit the study of emotions in the realm of politics. This paper draws on some of these works in its operationalisation, more specifically on the work by Andrew Ross (2014) and Todd Hall and Andrew Ross (2015, 2019), and builds upon this scholarship to propose a new theoretical framework for the study of emotions in EU politicisation.

Ross's (2014) framework combines psychological and neuroscientific insights on emotions and their influence on individuals' behaviour with micro-sociological findings on interpersonal social relations and group emotions. Ross (2014) conceptualises emotions as "composite phenomena" (ibid: 17) that he calls "circulation of affect," that is "conscious and unconscious exchanges of emotion occurring in and through the process of social interaction" (ibid: 16) that are the product of biological and social processes. This means that Ross (2014:153) treats emotions simultaneously as psychological phenomena that reside within individuals and social phenomena that connect individuals with one another in social contexts. In terms of definitions, we follow Hall and Ross (2015:848) notion of affective dynamics as the "range of ways embodied mental processes and the felt dimensions of human experience influence, thought and behaviour" and the definition of emotions as "socially recognised structured episodes of affectively balanced response, such as joy or fear." This recognises the existence and the prevalence of single emotion categories in politics and does not dismiss their analytical utility while simultaneously recognising that when used in isolation "They lack the analytical leverage needed for the historically layered and culturally diverse social environments involved in global politics" because emotions in politics are "unlikely to involve clear and distinct emotion types over time" Ross (2014:18). The consideration of broader affective dynamics thus allows a more holistic analysis and has mainly methodological implications for the construction of the codebook as this allows to code for negative and positive valence in the first round of coding and then code for emotion categories in a second round of coding if there is a need for a narrower interpretation.

Following this conceptualisation, the important question is how emotions are linked to the outcomes of politicisation. Drawing on Hall and Ross (2015), we argue that politicisation

processes incite, shape, transmit and reinforce affective states and emotional responses in the audience on two levels, the individual and the social. On the individual level, salient concerns and emotional dispositions can be activated through politicisation processes that problematise sensitive issues. This, in return, may elicit high-intensity responses. On the social level, politicisation processes engender emotions via "emotional contagion" (Ross, 2014) through public discourse. Emotional contagion can be facilitated by an actor's emotional display that is being mirrored by the audience. This mirroring occurs when "people observe emotional expressions in others, [and] their brains initiate the neural and bodily response associated with the observed emotions […] Through these mirroring processes, we not only receive others' emotions but emulate and transmit them in turn" (Hall and Ross, 2015:855). Emotions can also be elicited by the invocation of emotionally laden symbols, emotional narratives, and emotional discourse more broadly (Hall and Ross, 2015). When an emotional response is widely shared and highly salient, politicisation can even lead to what Hall and Ross (2015:859) refer to as "affective waves," that is a "collective, high-intensity affective response capable of overriding pre-existing goals and concerns" that, however, are "difficult to sustain over time and thus subside without further simulation." These waves, then, constitute "windows of political opportunity" before they subside. Even after the affective wave died down, however, concerns and dispositions are changed for good and with it the political imagination and possibilities. When political actors articulate positions on a subject matter and give speeches on a specific topic, the media reports and circulates them, and thereby the emotional expression are shared with the wider population. In other words, through politicisation processes affective dynamics and concrete emotions are shared with and by the wider population, rendering politicisation a form of emotional echo chamber that generates and reinforces collective affective experiences across society.

STUDYING EMOTIONS THROUGH DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

To study the emotional side of politicisation processes can take many different forms. We draw on a constructivist view that focuses on the role of language and discourse. As Solomon (2017:497) notes, language is productive and actively constructs both social relations and identities as well as the affective orientations and emotional attachments associated with them.

Solomon further argues that the work of production is not merely reducible to the actual linguistic utterance as there is likely "an affective component that accounts for how some instances of language become efficacious and some do not" as "[l] anguage and emotions blend together to do the political work of social production" (ibid: 497). Sasley (2011:472) goes a step further and argues that "language devoid of emotions is literally meaningless" which in reverse means that language is *always* emotional which renders discourse a perfect side to analyse social emotions. Moreover, as Hall (2015) points out, emotional language can convey messages about the speaker's perceived salience of an issue as well as the speaker's intention. From this perspective the study of the implications of the politicisation of the EU without taking emotions into account can at most generate an inchoate understanding of embodied experiences of actors involved in politicisation processes.

Emotions in politics become most visible in times of crises (Crawford, 2000; Ross, 2006) whereas crises become perceived as such through processes of politicisation. Therefore, in the context of this working paper, emotions become most visible as a result of an intensification of politicisation. The locus of analysis of this paper is verbal representations of emotions in government discourse, in other words, the "process by which individual emotions acquire a collective dimension" (Bleiker and Hutchison, 2008:130) and thereby shape social and political responses towards the migration crisis. The analysis of discourse has been a widely used method in the study of emotions in IR (Koschut, 2020), as emotions significantly influence and delineate political discourse. As politicisation elicits emotions both in the political actors as well as the audience, one of the main implications of politicisation is the narrowing of discursive space.

As Todd Hall (2017) points out, emotional discourse can be conceptualised as indicative, provocative, and evocative. It is indicative in the sense that the analysed speeches offer evidence of the emotional state of the speaker. Moreover, it is provocative of emotions in the sense that the speaker may actively try to elicit an emotional response in the audience, and it is emotionally evocative when political actors invoke specific emotions to reach political ends (Hall, 2017). Whether an emotion is genuine or not does not matter in this context as through the process of mirroring, even insincere emotions can elicit emotions both in the speaker himself as well as the

audience. As Bleiker and Hutchison (2008:130) put it, "Representations matter and […] they do so in a highly politicised manner." We follow Koschut's (2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2020) notion of emotional discourse analysis (EDA) and analyse three specific representations of emotions (emotion terms, emotional connotations, and emotion metaphors, comparisons, and analogies) to explore politicisation's implications on the emotional vocabulary of German elites during the migration crisis, and the concomitant structuring of discursive space.

THE GERMAN ELITE'S POLITICISATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION DURING THE MIGRATION CRISIS OF 2015

In April 2015, a tragic boat accident in which about 800 migrants drowned while attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea foreshadowed what would later be known as the European migration crisis, or "Flüchtlingskrise" in German. The media echo as well as the political repercussions across the EU were immense, and arguably constituted the first spike in politicisation of the crisis as a European issue. Using a dataset composed of 91 speeches of German officials between March 2015 and March 2016 (Bundesregierung, 2020), we thus analyse the government's emotional response towards Europe in the context of the politicisation of the European migration crisis.

On the 22nd of April, the German Bundestag initiated a debate on the "Flüchtlingskatastrophe im Mittelmeer," during which the situation had not yet been perceived as a crisis and the rhetoric predominantly revolved around empathy and help for migrants. One emotionally significant aspect here is that both German government officials and media throughout the crisis predominantly invoked the term "Flüchtling" (refugee) rather than "Migrant" (migrant) or "Asylsuchende" (asylum seekers). This move has several implications as refugees invoke notions of empathy and helping them is perceived a moral duty. Moreover, after WWII, millions of Germans were refugees themselves, which renders this an emotionally significant and sensitive topic anchored in collective memory. As such it is socially unacceptable to express negative feelings towards refugees. Even those who do, such as the Alternative für

Deutschland (AfD), only speak negatively about migrants, immigrants, or asylum seekers while avoiding the term "refugee" all together (see, for example, the AfD election manifesto for the national election 2017).

The debate further illustrates that, from the beginning, the migration crisis was understood as a European issue, and that the idea of Europe is emotionally significant in German politics. In the statements made in support of refugees, there are already discernible traces of what Koschut (2014) calls an "emotional community" as remorse, grief, sorrow and other negative emotions are expressed towards the catastrophe and discursively both linked to a common European identity shared with other EU member states. Foreign minister Frank Walter Steinmeier (22.04.2015), for instance, said about the incident that "[t] he truth is that [the boat catastrophe] does not only shake us as fellow human beings—thank God that too—but it has to shake us in a very special way as Europeans […] the tragedy that we are talking about today not only affects the refugees, it also affects Europe." Accordingly, he argues that it is the EU's "humanitarian responsibility" to rescue "humans from certain death." Interior minister Thomas De Maizière (22.04.2015) argued along a similar line that "we also have a shared responsibility in Europe for the refugees who are being saved" and that the EU needs to handle the situation in a joint solidary effort "in Europe and for Europe." Over the course of the following months, the issue became emotionally less salient in government discourse until September when the Schengen agreement was temporarily suspended, and an unprecedented number of migrants entered Germany.

As demonstrated by an abundance of scholarship, migration as a European issue as well as the EU more generally were extremely politicised during this period (Hutter and Kriesi, 2019). The EU became more salient amongst German government's members and political elites as they called for a European response to the crisis rather than a national one. In this context, Europe was exclusively framed in positive and inclusive terms indicating a discursive construction of Europe as a significant aspect of German identity. As Angela Merkel put it (24.09.2015), "human dignity, the rule of law, tolerance and solidarity unite us in Europe not only culturally. They are a founding idea; they are an integral part of the [European] treaties and the basis for joint action

of the European Union."[1] The invocation of shared European identity in form of culture and values as well as responsibility is a recurring theme in the discourse epitomised by the recurrent referencing of "community." Angela Merkel, notably, referred to Europe as "Wertegemeinschaft" (community of values) (see, for example, 27.08.2015a; 20.09.2015a; 24.09.2015; 07.10.2015), but also as "Rechtsgemeinschaft" (community of law) (17.07.2015; 24.09.2015); "Verantworungsgemeinschaft" (community of responsibility) (ibid; see also Gabriel 10.09.2015) and "Schicksalsgemeinschaft" (community of destiny) (17.07.2015). As demonstrated by Koschut (2014), the term "community" is endowed with positive emotional connotations as it implies togetherness and amity. The German government constantly (re) constructed German identity as firmly entrenched within a unified Europe and, as demonstrated by Sasley (2011) and Mercer (2014), identities are emotionally charged and significant. As emotions are reinforced through politicisation, this strong, positive emotional construction of the EU significantly narrows down the discursive space for political manoeuvres concerning the migration crisis.

This process is simultaneously complemented with what Koschut (2017, 2018a, 2018b) refers to as "emotional othering" as the European "community" is put into stark contrast against threatening, thus anxiety and fear-inducing challenges, "others." These "others" include terrorists, the so-called Islamic State, the "bad migrants" and other EU Members States, but never the EU itself. Those "othered" EU MS are essentially discursively deprived of their "Europeanness" as they are accused of not sharing European values, norms and rules, and therefore identity. While calling for a "fair sharing" of the "burden" of the migration crisis, Sigmar Gabriel for instance claims that "Europe is not endangered by Greece, but by the growing national selfishness of its Member States." He also calls for MS to cooperate more in the migration crisis as the EU is not merely an economic union, while he explicitly emphasises that the issue is not the EU, specifically Jean-Claude Juncker, but some MS (10.09.2015). Along a similar vein, Angela Merkel (09.09.2015) underlines the positive role that Jean-Claude Juncker

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[1] All translations provided by the authors

played in the negotiations for a European response to the crisis. Steinmeier (02.11.2015) gets more explicit by pointing out:

> "[i] t is not Brussels that is spitting in our soup at the moment.[2] Quite the contrary. When we have expectations towards European asylum and migration policies, we get support from Brussels. It is individual Member States that do not allow laws or legal requirements to be enacted in Brussels that would actually help us to get the refugee numbers down significantly."

Spitting in the soup is a relatively common German idiom. In the context of a speech from a government official, it can be interpreted as a strong emotional expression of contempt directed towards EU MS that undermine shared, emotionally significant European values. In a different speech, Steinmeier (06.11.2015) repeats his critique indicating that the emotional salience is still sustained when he proclaims that:

> "[i] t cannot be that not even a handful of countries are currently accepting all refugees in Europe! […] The European solidarity which has suffered so much in the financial crisis cannot be limited to financial aid! European solidarity includes the fair distribution of burdens across all Member States. That must not prompt us to complain about Brussels. It is not Brussels that stands in our way. On the contrary! President Juncker showed great courage when he presented his proposal for a fair distribution system against the resistance of many Member States. The problem lies in the European capitals, where people like to call for solidarity when European funds are distributed, but duck away when the sea gets a little rough."

This quote is exemplary for the government's discourse surrounding the migration crisis and is full of emotions directed towards different entities. First, there are clear signs of indignation towards EU Member States that do not comply with European values. This is aggravated by the perceived lack of solidarity of other MS that has, from Steinmeier's point of view, been demonstrated by Germany. Simultaneously, the EU, as an emotionally salient and integral part of modern German identity, cannot and is not criticised. Instead, anger is expressed towards other MS that are accused of non-solidarity and thereby of an ultimately un-European behaviour. Thus, at the same time, these techniques of emotional othering increased the salience of the emotional attachments to European identity, while also narrowing down discursive space and possible policy options. Unlike for example in the UK, Hungary, and Greece

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[2] German idiom similar to "to rain on one's parade" in English

(Ford et al., 2012; Clements et al., 2014; Csehi and Zgut, 2020) in German government discourse, there was no place for contesting the EU itself due to the emotional involvement partially engendered through the process of its politicisation.

However, politicisation does not only bind political subjects stronger to their identities but also constitutes the basis for political mobilisation. In government discourse, there is a clear tendency to link the migration crisis with the flight and expulsion of German speakers during and after WWII. This is, quite obviously, a highly emotional topic and this discursive link taps on the emotional potential of these experiences and social memory (see Pace and Bilgic, 2018; Campbell, 2020 for a detailed account). This discursive link, in combination with the self-constructed understanding of Germany as a European country, is used to formulate compelling moral imperatives which significantly narrow down possible public policy responses towards the migration crisis. Angela Merkel's speeches illustrate this point brilliantly when she argues that:

> *"[t] he fates that millions of Germans have suffered as a result of flight and displacement are also a reminder and a mandate for us today to ensure that we and future generations are spared such suffering. The best answer to the challenge of securing peace, freedom and stability is and remains European unification." (Merkel, 05.05.2015).*

The German chancellor thereby links positive emotional concepts such as peace and freedom with the idea of a unified Europe while contrasting it with fear and anxiety inducing social memories that are extremely salient to German identity (see, for example, Banchoff, 1999 and Dingott Alkopher, 2018). This form of politicisation emotionalises the idea of Europe by merging it with concepts that are associated with positive emotions. Hence, the EU gets emotionally more significant while the alternative, a Europe without a union, is constructed as threatening, undesirable and even fear inducing as without the EU war and suffering might come back to the continent. Once again, this narrows down the room for political manoeuvres. It is noteworthy that this is a recurring theme in government discourse and one that is often directly linked to policy proposals. In a different speech, Merkel states that:

> *"[f] inding a viable answer to the refugee movements is and remains a European and, of course, global task. Because since the Second World War there have never been so*

many refugees as now. I know that the way to accomplish this task is arduous. But it is a question of humanitarianism, a question of economic reason, and a question of the future of Europe—a Europe whose values and interests have to assert themselves in global competition. Our answer can only be a pan-European answer. We are working on this with all our strength" (Merkel, 13.02.2016).

Once again, Merkel refers to WWII in order to appeal to the audience and justify the need for Europe by invoking some highly emotional topic. By linking a European answer to the refugee crisis with a common European future, she reinforces the idea of a European identity, using the pronoun "we" and insisting on the moral imperative stemming from a common answer to the situation.

CONCLUSION

Politicisation and political performances incite emotion across political elites and society (Ross 2014; Hall and Ross, 2015, 2019). Our case study empirically demonstrates the use of emotional vocabulary by political elites which reveals their underlying affective and emotional attachments. The process of emotional contagion makes it tenable to assume that the government discourse, at the very least, engendered emotional reactions in the audience whereby, considering media coverage, opinion polls and studies by think tanks, a significant part of the German population also shared the government's sentiments. In this context, it is possible to speak of an "affective wave" that lead to a unique "window of opportunity" within which Germany's government adopted an "open-door policy" and temporarily suspended the Schengen agreement which was and is unprecedented.

Times of crisis reveal and reinforce (or potentially uproot) emotional attachments to identities. The positive emotions towards the European Union, as well as calls for a common response to the crisis, and the reiteration of shared European values and future marks a definite tendency amongst German officials to situate their country's identity as part of the EU. In fact, the response to the "Flüchtlingskrise" can be seen as a reinforcement and reification of Germany's European identity and the positive emotional attachments to the EU. This reinforcement of emotional attachments to identities significantly narrows the discursive space

and political imagination within which actors navigate, as the government justifies moral imperatives with positive claims about the EU, anchored in emotionally compelling historical subjects.

Thus, the extremely positive emotions towards the EU preclude the possibility of criticizing the polity, thereby transferring any negative emotions such as anger towards other MS which allegedly undermine European identity. This, of course, might change in the future. However, the politicisation of the European Union, which has become more prominent during the migration crisis of 2015, has had, as exposed in this volume, many consequences at different levels. Nonetheless, in many spheres, for instance government discourse, shift in the use of emotional rhetoric and concomitantly the emotionalization of the EU is undoubtedly one of its main implications.

In conclusion, although it has been largely neglected in politicisation studies, especially in the European context, we found evidence of emotions as an implication of EU politicisation. The more the European Union becomes politicised, the more political actors become emotional about it. Yet, as emotions also play a role on the salience and polarisation of issues, their systematic inclusion in the whole politicisation process is still missing from the literature and should be added to a future research agenda.

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