To craft a Union:
Union-leadership and transnational statecraft

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WORKING PAPERS

Abstract

This paper proposes the concept of **Union-leadership** for the study of polity-building at the EU level. It draws on Ferrera's diagnosis of a de-conciliation between market-making and market-correcting developments in European integration in order to formulate the following puzzle: why political agency is letting the EU polity project falter? The concept of Union-leadership is presented as a tool to tackle this question from a Weberian perspective. The paper is structured as follows. The first section tentatively formulates the concept of Union-leadership. The second specifies the logic of action of Union-leadership within a neo-Weberian framework. The third one further develops the concept by discussing a number of qualifications needed to sharpen the analytical focus on personality and statecraft. The paper concludes by assessing the limits and prospects of Union-leadership for studying the current political crisis of the EU.

Introduction

Present-day European Union confronts a multifaceted existential crisis. Popular appreciation for the EU is on a downward trend, while electoral campaigns in Europe increasingly feature open criticisms of EU policies and European unification in general (Aguilera de Prat 2013). Exogenous shocks such as the Great Recession and, ultimately, the migration crisis are only partial culprits for the current enfeeblement of the EU's effectiveness and legitimacy. A wide consensus exists that the malaise mostly comes from within. Some influential intellectuals consider the EU a dysfunctional construct, be it deliberately or unintentionally so: a fanciful endeavour destined to derail and collapse or, worse, a wicked idea better left forsaken and forlorn (Streeck 2015; Streeck and Elsässer 2016; Zielonka 2014; 2006; Scharpf 2015). Less pessimistically, other commentators have argued that today's EU28 is not yet doomed, but just too badly designed and managed to cope with the external and internal challenges it is facing (Ferrera 2016; Vandenbroucke and Vanhercke 2014).

A common feature within this second strand of literature is the focus on the overall consistency between the architecture of the EU polity and its policy making. Jürgen Habermas (2012) has proposed to re-conceive the EU as a community of nation states. Kalypso Nicolaïdis (2012) has introduced the concept of *Demoi-cracy* to indicate how the EU project has transformed traditional patterns of sovereignty in Europe. Maurizio Ferrera (2014; 2016) interprets the underlying tensions of today's European politics as the result of an endogenous syndrome: the "de-conciliation" between economic and social integration.

The endeavour of these authors is partly descriptive and partly normative. That authoritative decision-making in the EU operates on a multi-level basis and according to a "variable geometry" of policy fields, arenas, and subject populations is well known (see Philippe Schmitter in Marks *et al.* 1996). Claiming that this functioning is novel or unique is of little relevance, in the presence of the current EU crisis. What this literature wants to contribute to is to understand whether policy decisions have or should acquire a polity-building rationale; that is, whether EU policies do or have to internalise their impact on the stability of the Union as a political entity. This is particularly the

case of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), with its exclusive reliance on macroeconomic stability and its focus on national budgetary discipline and "doing homework" (Featherstone 2011).

Beyond its contribution to factual reconstruction and normative theorising, this literature has still unexpressed potential for explanatory analysis, even for scholars who do not espouse its normative conclusions. It frames, I believe, the current scenario in a way that facilitates asking "why-questions" about the EU political impasse and its underlying causes and mechanisms. With the metaphor of the EU as a "demoicracy in the making", Nicolaïdis (2012) suggests that the logic of uploading national sovereignty to the supranational level has incrementally become one of mutual recognition and transnational opening. The existence of multiple "peoples" in Europe, which cannot be simply dissolved into a single European demos, means that the Westphalian State is no more the role model for EU-level polity-building. The only defensible endpoint for the EU polity, Nicolaïdis argues, is an architecture of shared leadership and domestic mediation; one which reduces to a minimum the need for rule harmonisation and the chances of domination and assimilation.

Ferrera (2016) describes instead the EU polity as a complex adaptive system, where new properties (such as belonging to a common market or a common monetary area) emerge that are irreducible to the sum of their component parts (Bhaskar 1978). Similarly to Nicolaïdis, he sees the EU as caught in-between a neither-or transition: a "change of state" where neither a return to untamed national sovereignty nor the creation of a federal super-state is a feasible option. What remains on the menu of historically practicable choices is crafting a true "Union of states". The latter would be a polity of novel kind, where member states would be aware of the irreversibility of their integration. Accordingly, they would internalise in their own national interest the externalities impose on other members by their own policies. In doing so, they would defuse disintegrative pressures with unpredictable polity-disrupting effects.

Present day Europe is very far from the mark of a "Union of states". The monetary union is a major and tangible step in this (almost) irreversible ontological jump. Instead of producing an ever closer union, however, the functioning of the EMU rather produces dis-union. Not only the overall EU+EMU framework is unable to contain polity disruption; it pitches member states (singularly or in groups) against each other on visible and valuable issues, while also imposing an intergovernmental drift on EU decision-making (Amato and Mény 2012). Increasing reliance on

intergovernmentalism makes coercion and blackmail among member states all the more likely. It magnifies the bargaining power of larger member states, potentially weakening the legitimacy of EU decision-making (Fabbrini 2016). Institutional remedies to the biased and incomplete logic of the EMU, such as greater coordination of social policies and the activation of channels of transnational solidarity (envisioned as a "European Social Union") simply become unrealistic in this scenario. Rescuing the EU from this kind of short-sightedness, putting it back on track with a vigorous and visionary reform agenda, is now the greatest challenge facing European political leaders.

A key analytical contribution of these normative accounts is that it encourages the reader to critically reconsider the idea that the EU is irremediably faulted, that there is nothing surprising about its withering. The EU is a complex, layered construct, which is undergone but also enlivened by multiple tensions. Moreover, there is no easy exit option for member states from their present transnational entanglement. What this line of reasoning suggests is that viable options exist to change the unfortunate course of today's EU, while the costs of letting it falter are high and increasing. What is lacking, then, is a shared sense of purpose and a shared belief that the EU polity – whatever kind of polity it may be – is an entity that is or can become a source of common goods such as security and prosperity (Almond and Powell 1966; Bartolini 2005) and therefore deserves proper maintenance (Ferrera 2016).[1] In a nutshell, the political problem is not so much that the EU is designed to be self-harming; it is rather that initiatives to rescue it from itself are nearly impossible to publicly justify on the basis of a shared sense of common good.

From this perspective, that the EU polity is not properly maintained by its governors is more than a normative question: it is a major empirical puzzle that remains unexplained. Why is it the case? What is preventing European political leaders from enacting effective polity-building initiatives and discourses? Are they, generally speaking, too constrained by political and institutional vetoes, or are they even unwilling or unable to deal with polity-level problems and effects?

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[1] According to Ferrera, the main reason behind the current malaise is the lack of a polity-building logic (what he calls EU-reason) akin to the Reason of State (or state-reason) that upheld state-building since the Modern Era. European states revised their own state-reason as they became democratic welfare states, establishing new channels of public intervention and legitimation. The EU, instead, did not only come short of asserting its authority on external security and social policy matters, but also failed to fully develop its competences on economic governance.

This paper tries to take a first step towards answering these complex questions. Drawing on Ferrera, but heightening focus on the role of agency, it advances a conceptualisation of leadership and a tentative framework to study its impact in a transnational environment. Section 1 advances the concept of Union-leadership as a particular case of political leadership. Section 2 tries to come up with Union-leadership's underlying logic of action, adopting a neo-Weberian understanding of polity-building, informed by the notions of state-reason and statecraft. Section 3 discusses the analytical steps still required to blend the concepts of personality, political agency and state reason within Union-leadership and within the EU's transnational political system. Some short concluding remarks wrap up the discussion.

1. Polity-building and agency: the concept of Union-leadership

The normative studies discussed above reveal the EU polity as ridden of conflicts and tensions. That the latter may escalate and cumulate until a major political crisis is unleashed is not surprising. Recent setbacks, from the "polish plumber" scare (Nicolaïdis 2007; Crespy 2010) to the forthcoming Brexit referendum (Butler et al. 2016), through the tormented steps of the Greek bailout (Schmidt 2014) are not necessarily puzzling developments. Setbacks are instead expected to occur from time to time, forcing the governing elites to engage in problem-solving and find the appropriate means to further polity development. What entails a major puzzle is the anaemic, unconvinced reaction of today's European elites. I am proposing the concept of Union-leadership precisely in order to study why this reaction is so feeble and whether a more resolute course of action is possible in the current scenario.

This question is best understood in an institutionalist perspective, where the relation between problems, agency and the pre-existing institutional environment can all be given proper attention. Historical neo-institutionalism (Steinmo 2008) and state-building studies of European integration (Bartolini 2005; Ferrera 2005) are two natural choices for the task. Unfortunately, they both focus on institutional sources of inaction and only sketchily conceptualise the role of agency. The latter, moreover, remains a potential source of both polity consolidation and disruption: an ambiguity that confounds why-questions on the absence of polity-building agency in the EU.

Both approaches offer little guidance when formulating expectations about what may trigger polity-building agency and facilitate or hinder its emergence. Most historical neo-institutionalists agree that the role of agency is magnified when institutions are weakened by past failures or new shocks. The notion of polity-building agency is nonetheless hard to reconcile with the theory's general view of institutions as self-stabilising devices and of agency as a source of change. The state building approach is a distinct variant of classical historical institutionalism, which focuses on the statehood projects of polity-building elites. Unfortunately, it disregards the transnational and emergent aspects of European integration, which remains nothing but the attempt to establish a European supranational state. As a result, the approach is too concerned with the clashing ambitions of nationalist and supra-nationalist elites to help ascertaining whether, and under what conditions,

national political leaders may opt for transnational EU-building. In sum, while the notion of change inducing agency is overly abstract, that of supranational state-building is unnecessarily narrow for the concept of Union-leadership. Further discussion remains necessary before coming up with a definition.

Greater conceptual clarity can be achieved by applying to Union-leadership a narrower notion of agency. Union-leadership is polity-building agency, operating at the EU level. The attribute "polity-building" indicates that agency, in this context, is not interested in institutional stability or change only out of its true preferences or of its better material interest. Conversely, this kind of agency tries to be "prudential" and as reflexive as possible about the foreseeable polity-disrupting consequences of its actions and inaction. Before developing this notion of prudence in Section 2, I will discuss the meaning of "operating at the EU level". In order to be given the chance to operate polity-building, Union-leadership requires at least the power to make legitimate authoritative decisions with polity-level effects. Rather than "agency", Union-leadership is thus better conceived as "political leadership" that operates polity-building in a transnational environment. Turning to political leadership, a time-honoured concept in political studies (DeRue et al. 2011), is a promising venue. However, the fragmented and multi-faceted literature on the topic, briefly discussed in the reminder of the section, also presents distinctive analytical challenges.

1.1 Blending personality and leadership

Back in the nineteenth century, the interest in the personality of "great men" led to a first strand of research on "leadership traits" (Galton and Eysenck 1869). Harold Lasswell was the first to systematically apply to it insights coming from psychology and psychopatology (1930). Fred Greenstein's seminal contribution on *Personality and Politics* (1969) proposed the first systematic framework and typologies for the study of individual and collective leaders. During the 1970s, Max Weber's notions of charisma and legitimacy gained new currency, influencing James MacGregor Burns's seminal distinction between transformational and transactional leadership (Burns 1978; see also Bass 1985; Hollander and Offermann 1990) In the 1980s, Tucker (1995) and Blondel (1987) provided a critical appreciation of the concept. Over the following decades, the growing personalisation of politics (Wattenberg 1991; McAllister 2007), the new waves of democratization

(Di Palma 1990), and the policy reforms stimulated by economic globalisation led to an increasing interest for the agency of leaders when democracies experience crisis (crisis-leadership: see Boin et al. 2005).[2]

Beyond government, leadership was recognised as crucial factor for the positioning and performance of parties at the polls in a new context of eroded partisan loyalties (Dalton and Wattenberg 2002; Katz and Mair 2009). At the same time, comparative politics recognised the importance of political agency to explain institutional change, leading to a revaluation of the role of political and ideational leaders in explaining major policy reforms (Hacker 2004; Schmidt 2008; Mahoney and Thelen 2010; Stiller 2010; James 2016). All the newly acquired functions of leadership also sparked a growing interest in measuring its effectiveness (Yukl 2006). Ever new typologies of leader profiles (Krasno and LaPides 2015), functions (Ancona *et al.* 2007; Pendleton and Furnham 2011), and traits (Coates and Herbert 2008) are emerging in the literature.

Two main lessons, I contend, can be drawn from this essential review. First, the many studies of leaders' traits and behaviour disregard mundane political dynamics, while studies of the personalisation of politics and of path-breaking reforms emphasise the leaders' activity of representation and government (but not polity-building). Second, the role of personality is only inadequately taken into account in comparative politics, but typologies and taxonomies to model its impact abound and wait to be incorporated in a wider analytical framework. The Union-leadership concept seeks a balanced account of these two meanings of leadership: leadership as observable government activity and leadership as the contribution of individual personality on decision-making. One way to keep both aspects in view is to start from a very generic definition of political leadership, such as Blondel's:

> "…the power exercised by one or a few individuals to direct members of the nation towards action." (Blondel 1987:3)

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[2] A renewed interest for traits and behaviours (Lord *et al.* 1986; Kirkpatrick and Locke 1991) complemented theories of charismatic and transformative leadership, focusing on symbolic and communicative skills (Pancer *et al.* 1999), discourse and manipulation (*heresthetics*: Riker 1986), emotional intelligence (see Zehndorfer 2014), and personal electoral marketability (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000).

What are the defining characteristics of political leadership, according to Blondel? It is hierarchical ("to direct") and purposeful ("action"); it occurs within a community ("the nation"), at the micro-level of individual interactions ("one or few individuals"; "members"). Each of these four aspects can be further specified in order to bring the Union-leadership concept closer to observable reality, while taking both government dynamics and the influence of personality in sight.[3]

First, Union-leadership may only "direct" within the constitutional framework of democratic representation that prevails across the EU28, where political leadership is constrained by a political "mandate" and by mechanisms of political election and selection. Second, the "action" Union-leadership promotes can be narrowed down to compliance to (or at least acceptance of) the leader's own political agenda, leaving open, at least for the moment, the question of its contents. Third, the "nation" here is best understood as the EU's transnational community, where the authority and influence of national leaders is still affected by the existence of national boundaries.

Finally, Union-leadership can better specify its interest in micro-level dynamics by adopting a specific focus on national Prime Ministers. The reason for this choice is twofold. Firstly, while Union-leadership can in principle be defined in such a way as to cover the Presidents of the European Commission and the European Central Bank, the role of national leaders is more open-ended and their polity-building actions potentially more telling, for the simple reason that they have no straightforward interest in the defence or expansion of supranational powers. Moreover, an intergovernmental style of decision-making resurfaces from time to time in EU level negotiations, expanding the leeway available to individual leaders. Secondly, government leaders are most often also the leaders of political parties that are strongly associated with them and their personal charisma. Charisma can here provide a link between government and personality, complementing the abovementioned rationale of political mandate. Of all the individuals exercising political leadership at the EU level, national Prime Ministers are those whose personality and charisma are most often and most thoroughly put to the test. This makes easier to observe them and make inferences upon their effects.

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[3] Union-leadership will therefore be an instantiation of Blondel's notion of leadership: a case of the latter, defined at a much lower level of abstraction (on the "ladder of abstraction" see the seminal contribution by Sartori 1970).

A number of loose ends still remain in the Union-leadership concept. Democratic representation and personal charisma stand in obvious tension, while also the interplay of transnational and intergovernmental dynamics remains to be clarified. Moreover, the concepts of power and personality open up a huge theoretical room for agency, but it is a room where indeterminacy reigns supreme. What are further structuring factors that can qualify Union-leadership and make it more analytically treatable? Can Union-leadership be conceived as a reflexive type of agency, one characterised by the willingness to accept self-restraints, in order to increase the odds of effective polity-building? Or does it only relinquish its purposes when forced to do so by environmental constraints?

Finally, some theoretical guidance is required to fill the notion of "leader's agenda" with empirical content and to distinguish polity-building agendas from potentially disruptive ones. The issue here is to understand which combinations of goals and means are incompatible with EU-building. However, distinguishing a priori and with meaningful precision polity-building from polity-disrupting initiatives is a very contentious normative exercise. It may require defining a final state EU polity, or at least some necessary intermediate steps towards it, in order to deduce the necessary contents of a "truly Union-building" agenda. I believe this would create more problems than it may solve and I rather look for a more inductive and open-ended approach. In the next section, I will suggest that turning to a Weberian understanding of politics and of the role of personality can diminish some of these difficulties.

2. Between state-reason and charisma: a neo-weberian understanding of Union-leadership

To restate, the concept of Union-leadership is defined by two constraining and two empowering elements. On the one hand, there is the need to formulate an electoral platform agreeable to the national electorate and deliver on it in order to be re-elected, as well as the need to foresee and minimise its potential for polity-disrupting effects at the EU level. On the other, one finds a rather generic reference to power, as well as the unpredictable and potentially game-changing role of personality and charisma. One problem here is that the constraining factors are too vaguely specified to meaningfully structure the concept in terms of expected and observable conduct, while the other two factors expand way too broadly the leader's room to manoeuvre. The empowering

role of charisma directly challenges the constraining role of electoral democracy. At the same time, the unspecified notion of power I borrowed from Blondel makes theoretically possible for leaders to make up for the polity-disrupting consequences of the policies with an (analytically unmanageable) array of informal and even unorthodox resources of influence and coercion.

In sum, my inductive focus on agency, in the absence of strong assumptions on the rationality and codes of conduct of the actors, leaves important dimensions of the Union-leadership concept haplessly unspecified. I believe that guidance on how to overcome this problem can be found by going back to one of the founding fathers of political science, namely Max Weber. Weber's late interest in the articulation of charisma and democracy and in the tension between power politics and the ethos of leadership, most famously discussed in his Vocation lecture on politics, already offers a first settlement to the dilemmas of Union-leadership. Here I will focus in particular on Weber's conception of democratic leadership and on his notion of Staatsräson (state-reason).

Starting from the latter, for Max Weber state-reason is the founding logic of the "political sphere", which acquired its autonomy and objective character throughout the process of secularisation and rationalisation. As a result, the absolute and self-referential role of the political sphere is the stabilisation and expansion of legitimate power over the subjects of binding decisions. In other words, state-reason is, for Weber just as it was for Machiavelli, the imperative of polity-building, standing beyond good and evil. It aims at responding to contingent challenges and at preserving the "conditions of possibility" of the polity: that is, the monopoly of coercive means and, at the same time, the resources needed to legitimise it.

For most of the 20th century, political scientists, and structural functionalists in particular, recognised this polity-building rationale of state-reason and reconceptualised it in terms of the system-maintenance function of politics. System-maintenance was considered a meta-function: that is, a prerequisite for the production of other political goods such as internal and external security, economic prosperity, and individual welfare. The intuition was that political systems could suffer from a disconnection between the quality and scope of political goods they produce and the demands advanced by the general public. By carrying out system-maintenance activities, such as socialisation, recruitment and communication, policy makers could better adapt to such challenges, stabilising the polity (Almond and Powell 1966).

Later scholarships have mostly taken system-maintenance for granted, at least when the object of study was a single policy arena. Neo-institutionalism in particular, with its idea of path dependency and institutional stability has described individual policies, let alone entire polities, as characterised by quasi-constitutional resilience. Studies of European unification have also largely assumed that integration was capable of system-maintenance, as it is the case for neo-functionalism, or downplayed the issue for various reasons, as in the case of historical institutionalism and, more recently, post-functionalism. Theorisations of the unfinished and profoundly innovative nature of the EU polity and of its development, such as the literature I reviewed at the beginning of the paper, suggests that system-maintenance is an open question that urgently needs renewed attention. Seemingly functional and popular decision might be polity-disrupting if they compromise or prevent institutional capabilities to act in related policy fields, or if they create irremediable tensions with other policies.

Against this backdrop, two observable characteristics of Union-leadership can be further specified. First, to be classified as Union-leadership, empirically observed political leadership must manifest observable awareness that policy-making produces positive or negative polity effects; in addition, it must manifest observable awareness that the polity relevant for such concerns is the EU one, not just the national one. However, the structural-functionalist concept of system maintenance is too restrictive for today's EU28 which, in its current EU+EMU configuration, is not a nation state and not on the way to becoming a supranational one. A notion of system-stabilisation would be intuitively more fitting in the EU context than structural-functionalist system-maintenance. Paradoxically, it is precisely on this ground that Weber's conception of state-reason may provide a better frame of reference for Union-leadership.

2.1 State reason: prerogative, prudence, statecraft

In Weber, state-reason is an absolute and impersonal logic of expanding government competences, and not yet, like in system-functionalism, a defined function (or meta-function) linked to a variety of policy-making activities. The generality of the state-reason concept is therefore more in tune with the image of the EU as a Union of polities, with a structure of government competences that may be different, now and in the future, than that of the nation state. In other words, system-maintenance is

both insufficient and too narrowly specified for a polity-in-the-making whose government competences and functions are still in flux. While this conclusion is in line with Ferrera's concept of *EU-reason* (Ferrera 2014), the notion of "Union-reason" I have in mind is something different from a rationale for expanding (certain) EU powers. Moreover, I believe that the very concept of state-reason, which Weber himself takes from the history of modern political thought, can provide additional insights on how leaders confront the polity-level consequences of their decisions. I will briefly elaborate on this point before turning to Weber's conception of democratic leadership.

The term state-reason was first introduced in 15th century Florence, well before the rise of the modern state (Wolin 1987). For almost two centuries the concept was continually revised and redefined throughout a heated but fragmented debate. Its main line of contention was the applicability to government of Aristotelian and Aquinas's ethics in the context of Modern Europe, which was characterised by endemic civil and religious wars, complex diplomatic orchestrations, the need to promote the image and reputation of the ruler, and the increasing salience of espionage and intelligence (Borrelli 1993). That novel scenario commanded the continual recourse to political manoeuvring, the constant monitoring and surveillance of the subjects' habits and loyalties, and the ruler's favourable disposition to simulation and dissimulation. Against this backdrop, if Weber was correct in describing state-reason as impersonal and increasingly autonomous from Christian ethics, scholars such as Wolin and Foucault authoritatively pointed out instructive differentiations in its development (Wolin 1987; Gordon 1987).

In a nutshell, a Machiavellian and an anti-Machiavellian tradition of state-reason can be distinguished. Machiavelli focused on the right code of conduct for rulers may achieve good reputation and everlasting renown. Accordingly he came to his famously "amoral" conclusion that the ruler may only achieve self-aggrandizement by means of the aggrandizement of the polity. This rationale for expanding power was not absolute or impersonal, but rather inseparable from the individuality and personality of the leader. In fact, Machiavelli himself never used the term state-reason, but rather opted for "art of state", or statecraft (Fuller 2016). The anti-Machiavellian variant is traceable to the influential work of Giovanni Botero and his "paradigm of preservation" (*paradigma conservativo*). It rejected the amoral character of Machiavelli's statecraft, seeking for reconciliation with political Aristotelism and the principles of Christian ethics (Borrelli 1993). This scholarship developed as a collection of best practices for rulers willing to retain their rule through

time management and political manoeuvring in security and foreign affairs. Progressively, state-reason came to indicate a compilation of "prudential wisdom": a sort of very detailed technical knowledge completely detached from the personal agenda of the ruler. It is only after the consolidation of the Westphalian state that state-reason lost the nitpicking, procedural, and experiential character it manifested during Renaissance. By incorporating the concept of "royal prerogative", state-reason finally turned into the logic of increasing rationality of government that Max Weber has indicated (Wolin 1987).

What to conclude, with regard to Union-leadership, from the considerations above? It can be concluded that Union-leadership can be defined as a specific type of political leadership that is (observably) reflexive on the consequences of its actions on the EU polity. The reflexive conduct of the Union-leader is akin but not equivalent to structural-functionalist system maintenance, and this is eminently due to the work-in-progress character of the EU polity. Union-leadership is thus better conceived as resting upon a state-reason-like rationale, which sees Union-building as the supreme goal of EU politics. However, and that is always related to the non-statehood of today's EU, this "Union-reason" cannot just be an "absolute" logic of expanding EU powers and prerogatives. One has to consider first and foremost the irremediable uncertainty that exists on the acceptable scope and functions of the EU government and, secondly, the transnational and in-between nature of Prime Ministers who attempt to exercise Union-leadership.

This is why I am suggesting drawing on the other rationales, alternative to "prerogative", available in the long history of the state-reason concept: statecraft and prudence. The latter suggests that Union-leadership should not (or at least not only) be equated to confrontational attempts to abruptly increase the powers of the Union. On the contrary, observable Union-leadership attempts may well be characterised by the key aspects of Botero's state-reason: incrementalism, the crafty use of time-management and ambiguity, and the repackaging of past experiences and ideas. Including a reference to Machiavellian statecraft means instead that the rationale of Union-reason needs not being in contrast with the self-promoting and office-seeking goals of national political leaders. Finally, at least in my understanding, neither referring to prudence nor referring to statecraft stand in major contradiction with my previous "Weberian" assumption that Union-leadership should see Union-building as the supreme goal of EU politics. The existence of alternatives rather points to the fact that different empirical conducts are compatible with the basic premises of Union-leadership.

In sum, the prudential elements of state-reason let us see in which sense Union-leadership may accept a number of self-restraints on "the exercise of power" in order to live by its polity-building ambitions. Here, the fact that leaders may accept self-restraints on their personality and power is not a result of mere political strategising; on the contrary, it directly follows from the recognition that too ambitious polity-building attempts may also bring about further polity-disruption. In a similar way, referring back to statecraft points out that Union-leadership needs not a sub-optimal, inconsequential, or purely affective way of running the national government, or an electoral misstep. Being mindful of statecraft rather leads me to expect that Union-leadership will be more frequently observable whenever national leaders think of challenging the status quo of the EU as a way of furthering their electoral fortunes.

2.2 A Weberian perspective on democratic leadership

Discussing the concept of state-reason has uncovered a promising link between polity-building and the role of power and personality within political leadership. As long as the analysis does not neglect the system-maintenance functions of the political system, it is fair to conclude that these three elements can be brought within one same analytical umbrella. The interplay between the logic of prerogative (the expansion of government competences), prudence (reliance on tactics and experience) and statecraft (the art of combining polity-building and personal ambition) points at a more complex and realistic understanding of the role of leaders. However, the insights reviewed in the previous section have not made Union-leadership more empirically tractable. An undecidable three-way tension remains between polity-building ambitions, the leader's personal agenda, and the need to gain consensus and win office.

It is again in Max Weber's work that further insights can be found on how democratic leaders cope with this trilemma. According to Weber, electoral democracy opens a new phase in the autonomisation of the political sphere, which imposes a further twist on the impersonal logic of state-reason. Electoral democracy implies that not only government scope and activities must rest on legal-rational basis (as it was the case under absolute monarchy): also the selection of the governors must follow a similar logic. In other words, democracy means the proceduralisation of charismatic authority/legitimacy. In democratic polities, charismatic individuals seeking legitimate

authority can opt to become professional politicians. Doing so, they accept to subject their personal quest for power to the procedures of election and selection valid in their national political system.

As long as they wish to operate in a political sphere which rests on a "democratised" state-reason, leaders have compromise with the imperatives of electoral democracy. Such a compromise should not be seen as a structural constraint, imposed on an abstract notion of agency. Conversely, it is best understood as a necessary prerequisite for acquiring power in those polities where state-reason and democracy both apply. The fact that the democratic struggle for power is (allegedly) open to charismatic individuals of any social background (rather than just to the scions of the reigning family) revamps the logic of statecraft and self-aggrandizement in contemporary political systems, getting over the impersonal state-reason of the eighteenth-century *Polizeistaat*. In polities where electoral competition, rather than war or birthright, selects the ruler, statecraft and democratic procedures find themselves inescapably entwined. As a result, aspiring leaders have to perform a variety of mundane activities, such as winning the loyalty of their own party or formulating a self-committing appeal to the public. But it is worth pointing out that Weber never thought that leaders had to commit themselves to platforms of policy proposals. They rather presented themselves as harbingers of visions and fundamental values. This is a point worth further reflection.

To briefly summarise his classical argument (see Anter 2014), Weber sees candidate leaders as either interested in office for its own sake or as guided by the "vocation" (*Beruf*) for a political "cause" (*Sache*) of their own choice. The former, termed "power politician" (*Machtpolitiker*), are mindless about the far-reaching consequences of the conduct, whereas the latter, identified as "vocation politician" (*Berufspolitiker*), follow a much more demanding deontology. They somehow need to strike a balance between sticking to the goals and means prescribed by their cause (ethics of conviction) and coming to terms with the objective necessity of the social world (ethics of responsibility). While devoted to their cause, vocation politicians are nonetheless constantly cross-pressured by the ethics of responsibility. They encounter it when selecting the most effective means to their ends and also when determining the acceptable level of violence for enforcing a given policy. Most notably, they confront it when they must assess, with the help of past experience and scientific knowledge, the historical feasibility of their own cause. Essentially, this means adjudicating the compatibility between the latter and the polity-building imperatives of contemporary state-reason. Here, Weber rediscovers two core elements of pre-modern state-reason:

prudence and experience. Unlike earlier political thinkers, however, he subjects them to the moral inclinations of individual leaders.

To restate, in Weber's view elections are just formal mechanisms to select, together with the leader, the very values and worldviews that he or she freely chose to represent. Electoral appeals rest on generic normative worldviews and the whole issue of intermediation and delegation is absent. The rules of the electoral game do not channel or select demands for substantive representation or policy change. Electoral dynamics remains a mere reflection of procedural requirements, which greatly limits the constraining power of what I previously called "mandate". In this light, Weber's reading of democracy may appear today at once too crudely realist and too idealistic. Public demands might well be myopic and inconsistent as Weber expected. In turn, political parties still put on offer recognisable alternatives on socio-economic and socio-cultural matters. And yet, the evolution of politics and society in most political systems has increased the leverage of bottom-up political dynamics, while also narrowing down the ideological conflict space, at least among the so-called mainstream parties.

It is no surprise, then, that contemporary theories of electoral democracy, be they inspired by Down's median voter theorem (Downs 1957) or by the identification of societal cleavages *à la* Rokkan, are all focused the role of political intermediation (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Shedding light on the substantive priorities and orientations of the masses, they elucidate all the substantive constraints on government activity (the interests and groups of "primary electoral interest") that inevitably filter through the formal-rational procedures of modern democracies. Within a leadership-centred approach, these pieces of information can only be renounced at the risk of naïve voluntarism. But, if these models cannot be dismissed, they nonetheless tend to downplay the role of its intrinsic features of political leadership, such as the leader's preferences and orientations, values and moral choices, as well as personality traits. Adopting a Weberian perspective, I suggest, may help addressing this shortcoming and lead to a more balanced account of democratic leadership.

My contention is that Weber's argument can well accommodate the insights of contemporary political science on the many societal, institutional and even supranational constraints nowadays imposed on political leadership. Weber's original focus on leaders' moral choices and orientations

does not preclude acquiring an informed, detailed understanding of the electoral imperatives they face. Such an understanding might well refer to Downsian or Rokkanian models, occasionally combining or rejecting some of their insights. Providing the actors that operate in the political sphere with this kind of practical knowledge is precisely the role that Weber anticipated for the social sciences. More precisely, what is distinctive (and indeed useful to Union-leadership) in a Weberian perspective, especially when compared to bottom-up theories of democracy, is a different way of understanding the interplay between leadership choices and the factors that constrain them.

Seen through Weberian lenses, leadership behaviour is neither a mere reaction to political demands or external constraints, nor the result of randomness, fuzziness, or caprice. Weberian leaders are neither office-seekers à la Downs (although the *Machtpolitiker* might fall close to the latter) always ready to please a majority of voters, nor policy-seekers à la Rokkan, only interested in mobilising and representing their own subculture or *classe gardée*. Weberian leaders are first and foremost free, purposeful and (as far as vocation politicians are concerned) principled agents. They make fundamental moral choices (value-judgements) and then take policy decisions from a historically constrained menu of options. In so doing, they are able to come to terms with reality, but also to pursue a transformative moral vision.

In sum, a Weberian approach assumes leaders to be capable of making independent moral and factual judgements, and to introduce real (that is, ontological) innovations into the social world. When seen through Weberian lenses, Downsian or Rokkanian predictors of leaders' behaviours become objective necessities and constraints, which can shape but never entirely determine the conduct of political leadership. What is more, Weber's reasoning provides guidance for understanding how leaders "freely" make choices on their historically constrained policy menus. Weberian insights thus allow advancing on the icy ground of power and personality. The next section will further elaborate on these Weberian foundations, in order to make power and personality more analytically tractable and bring them closer to observable empirics.

3. From political leadership to Union-leadership: a tentative step forward

This section takes stock of the arguments discussed in previous parts of the paper and begins developing the concept of Union-leadership in empirical terms. I will first of all clarify how I intend to analyse power and personality. To this aim, I will connect with two more recent strands of literature that either build on Weber's work or develop arguments largely compatible with it: the neo-statecraft approach and neo-charismatic theories of personality. Finally, I will consider some additional difficulties related to the partly transnational nature of government and representation within the EU. I will start by summarizing the conceptions of power and personality emerge from the Weberian insights discussed in the last section.

Regarding the issue of "power", Weberian democratic leaders are not simply individuals endowed with the power to govern. They are selected by their political environment among individuals willing and able to win and retain "power" and they operate within a political system that rests on a specific type of state-reason and faces them with various types of challenges, including cognitive ones. Using the terms I have discussed in the previous subsection, these individuals do not exert power, but statecraft. Out of their own self-interest, these leaders have to square the circle between promoting their own political career and taking care of system maintenance and polity building. At the same time, they are also characterised by a moral dimension, which can be conceived as a continuum ranging from the opportunism of the *Machtpolitiker* to the righteousness of the *Berufspolitiker*. When they do so, they not only manifest devotion to a "cause" or "vision"; the ethics of responsibility, they also abide by (or, better, internalise) the logic of prudence. While all of these linkages are pure possibilities which in the end remain open, empirical questions, the Weberian approach offers great help in making the concept of power more analytically tractable, while accounting for both necessity and freedom in the analysis of leadership.

The notion of statecraft has been recently rediscovered by a number of studies of British politics and government leaders (James 2016; Clarke, James et. al 2015; Clarke and James 2015). This so-called neo-statecraft literature has developed a very convincing framework for analysing political leadership under electoral constraints, emphasising its potential for innovation and creative action. I will propose a number of amendments to the approach before nesting it a Weberian perspective and in order to apply it in a transnational political context.

Regarding "personality", an "exemplary character" indeed remains a crucial feature of leadership. From a Weberian perspective, however, some of its manifestations are more important than others. Charisma, meaning here interpersonal agreeableness and the capacity of leaders to attract followers and guide their collaborators, is certainly the most important. The leaders' moral fabric, worldview, and attitude towards change constitute the raw material of their personal authoritativeness. Cognitive abilities and the capacity to process information and take decisions under pressure or time constraints are also important, as key preconditions for the ethics of responsibility to rein in imprudent behaviour. Along these lines, personality is not meant to remain part of a residual explanation, or a simple reference to the irreducible and mysterious nature of human individuality. Personality can be unpackaged in a number of sub-dimensions, which allow formulating expectations on how different individual profiles may approach decision-making tasks and their challenges.

In the next paragraphs I propose to consider personality as an intervening factor, which may further constrain or expand the chances of individual leaders to exercise successful statecraft. Therefore, I will speak of personality-bounded statecraft. I will propose a grid of personality sub-dimensions inspired by a Weberian reading of political leadership. The grid will cross-tabulate a number of traits and behaviours taken from the leadership literature, and in particular from neo-charismatic theories.[4]

3.1 Political leadership as personality-bounded statecraft

From a Weberian perspective, the defining trait of an agent is its ability of making choices. Weber largely emphasises the personal dimension of choice, its interior and moral nature, which especially holds for the epochal decisions of democratic leaders. Accordingly, for however many, varied and compelling constraints or imperatives leaders may face when exercising statecraft, they are always assumed to enjoy the fundamental freedom to act or refuse to act of their own accord. Along these

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[4] Neo-charismatic theories constitute a primary approach among contemporary studies of leadership behaviour in administration, business, and social movements. As the name suggests, this scholarship draws on Weber's theorisation of charismatic authority, while building on the seminal contributions of Burns (1978) House (1977) and Bass (1985). As I briefly mentioned in Section 1, during the Seventies the emphasis on traits and behaviours in leadership studies started to be critically re-examined. Following Weber, neo-charismatic theories affirmed the ascribed and context-dependent nature of charisma, trying to determine its preconditions and effects. The focus was thus shifted from charismatic individuals themselves to leader-follower relations, and to the effective articulation of value-based visions of radical transformation.

lines, statecraft is more precisely conceivable as an activity that is, on the one hand, influenced by the rationales of polity-building, prudence and self-aggrandisement "from above" as well as, on the other hand, conditioned "from below" by a series of situational constraints, such as policy problems and legacies, available knowledge and resources or the configuration of the electoral space, all of which restrict the policy menu historically available to the leader.

In Weber's original thought, personality enters this picture in three ways: not only as charisma, but also as the leader's cognitive abilities and individual moral fabric and value-orientations. There is little reference to psychology or psychoanalysis, but rather to a relational and interactional notion of subjectivity. In the case of elected leaders or, more in general, first line professional politicians the attribute of charisma can largely be assumed a priori. Charisma, a quality ascribed by the followers, is a prerequisite of political incumbency in Weber's conception of democracy. Similarly, Weber seems to assume that leaders, when taking decisions, can normally access the best information available. Although he was worried by the "economic incompetence" of the heads of the socialist movement, he related incompetence to their ideological mindset and never suggested discriminating among leaders on the basis of their cognitive skills and background. Finally, the moral dimension of leadership consists for Weber in the choice of a cause and in seeking a balance between the ethics of conviction and the ethics of responsibility. The moral reasoning that underlies both choices, however, remains unobservable. The fact that it takes place and its substantive content can only be assumed or be inferred by the leaders' stances and conduct.

In sum, personality is a crucial and multifaceted dimension of leadership in Weber's argument. However, it remains unclear how it can be empirically observed and how empirical observation itself may help discriminating among leaders with different interpersonal and cognitive skills or moral dispositions. In order to preserve Weber's insights while making them more empirically tractable, I suggest adding personality to the list of situational constraints faced by leadership as it exercises statecraft. This is what I mean with the expression personality-bounded statecraft. Assuming variation in the cognitive, relational and "visionary" attributes of real-world leaders means acknowledging the fact different leaders confronted with comparable problems may experience very different constraints on their menu of historically available options.

Just to make some examples, more charismatic leaders might be able to sidestep situational constraints with a personal assumption of responsibility, or by credibly invoking for themselves the aura of a higher moral authority. Leaders with higher interpersonal skills might be more familiar with the media environment and keep their entourage more efficient and motivated. Finally, leaders with higher cognitive skills might be able to find original solutions to policy problems, to better monitor implementation, and to outsmart their rivals. It is evident that any of these "comparative advantages" might decisively contribute to unblock decisional stalemates and to increase the political sustainability of the leader's preferred policy course, thus actualising the potential for innovation of political leadership.

Trying to exemplify of observable aspects of leadership also gives me the chance to be more explicit about one last key feature of Weber's conception of leadership, namely its functions. Weber seems to suggest three main tasks for democratic leaders: struggling for power in the political arena, responsibly dealing with government activities and their consequences, and selecting which fundamental values have to be upheld in their political community. Some commentators suggest that this threefold task of leadership conforms and expands Hugh Heclo's influential dyad of powering and puzzling (Heclo 1974). Why is this parallelism between Weber and Heclo worth pointing out?

On the one hand, this indicates that Weber's political theory is not as removed from on the ground policy analysis and process tracing as it could seem looking only at its high-level philosophical profile. On the other, this means integrating Heclo's typology with a third function: "valuing". Valuing can be understood as the infusion of values and meaning to policy decisions and to the relative request of recognition and compliance. Without abandoning the basic assumptions of a Weberian approach, the notion of valuing offers a promising window on discursive institutionalism and, more in general, social constructivist models and arguments, interested in the normative and communicative dimensions of policy and politics. Valuing has the potential to overcome an exclusive focus on instrumental considerations, be they of political or technical nature, emphasising the essential activity of normatively justifying government action (and inaction), linking it with the "vision" promoted by the leader.

If one takes seriously the idea of personality-bounded statecraft, it is precisely at the interplay between the leaders' endowments (in terms of their cognitive, interpersonal, and visionary qualities) and their threefold function of powering, puzzling and valuing that different leadership styles may emerge, even in the face of similar problems. It follows that, in times of crisis or rapid change, different leadership styles may then lead entire polities towards different historical outcomes, according to the courses of action their Prime Ministers can (or feel they can) credibly and successfully pursue. Therefore, before drawing conclusions on the merits and effectiveness of political leaders and their contribution to polity developments, it is important to account systematically for the effects of their personality on the exertion of statecraft.

Table 1: Taxonomy of Personality Traits for Union-leadership

	Competence (task-oriented)	**Sociability (relational-oriented)**	**Charisma (change-oriented)**
Background	*Qualification*: • Education; • Conscientiousness; • …	*Temperament*: • Extraversion; • Emotional intelligence; • …	*Ego*: • Self-confidence; • Power hunger; • …
Practice	*Stewardship*: • Technical knowledge; • Recourse to delegation; • …	*Demeanour*: • Communication skills; • Self-confidence; • …	*Initiative*: • Pro-activeness; • Attitude towards change; • …
Perception	*Trustworthiness*: • Perceived own competence • Perceived cabinet competence	*Sympathy*: • Perceived empathy	*Exemplarity*: • Perceived moral integrity; • Perceived as "strong leader"

Source: Elaborated from Pancer *et al*. 1999; DeRue et al. 2011; Krasno and Lapides 2015

To operationalise personality, I propose adopting the taxonomy shown in Table 1. It relies on three main sources. The first is Pancer's seminal study of popular perceptions of political leaders as a function of four categories: competence, empathy, honesty/integrity and strong leadership (Pancer *et al.* 1999). The second is DeRue's extensive literature review and meta-analysis of the effectiveness of leadership traits (DeRue *et al.* 2011). The third is a comparative psychobiographical study of nineteen global leaders (Krasno and LaPides 2015), which combines traditional and novel insights on leader profiling. The definition of these nine subdimensions and the selection of the relevant traits and behaviours are not meant to reinvent the wheel of leadership and personality studies, or to disregard other prominent approaches. Goal of the taxonomy, instead, is to systematize the subjective assessment of leadership qualities, rationalise the access to empirical

sources, and guarantee a basis for comparisons and generalisations across leaders. As long as traits are clearly operationalised and can be straightforwardly linked to one of the nine subdimensions, reference to existing typologies – such as the Big Five (Rubenzer and Faschingbauer 2004) or Hermann's LTA (Leadership Trait Analysis: Hermann 1974) – is not precluded. Conversely, some degree of eclectism is deemed necessary in order to take advantage of available pieces of evidence, considering that there is no possible way of running standardised personality tests on Prime Ministers and their entourages.

The columns in Table 1 follow DeRue's threefold distinction between task-oriented, relational-oriented, and change-oriented traits, which, for the sake of clarity, I nicknamed competence, sociability and charisma. These dimensions have been chosen for their ability to accommodate the knowledge produced by neo-charismatic theories of leadership (I refer in particular to change-oriented traits and behaviours) together with additional empirical and interpretive insights from other approaches (such as symbolic leadership theory, leader-follower exchange theory and role theory of leadership, to mention just a few) and studies of leadership effectiveness. The idea behind this selection is to be as open and inductive as possible. The main analytical goal is not to formulate a psychological assessment of individual leaders, but to fill with empirical content the nine sub-dimensions, in order to formulate ideal-types of leadership styles as both a heuristic and an interpretive tool.

The rows tackle instead a preoccupation with the empirics of personality analysis: where to observe them and how to select them. My solution of choice is distinguishing between long term personal background, situational behaviours, and perceptions of the public. "Background" traits and behaviours are the long-term elements of personality and personal identity. This is the kind of elements that can be reconstructed by examining biographical and auto-biographical materials and focusing on formative life experiences (often recognised as such by the agents themselves) with lingering effects (on the so-called psychobiographical approach see Schultz 2005). "Practice" traits and behaviours focus instead on the short-term, in order to examine how the personality of leaders manifested itself during definite critical moments, when actions and decisions were taken. This is the kind of material that is most often found in actor-centred analyses based on process tracing and historical reconstruction. Empirics related to these traits can be gathered not only through biographical accounts of the events, but also through newspaper articles, official statements or

recordings, and interviews with key informants. Finally, "perception" traits deal with the ascribed nature of certain leadership traits. They are meant to capture the public image of the leaders, which reshapes their chances to actualise into the public sphere the other, "intrinsic", aspects of their personality.

Following this reasoning, a leader's competence dimension of personality is the sum of long term "qualification", practiced "stewardship", and ascribed "trustworthiness" (personal and cabinet's) among the public; her sociability dimension is the sum of long term "temperament", practiced "demeanour", and "sympathy" among the public; finally, her charisma is the sum of long-term "ego", practiced "initiative", and an attribution of "exemplarity" to the public. Cell contents, instead, are mere exemplifications of how the extant multiplicity of leadership traits can be streamlined. So, for instance, the "ego" and "initiative" sub-dimensions contain ego defensiveness and power hunger as in the influential notion of "authoritarian personality" (Greenstein 1969; Krasno and Lapides 2015). The "initiative" and "demeanour" sub-dimensions include the key traits of Burns (1978)'s transformational leadership: self-confidence, proactiveness and attitude towards change. These exemplifications suggest that finer-grained traits and behaviours are not removed from the picture. On the contrary, they enter the grid as assets useful to operationalise the nine personality subdimensions, bringing them closer to empirically observable materials.

To summarise, taking personality into account is a complex and tricky analytical effort. The relevant scholarship is fragmented and does not possess a set of shared assumptions or a unique vocabulary. Nonetheless, Weber's original reflections and contemporary neo-charismatic theories of personality provide enough guidance to elaborate a heuristic grid for leadership profiling, like the one I proposed in this section. By systematically organising extant biographical, documentary, and survey evidence on political leaders, it is possible to add a personality profile to the list of situational constraints posed on the exercise of statecraft. The working hypothesis that personality bounds statecraft allows me to ascertain whether the leaders' individual personality profiles restrict, ceteris paribus, their available menus of historical possibilities.

3.2 Practicing statecraft at the national level

Up to now, I have discussed how statecraft is constrained from below by situational factors (including the leader's personality profile) and structured from above by the threefold logic of state-reason, prudence, and Machiavellian "self-aggrandizement". Now it is time to be more precise about what statecraft substantively consists of. How is it practiced within national boundaries? Which activities routinely carried out by political leaders belong to the exercise of national statecraft? A recent strand of literature, named neo-statecraft theory (Buller and James 2012; 2014; James 2016; Clarke, James et. al 2015; Clarke and James 2015), offers a promising starting point to answer these questions.

Neo-statecraft is an elite theory focusing on how politicians manage government while cultivating an electoral appeal. Drawing on Jim Bulpitt's work on British politics (Bulpitt 1986; 1995), it seeks to explain policy making and policy change in economic and foreign affairs, as well as to evaluate the merits of executive leaders. Neo-statecraft identifies itself as an agency-led variant of historical institutionalism (James 2016). It understands politics in-context and in-time and searches for context-dependent regularities, while using concepts akin to critical juncture, unintended consequence and context-sensitive preference.

The theory rests on a very clear actor designation. It focuses on (candidate) Prime Ministers and their entourage, seen altogether as a unitary subject: the court or clique.[5] Cliques are office-seekers; they only want to keep winning elections. To support their aim, they rely on semi-structured codes of behaviour, named "governing codes", featuring both grand philosophical principles and instrumental policy beliefs. Governing codes also individuate a number of domains on which cliques want to maximize autonomy vis-à-vis domestic stakeholders. Moreover, cliques exert five "statecraft functions" (Table 2) along a "statecraft cycle". In order to fulfil their political goals, cliques does not only need a winning electoral strategy, but also to show governing competence, to achieve argument hegemony in the public debate, to keep their party under control and to steer the rules of the electoral game (Buller and James 2012; James 2016).

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[5] I will use the less common term clique to avoid confusion with "courts" as juridical bodies, such as the CJEU or the German Bundesverfassungsgericht.

Table 2: The 5 Statecraft Functions

Function	Description
Winning Electoral Strategy	Crafting an image and policy package that will give the party impetus in the lead-up to the polls;
Governing Competence	Cultivating a reputation for 'governing competence, especially in the area of economic policy;
Party Management	Fending off leadership challenges and ensure party coalescence to maintain credibility in the delivery of legislation and governing competence;
Political Argument Hegemony	Making the party's arguments on policy solutions and the general stance of government generally accepted among the elite and, possibly, the public;
Bending the Rules of the Game	Maintain or change the constitutional rules of the game to make winning elections easier to achieve

Source: Adapted from Clarke and James 2015: 22-31.

These five statecraft functions capture routinely activities in different times and places of the electoral cycle. Actions across the five functions should obey to a unifying logic, a leadership style unique to the leader or clique. Neo-statecraft scholars call such an element the leader's "governing code", but fall short of developing this interesting concept. Nonetheless, their strong actor-centred perspective allows combining in one same "statecraft cycle" partisan and government dynamics (such as party management and electoral reforms), as well as symbolic and material achievements (such as good performances at the pools but also in public debates). Drawing on Bulpitt's original attention to the multi-level scope of leadership, whose strategies unfold at both the national and the sub-national level, the same perspective allow for a holistic view of the polity, which is another promising asset for the study of Union-leadership.

Neo-statecraft shares with a Weberian reading of political leadership the fundamental assumption that leaders are free agents that, even when heavily constrained, may respond creatively and innovatively to their environment. At the same time, in the context of contemporary democracies, it has much to contribute to the Weberian approach in terms of empirical substantiation. Neo-statecraft is in fact hospitable to a wide array of insights coming from various branches of electoral studies, be they qualitative or quantitative, or be they interested in cleavage voting, in the role of political supply and party organisation, or in campaign effects. Considering the theory's explicit and realist focus on electoral rules, this versatility allows modelling with great precision the constraints and opportunities that characterise national political systems in different points in time. Finally, neo-statecraft also tackles the role of the media system and to intra-party dynamics. In other words,

it is compatible with any combination of Downsian and Rokkanian insights on political competition, as well as with constructivist or other non-interest-based conceptions of representation.

At the same time, some aspects of neo-statecraft theory are less in tune with Weber's account of the role of political leadership and of its moral dimension. Neo-statecraft nicely updates Machiavelli's idea of "self-aggrandizement by means of the aggrandizement of the polity" by equating political leaders' personal success with the electoral and governing successes of their cliques. What is largely missing from the neo-statecraft framework, however, is the "vocation" element. The Weberian tension between responsibility and conviction and its implications for puzzling, valuing and polity-building are not adequately taken into account. The "visionary" qualities of leadership have a mere instrumental function in neo-statecraft theory, whose only focus is on "powering". Puzzling is by and large "puzzling on how to power", which has little to do with effective, not to say responsible, problem solving or polity-building. The long term perspective plays no part in the statecraft cycle. Valuing is not even conceived as a leadership function: leaders are not harbingers of moral worldviews and in no way they are meant to present their ethical convictions to their political community. On the contrary, they should rather take stances that resonate with the prevailing attitudes among the public.

3.2.1 Neo-statecraft theory and Weberian leadership

I hereby propose a number of amendments to neo-statecraft theory to bring it closer to the additional insights of my Weberian understanding of leadership. A first possible addition goes back to the issue of personality. Neo-statecraft scholars have written extensively on British party leaders since the Victorian Age, producing detailed evaluations of their performance across the five statecraft functions (Clarke, James *et al.* 2015; Clarke and James 2015). This scholarship nicely combines theory with historical and biographical analysis. Still, I find surprising that heightening focus on leaders' individuality came short of a sounder treatment of leadership as personality, which has somehow remained between the lines.

I believe that the intuition that personality bounds statecraft, together with the analytical grid in Table 1, would help inferring regularities across leadership profiles. Without major adaptations, it would just be possible to include the personality of the leader among the defining characters of the clique. The stewardship, demeanour and initiative sub-dimensions may be revealing of how leaders

are able to cultivate and manage their entourages. Information from the leaders' cognitive, relational and psychological background can indicate structuring factors of their puzzling and valuing activities. Overall, an in-depth exploration of the effects of personality on statecraft may add significance to the underdeveloped and overly descriptive concept of governing code. Even more promising is the chance to determine which personality traits are more important for each statecraft function. This would benefit neo-statecraft theory in two ways: by shortening its causal chains and by ascribing an even greater causal leverage to the agency of the cliques.

The second amendment I propose deals with the question of state-reason. The discussion in previous sections of the paper suggests that it is reasonable to assume that democratic polities select leaders that, to some extent (the latter being an empirical question) internalise the imperatives of polity-building and prudence. In Weber, the latter depends on the ethics of responsibility, while the former is partly tackled by the leader's sense of responsibility and partly enforced by the impersonal logic of the political sphere. How can these insights be merged into the five functions of statecraft? More precisely, is it possible to trace the five functions of statecraft to the three Weberian functions of leadership? And how can the strong focus of neo-statecraft on winning elections with an appealing party image and platform be reconciled with Weber's lack of interest in the demand side of democratic politics?

Table 3a: Union-leadership: Statecraft, responsibility and responsiveness

	Responsibility	*Responsiveness/ Accountability*	*Statecraft*
Powering	Legal	Electoral mandate	Bending the rules of the game Party management
			Political Argument Hegemony
Puzzling	Reflexive	Party ideology	Winning electoral strategy Governing competence
Valuing	Transcendental	Party identity	?

In Table 3a, I suggest taking seriously the threefold distinction between powering, puzzling and valuing, considering how each of them may relate to responsibility and how to the clique's political mandate and political accountability. These are admittedly rough simplifications of a much murkier reality, but the goal is to gain analytical leverage by sharpening relations among concepts. Accordingly, to each leadership function (powering, puzzling and valuing) I associate a prevailing

form of responsibility and a prevailing form of responsiveness/accountability.[6] In addition, I also assign them certain statecraft functions.

Responsibility here indicates logic whereby leaders and cliques accept limitations from above to their statecraft. I take the tri-partition between legal, reflexive and transcendental from the discussion in Davis (2001). Leaders are confronted with "legal responsibility" as they exercise powering, whenever they must take hard decisions about the opportunity to violate long-term commitments or constitutional provisions (including, for instance, international treaties). They are confronted with "reflexive responsibility" whenever they need to process information and "puzzle" on the most effective means to a given goal, eventually revising their previous beliefs. Finally, they confront "transcendental responsibility" whenever they are forced to consider taking actions in contrast with their "cause" and their deepest moral convictions. It is worth noting that all of these three declinations of responsibilities are present to some extent in Weber's conception of political leadership. Legal responsibility, while not thematised as such, captures certain aspects of the impersonality and polity-building logic of state-reason. Reflexive responsibility comes very close to Weber's ethics of responsibility, especially when applied to problem-solving. Transcendental responsibility reflects the highest and innermost type of responsibility that, in Weber, forces leaders to "draw red lines" (which they are not ready to cross) and "renounce the world" when the ethics of convictions and responsibility cannot be reconciled.

Looking instead at the dimension of responsiveness/accountability, the idea is to model which assets leaders and cliques can use to make their visions electorally appealing. This means nesting radically innovative proposals within reassuring packages, which their electorate can recognise and look with sympathy. A reasonable assumption in this respect is that cliques can take advantage of the image and identity of their own party. In order to power their preferred policies, cliques can rely on the authority bestowed on them by their party's electoral mandate. When puzzling on new policy solutions, workable both in functional and consensus-building terms, leaders and cliques can first of all take advantage of their party ideology. The latter provides them with causal and instrumental arguments that may sound true, or at least plausible, to their electors. Finally, when taking difficult

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[6] The tension between responsiveness responsibility and its potentially disruptive effect on European party democracy have been extensively discussed in the work of the late Peter Mair (2013). I only make limited reference to his analysis, trying to expand it in line with my Weberian framework.

decisions on fundamental ethical questions and dilemmas, leaders can first of all make appeals to the identity and image of their party, borrowing credibility and moral authority from the historical records of their own political organisation.

Thinking in terms of the five statecraft functions, the two most clearly related to the powering function of leadership are "party management" and "bending the rules of the game". Powering is quintessential to these functions: when dealing with them, leaders exercise power in order to increase their powering options. It is very obvious that leaders and cliques confront the responsibility of breaching or bending legal constraints when forcing the internal rules of their parties or the electoral rules of their political systems. At the same time, they may empower their actions with references to their electoral promises and/or with the sheer numbers of their electoral victory.

The "winning electoral strategy" and the "governing competence" functions realise instead a form of puzzling: more precisely, as I suggested above, puzzling on how to power. In fact, policy choices taken with these functions are not made to achieve certain policy or polity-building goals, but only in order to keep winning elections. Leaders and their governments may confront reflexive responsibility when dealing with these functions, given that their arguments need to satisfy some objective criteria of validity to be credible and support at least a resemblance of competence. Once again, party ideology can provide leaders with cognitive shortcuts acceptable to large sects of the electorate, reducing the effort and political uncertainty of substantive puzzling. Regarding "political argument hegemony", it has instead a hybrid status. It may seem another puzzling activity, but it actually a form of powering in the realm of ideas. There is no need, in fact, for arguments to be valid or evidence-based for them to achieve hegemony. The latter, in turn, is a key to change in one's own favour the terms of the debate during the subsequent iterations of (collective) puzzling. Finally, as I suggested above, the dimension of valuing has little relevance in the original neo-statecraft approach. How can this limitation of neo-statecraft be redressed?

In Table 3b I elaborate further on the three functions of leadership. Following the intuition that puzzling may be carried out in order to power and that powering might also be exerted to gain argument hegemony on subsequent round of puzzling, I subdivided the statecraft column in nine cells. Therefore, powering might be exerted in order to (get more) power, in order to puzzle (from a

position of hegemony), or in order to value (from a position of higher moral authority). Similarly, puzzling can be exercised in order to (get more) power, in order to puzzle (developing new knowledge and cognitive skills), and in order to value (infusing meaning in the initiatives of the government). Finally, valuing can also be exercised in order to (get more) power, in order to puzzle (as when a phase of assessment and evaluation is started after declaring success) or in order to value (as when a sincere moral judgement is given).

In order to fill-in the table, I take inspiration from within the leadership literature, in particular from studies of "crisis-leadership" (Boin *et al.* 2005). Crisis leadership generally provides descriptive accounts of the role of leaders in phases of major distress and uncertainty (wars, natural disasters, terror strikes…), where leaders are expected to provide diagnoses, guidance, and keep civilian morale high. As a result, the crisis-leadership approach emphasises precisely the functions of puzzling and, to some extent, valuing that are neglected by the neo-statecraft theory. Four crisis leadership functions can be added to the table: "sense making"; "meaning making"; "terminating"; "learning". Since valuing aspects still remain underdeveloped, I finally add three further original functions: "moral argument hegemony"; "moral pressuring"; "drawing red lines".

Table 3b: Union-leadership: a Neo-weberian Statecraft Model

	Responsibility	*Responsiveness*	*Statecraft*		
			…in order to power	…in order to puzzle	…in order to value
Powering	Legal	Party mandate	Bending the rules of the game Party management	Political argument hegemony	*Moral argument hegemony*
Puzzling	Reflexive	Party ideology	Winning electoral strategy Governing competence	*Sense making Learning*	*Meaning making*
Valuing	Trascendental	Party ethics	*Moral pressing*	*Terminating*	*Drawing red lines*

Cell content in *italics* is taken from (Boin *et al.* 2005).
Cell content that is both underlined and italicised was elaborated by the author.

In the revised table, "sense making" and "learning" indicate cognitive activities respectively carried out when the nature of the crisis is first recognised and when new remedies get codified and enter the wealth of available knowledge. They represent puzzling in its purest form: a cognitive effort that

is meant to produce substantive knowledge, or "puzzling in order to puzzle". The "meaning making" and "terminating" functions combine instead a cognitive and an axiological dimension. Meaning making indicates the cognitive effort required to come up with an explanation of the crisis that may also motivate the public to find new optimism and react to the current state of affairs. It therefore consists of an act of puzzling used to convey a value-based message to the population: "puzzling in order to value". Terminating always combines puzzling and valuing, but in an opposite fashion. It begins with a declaration that a given objective has been fulfilled, so that the relative policy or intervention can be terminated. This is an axiological act, which infuse with value the current state of the world. After the initiative has been terminated and a step back from on the ground implementation has been taken, a new phase of puzzling and retrospective evaluation can begin. Terminating can therefore be understood as a function by which valuing is undertaken in order to puzzle or, better, in order to suspend action and begin puzzling.

Drawing to a close, I can now present the three new functions I am proposing to complete the table. "Moral argument hegemony" is quite obviously a variant of neo-statecraft's political argument hegemony. It means making the moral and axiological stances of the government accepted in the policy debate and, if possible, among the public at large. Being a form of powering, it is not interested in the normative validity of the arguments advanced by the clique. It only aims at acquiring the "moral high ground" in order to enhance future acts of valuing. "Moral pressing" is the mirror image of "moral argument hegemony". It is a valuing act seeking for normative validity and axiological rationality. At the same time, however, it is a hostile act, with a view on future rounds of powering. Its goal is to put the clique's political opponents at disadvantage, delegitimizing their worldview, possibly creating conflicts among their ranks or cornering them into publicly unacceptable positions.

The last function, "drawing red lines" is valuing in its pure form: a normative act whose only interest is advancing or upholding the axiological rationality of the leader's viewpoint. The function takes its name from Weber's suggestion that leaders, when irremediably cross-pressured by responsibility and dedication to their cause, may declare themselves unable to overstep certain moral boundaries.[7] "Drawing red lines" is a strong form of personal commitment, which may even

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[7] To exemplify this case, Weber makes explicit reference to Luther's (attributed) motto "Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise".

reveal a principled choice. Whether the moral judgement is sincere certainly remains unobservable, but there is a strong indication that the leader is willing to risk his or her personal credibility and, possibly, future political career on the issue.

In sum, neo-statecraft theory provides a useful framework to analyse political leadership, even from a Weberian perspective. Its key tenets remain valid even under Weberian assumptions. Eventual gaps can be filled without fundamental revisions, only by expanding the set of available statecraft functions. The tentative framework I proposed in Table 1 and Table 3b certainly requires empirical substantiation and a sharper definition of some of the additional functions. However, it gives reasons to believe that Weber's theory of democracy and fine-grained frameworks for the study if national political leadership can be combined with mutual advantage. In the next subsection, I will discuss the main challenges posed to this framework by the transnational architecture of the EU

3.3 From national statecraft to transnational Union-craft: charting the terrain

It still needs being considered how the transnational configuration of the EU political space affects political leadership and statecraft. In neo-statecraft theory, cliques are equally confronted by a multi-level governing challenge between the national and the sub-national level. In domestic politics, however, they compete for and possibly occupy the top executive position, whose authority applies to some degree to their whole community and homeland. In the EU's not-yet transnational political system, instead, both government authority and party competition are clustered, although not entirely enclosed, within national boundaries. From this transnational configuration, each national clique produces and experiences both direct and indirect political effects. Direct effects take place in the clique's domestic environment, where it can exercise full government authority. Indirect effects, however, take place across national borders and originate from foreign political environments or from the EU's one, which is composed by supranational as well as intergovernmental arenas.

The final outcome of the interaction between direct and indirect effects is unpredictable. It is a form of "organised disorder", which emerges from the layering of multiple (from 2 to 28) domestic political systems and from their strategic interaction across the supranational and intergovernmental

arenas of the EU. In the past, accelerations in the process of European integration have been fostered by the fortuitous layering of national political configurations. In the 1990s, the European Employment Strategy resulted from the electoral predominance of centre-left modernisers in a number of key member states. Conversely, the turn to austerity as soon as the financial crisis of 2008 became a sovereign debt crisis in the Euro-periphery is possibly traceable to a similar predominance of political neo-conservatism across the EU.

The Greek bailouts offered a dramatic illustration of organised disorder in terms of two countervailing dilemmas. The chosen option was putting foreign creditor governments in charge of designing policy reforms for a community that could not elect them. The alternative was to allow the Greek government to default on its debt, somehow forcing the governments of the Euro-core into a bank bailout. In either case, "debt collection" policy-making was meant to produce "taxation without representation": an unprecedented outcome in democratic Europe. From the perspective of state-reason and system maintenance, this is a major conundrum. In either case, the community whose economic interest called for wider decision-making prerogatives was not the one targeted by the decision. It matters a lot in this respect that a decision had to be taken, through means that were not purely intergovernmental. The pure intergovernmentalism of IMF-style rescue programmes would have not allowed such a paradox and its political dramatisation. Intergovernmentalism, however, was institutionally ruled out, as major decisions had to be taken within Euro summits or unilaterally by the ECB. The involvement of the EU accelerated the unfolding of organised disorder.

When looked through Weberian lenses, this story reveals something deeper than a conflict between the opposed political mandates of creditor and debtor governments. In the absence of a safe route back to pure intergovernmentalism, what remained was an obligation to choose between two equally irresponsible options. For the time being, the Union-leadership framework has little to say on this dilemma other than it faces statecraft with a major source of impasse. An irreconcilable conflict between political mandates may lead "power politicians" to very bad decisions, while driving vocation politicians close to their red-lines and then into inaction. This is a thorny question that requires further elaboration. At the same time, it is also an opportunity to study how different leadership styles emerge in crisis-situations where powering, puzzling and valuing all present highly complex and highly interrelated challenges.

Organised disorder also influences domestic party competition in the not-yet transnational European party space. What matters here is the impossibility, for nationally incumbent cliques, to challenge "images and policy packages" that frontally oppose their own, when opposition comes from a foreign political system. When this unresolved conflict occurs among pro-EU parties within the political mainstream, the worst possible consequence for the EU polity is inaction, due to a lack of policy coordination. This has changed with the recent raise of Eurocritical and Eurosceptic fringe parties at both extremes of the European ideological spectrum. What happens when one such party in a given member state successfully obtains argument hegemony or even wins the elections? It is fair to assume, that incumbent cliques in other member states will need to take a damage-control stance. This is a major example of an indirect, but indeed very tangible, political effect. Possibly, they would need to revise their image and policy package. In most European multi-party systems, this may disrupt their ability to form party coalitions or to keep together their current one.

What can be expected of this reaction? Will the domestic party mainstream be conciliatory or pre-emptive towards the foreign fringe party? Will it attempt to shame and delegitimize it? And how will it impact on party competition in both countries? I anticipate that, in the eye of a foreign mainstream incumbent, at least four sets of considerations might matter. First, whether the fringe party abroad is in government or has realistic chances to enter it, either alone or in a coalition, rather than being permanently excluded from office. Second, whether the fringe party abroad is positioned on the clique's same end of the left-right political spectrum, or on the opposite one. Third, and related, whether the clique is also confronting Euro-critic opposition in its own country. Fourth, in this last case, whether the major domestic Euro-critic competitors are on the same or on the opposite end of the left-right axis. Finally, in the former case, whether this opposed fringe party is at any rate coalitionable or co-optable, as green or radical right parties have been in the past in most EU party systems (Bale 2003).

Developing a theory of transnational party competition largely overreaches the limits of this paper. However, the point is crucial to understand cliques' behaviours and the likelihood of successful Union-leadership. Organised disorder in party competition means that domestic incumbents may only meet the staunchest and most vocal opponents of their governing code at EU-level summits. Union-leadership needs therefore to develop the analytical tools to make sense of party competition "at a distance" and its indirect political effects. Organised disorder in government policies reveals

instead a major difference between state-reason and Union-reason. As long as policy problems will create opposite prerogatives among different political authorities, Union-reason will be very far from being a fully fledged "political logic", as impersonal and autonomous as 17th Century state-reason. On the contrary, its consolidation will require adopting contingent, situational and highly personalised settlements. Once again, the concept of Union-leadership is well positioned to observe and inquire the personal and situational logic of Union-craft.

Concluding remarks

In this paper, I have tried to come up with a concept able to account for the role of agency in overcoming the present existential crisis of the EU. I started from the intuition, common to some of the most influential political thinkers in Europe, that today's EU polity is more than the sum of its component parts, and yet not a "single" political entity. From this vantage point, however, I tried to move away from a normative type of reasoning, asking myself how an explanatory, empirically grounded sort of analysis could contribute to this intellectual debate. Therefore, I focused my attention on the issue of system-maintenance and polity-building. The EU might well be a "strange beast" and an unprecedented kind of polity but, as long as it is intended as a polity (and thus as a political community, rather than as an international organisation like the UN) there is no reason to expect that its governors should let it collapse.

So, if the normative puzzle of today's EU is how to bring this polity *sui generis* beyond the uncomfortable legacy of the nation state, the empirical puzzle is why the EU is so incapable of performing system-maintenance and polity-building functions. The argument that its institutional architecture is flawed and ill-designed is inadequate, given that system-maintenance and polity-building rarely run on autopilot, but most often depend on path-setting displays of leadership. The real question, therefore, is way the governors of the EU are unwilling or unable to take care of system-maintenance. The undefined nature of the EU polity vastly increases the analytical complexity of this problem. The prevailing, neo-institutionalist, accounts of European integration tend to suggest that political agency is empowered in crisis situations when institutions are destabilised, but they do not help formulating expectations about the when and the how. Moreover, what is asked from EU leaders is a deeply innovative and creative response, which is very difficult to devise a priori and whose definition inevitably requires some sort of normative argumentation.

I tried to sidestep this circular pitfall by focusing on political leadership and on what distinguishes it vis-à-vis "agency" broadly conceived. Political leadership is a particular type of agency which, as made clear by definitions such as Jean Blondel's, is defined by some of the political features of the nation state and by a peculiar focus on individuality. From this perspective, thematising leadership means to scrutinise the mutual influence between the personal qualities of the leaders and the

political logic that prevails in their polities. I did so by focusing on four aspects in particular: the necessity of polity building, the constraints posed by the electoral mandate, the power and room for manoeuvre that is granted to top political leaders, and the impact of individual personality and personal charisma.

Max Weber's theory of democratic politics offered me precious insights on how these four factors may interact and influence each other. Just like modern polities have been characterised by the interplay of state-reason and statecraft, contemporary democratic polities are characterised by a peculiar interaction between the logic of polity-building and the personal agenda of candidate leaders. Personality and power can grant individual political leaders immeasurable and unpredictable leeway to achieve their policy and polity-building goals. Nonetheless, political leadership confronts the inescapable necessity of perpetuating the conditions of possibility for its own government. Following Weber's conception of the political sphere and of the clash between the ethics of responsibility and the ethics of conviction, I concluded that both agency and power are too broad notions of the role of actors to be useful in explaining the lack of system maintenance at the EU level. I found instead that the concept of statecraft is more suitable to model a form of agency that is both able of creative innovation and capable of accepting self-restraints, such as those required by democratic state-reason.

This led me to discuss contemporary definitions of statecraft, which combine an attention for the personal agenda of candidate leaders with an acknowledgement of the dynamics of party democracy. At the same time, I also took very seriously the role of personality, selectively adopting some insights coming from the vast scholarship on leadership and personality. Trying to update Weber's reasoning, I reconceptualised political leadership as personality-bounded statecraft: a sort of power that is influenced by a series of constraints (including the inner constraints of the leader's own temperament) but also shaped by the threefold logic of state-reason, prudence and statecraft.

Looking closely at the interplay of all these elements, one can effectively identify a number of factors useful to profile leaders and account for the limits and prospects of their statecraft attempts. Thus I combined Weberian insights on responsibility, dedication to a cause, and the threefold function of leadership as powering, puzzling and valuing with the emphasis put by contemporary statecraft theories on the leaders' electoral, organisational and media performances. The end result

is an extensive heuristic framework, summarised in Table 3b. Such a framework is meant to capture several aspects of observable acts of leadership and the way different competing pressures (personal, electoral, and polity-level) may happen to shape and condition them. Finally, trying to move from national political leadership to Union-leadership, I have begun to discuss some of the distinctive challenges of exerting leadership in a quasi-transnational electoral and policy-making environment. This last part is certainly the least developed of the framework, but it is meant to provide guidance for the study of empirical dynamics, rather than to determine deductively the main dilemmas of transnational statecraft.

To wrap up, I can finally present Union-leadership as the blending of personality and statecraft in promoting the leader's own European agenda, revising Blondel's definition as follows:

> Union-leadership is personality-bounded statecraft, exercised in order to direct national and non-national members of the EU polity towards accepting or complying with a given European agenda.

To some, my elaboration may seem overly speculative and excessively rigid. At the same time, the reference to "a given European agenda" may also sound disappointingly vague. Certainly, I expect several theoretical revisions will be needed once the concept of Union-leadership is put to the test with actual case studies. Nonetheless, I believe that the vagueness of the "European agenda" is an important heuristic asset. We do not really know where the EU is headed and which kind of policy and polity programs will foster its consolidation as a polity. As political scientists, we may be able to imagine what should not be done, because it is potentially polity disrupting. However, I am afraid that such a hurry to come up with a substantive, normative argument would neglect the (unintended) polity-building effects of taking conflict to the EU level, once the irreversibility of the European dimension has been recognised, even if with polity-disrupting aims.

Once the normative question of what Union-leaders should do is removed from the picture, as I strived for doing in my conceptualisation, one has to let in the possibility that Union-leadership might not be benevolent towards the current state and ambitions of the EU; in other words, to allow for the possibility that Union-leadership might be Euro-critical, if not Euro-sceptic. So, if one had to define a minimum requirement for political leadership to be Union-leadership, that would be an obstinate conviction that the EU polity can only be transformed from within, by accepting its

irreversibly transnational character. Once leaders take this leap of faith, they might contribute to crafting a Union even by adopting confrontational political agendas and attitudes. From a Weberian perspective, in fact, the task of choosing how the EU should be transformed into a "Union" ultimately falls on leaders themselves, onto their own conviction and dedication and onto their unconstrained faculty of taking value-judgements.

In my own view, for the time being and possibly for many years in the future, EU polity-building will be much more a matter of Union-craft than of Union-reason. Union-leadership, intended as personality-bounded statecraft (or, better, Union-craft), and the interplay between real-world leaders and cliques will be a major determinant of the future shape of the EU-polity. Similarly, they will also determine the substantive features of tomorrow's Union-reason, which may well end up being very different than those of state-reason. Individual leaders, their personality and their ability to interpret, defend and adapt their national and personal prerogatives enjoy unprecedented opportunities to "ferry" (to use Weber's own famous metaphor) existing polity possibilities into future Union-building realities.

It is very likely that only inductive, historically-minded comparative analysis will tell how sensitive they will be to the opportunities and risks of transnational statecraft. In this respect, the role of the explanatory analysis cannot be to tell whether Union-building should take to Demoi-cracy, EU-reason, a community of states, or the like. It can only start building the explanatory tools most likely to be useful to explain future developments. If the discussion of polity-building and political leadership presented in this paper is of any relevance to the "crafting" of the EU, then the concept of Union-leadership might be revealed as a promising heuristic device to understand its forthcoming developments. It may contribute to the literature by linking together strands of research that have, up to now, failed to properly communicate, while streamlining their main insights. Beyond cold politological analysis, my hope is that Union-leadership will contribute to a sounder critical evaluation of political agency, in an age of increasing personalisation of domestic and European politics.

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