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European Emergency Politics and the Question of Legitimacy

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Abstract

Emergency politics raises theoretical questions about the legitimacy of executive authorities' governing activities in times of crisis, and in particular whether ensuring effective outcomes (output) can make up for the temporary suspension of political responsiveness (input) and accountable procedures (throughput). Answers depend not only on the specifics of the emergency actions but also on executives' rhetorical power to legitimize such actions via ideational/discursive coercion, structuring, or persuasion. After outlining the theoretical issues involved, this contribution considers the legitimacy and rhetorical power of political executives in multilateral emergency politics and technical executives in supranational emergency politics. It uses the cases of the Council and the ECB in the Eurozone and Covid-19 crises in illustration, considering their legitimacy over time, between a crisis' fast-burning phase of emergency politics and its slow-burning phase of legitimizing normalization or delegitimation.

Key words: Emergency politics, legitimacy, rhetorical power, Council, ECB, Eurozone crisis, Covid-19 crisis

Introduction

Emergency politics by supranational bodies such as the EU, involving both policymaking practices and rationalizing discourses, has often made for decisions by EU actors taken without the usual democratic processes and controls that tend to characterize governance in 'ordinary times' (Kreuder-Sonnen and White, this issue). Christian Kreuder-Sonnen and Jonathan White (this issue) provide a clear and concise classification of the four different kinds of emergency politics which they argue were united by "the same emergency script" in which "holders of executive authority expanded their discretion by breaking with established norms and rules" and then rationalized their actions "as necessary to cope with exceptional threats." But while they detail the different kinds of executive exceptionalism and worry about the legitimacy problems of their normalization, they do not fully engage with questions of legitimacy and justifiability in concrete instances of emergency action. Elsewhere, however, both authors do expand on this dimension of legitimacy. But while White (2019) adopts a fully critical view of emergency rule, Kreuder-Sonnen (2018, 2019) suggests that some instances of emergency politics may be legitimizable when they can be plausibly judged as in the public good even if they may not follow the established democratic processes. Both, however, argue that executives in the midst of emergency politics make up for what they lack in traditional coercive state powers with their rhetorical power to legitimize their actions during times of emergency and to normalize them afterwards (White 2019; Kreuder-Sonnen 2019)

These admirable contributions to the theorization of emergency politics take us a long way toward understanding its dangers, but they nonetheless leave a range of questions open. Most importantly, Kreuder-Sonnen and White (this issue) leave much more to be said about the legitimacy of emergency politics *per se*, beyond the concerns raised about the normalization of the measures introduced. Their separate books do provide deeper insights into the question of legitimacy, but they treat it without much theorization about the different forms of legitimacy and the ways in which they may interact. Nor do they develop theories about the different kinds of rationalizing rhetorical power which relevant actors may deploy while seeking to legitimize or delegitimize emergency politics.

This contribution seeks to fill these gaps first by providing additional theoretical discussion about legitimacy and rhetorical power. It draws its theorization of legitimacy from EU studies, which identifies three forms of mechanisms that serve to legitimize governing activities: policy performance (output legitimacy), political responsiveness (input legitimacy), and procedural quality (throughput legitimacy) (Schmidt 2013, 2020). It draws its theorization of rhetorical power from discursive institutionalism, which identifies three ways in which the 'rhetorical' power of ideas and discourse can be employed: coercive power *over* ideas via discourse, structural or institutional power *in* ideas and discourse, and persuasive power *through* ideas via discourse (Carstensen and Schmidt 2016, 2018). By providing more complete analyses of both legitimacy and rhetorical power, the contribution seeks to elucidate the means by which actors involved in emergency politics may appeal to three different forms of legitimacy while making use of three different kinds of rhetorical power in their efforts to legitimize and normalize their actions. It then demonstrates the benefits of its theoretical elaboration of conceptualizations of legitimacy and rhetorical power through an evaluation of the rhetorical legitimation of emergency actions by EU political executives in multilateral emergency politics and EU technical executives in supranational emergency politics. In illustration, it uses the cases of the Council and the ECB during the Eurozone crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic. In an effort to distinguish more clearly between emergency politics and normalization in crises such as the Eurozone that continue for a very long time, the contribution differentiates between the fast-burning phase of emergency politics, when governing authorities need to decide quickly to avoid disaster, and the slow burning period of potential normalization or reversal, when the crisis, although not resolved, no longer threatens to explode just then, leaving executive actors time to reflect on and amend their actions (Seabrooke and Tsingou 2019; Crespy and Schramm 2020).

The choice of the Council was an obvious one, since it was the main political agenda-setter in both crises, in contrast to the European Parliament (EP). The latter had comparatively little say both in the Eurozone crisis (Fasone 2014), despite some success over time in expanding its powers and extracting concessions (Rittberger 2014), and in the Covid-19 pandemic, at least until the budgetary debates more than nine months into the crisis. National parliaments for the most part were also poorly equipped to respond to the emergency politics of the Eurozone crisis, and therefore largely acted as rubber stamps to executive actions (Auel and Höing 2014;

Kreilinger 2019), as they also did in the initial phases of the Covid-19 pandemic. As for the choice of the ECB rather than the Commission for technical actor, it follows from the ECB's greater independence of executive action, which makes it more comparable to the Council. That said, the Commission would also have been an interesting case due to its increasing rollback actions that eased the application of the rules during the slow-burning phase of the Eurozone crisis (Schmidt 2020a, Ch. 7) as well as its innovative initiatives after initial hesitation during the Covid-19 pandemic (Schmidt 2020b). But considering the Commission in addition to the ECB was not feasible due to space limitations.

The cases of the Council and the ECB are in any event sufficient in themselves to provide ample demonstration of different possible outcomes. The legitimacy of the Council's multilateral emergency politics during the fast-burning phase of the Eurozone crisis was contested, as was its rhetorical legitimization; and instead of normalization its emergency practices were incrementally rolled back as the crisis slowed and then suspended with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. In contrast, the legitimacy of the ECB's supranational emergency politics was not only largely accepted during the fast-burning crisis but also when it slowed. Its success in rhetorically legitimizing its emergency practices is evidenced by the fact that they were normalized during the Eurozone crisis' slow burning phase and then ratcheted up during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Theorizing Legitimacy in Times of Emergency

Legitimacy, understood not only as citizen consent to a governing authority in the classical Weberian sense but also as acceptance of such an authority's governing activities, is naturally at issue during times of emergency politics. When defined in terms of governing activities, legitimacy is linked to policy effectiveness and performance for the common good (*output* legitimacy); citizen participation and representation along with political elites' responsiveness to citizens' concerns (*input* legitimacy) (Scharpf 1999, Ch. 1); and the quality of governance procedures (*throughput* legitimacy), including the efficacy of the policymaking processes, the accountability to relevant forums of those engaged in making the decisions, the transparency of their actions and access to information, along with their openness and inclusiveness with regard to civil society (Schmidt 2013, 2020a, Ch. 2). In EU studies, scholars have often assumed a trade-off between input and output legitimacy, where more of the one makes up for less of the other, such that good performance can make up for a lack of citizen involvement, or that bad outcomes are still legitimate if citizens voted for the policies. There are no such trade-offs between throughput legitimacy and input and output legitimacy (although there may be trade-offs within throughput among its different criteria). High quality throughput procedures cannot make up for failures of output performance or input responsiveness, whereas governance processes that appear incompetent, biased, corrupt, or oppressive can cast a shadow over both policy output and political input (Schmidt 2013, 2020a, Ch. 2).

But if these are the interrelationships among the legitimizing mechanisms of EU governing activities in ordinary times, how does this apply to emergency politics?

Almost by definition, emergency politics tends to suspend the traditional democratic processes of citizen representation and even parliamentary consultation expected for political (input) legitimacy in the name of effective policy (output) performance and procedural (throughput) efficacy. We can add that it also generally reduces procedural (throughput) quality in terms of accountability, transparency, inclusiveness and openness although it may increase efficacy. These are naturally major problems for legitimacy in emergency politics, but are they insuperable? More specifically, can claims of output legitimacy balance out any lack of input or throughput legitimacy?

For White (2019), the answer appears to be a resounding 'no,' because whatever the ends, the means damage democratic processes of representation and accountability, and may even be authoritarian. In the case of the Troika's processes of executive governance, the ends—to make the debtors pay—certainly could not justify the means—abrogation of political input for debtor countries and reduction of procedural throughput by institutional actors in favor of authoritarian rule. In contrast, Kreuder-Sonnen (2019, 199-202), although in agreement with White in the case of the Troika, suggests more generally that the normative principle of proportionality may apply in emergency politics, whereby the ends may justify the means in cases with a positive costbenefit calculation, whether by necessity (can't do without it) or functionality (it works). But he makes clear that assessing legitimacy is complicated by the question of who decides, the 'winners,' the 'losers,' or independent observers, in particular in cases where powerful coalitions of actors exercise institutional as well as rhetorical power to normalize crisis regimes. And he adds that it says nothing about the normalization of the institutional outcomes after exceptionalism.

Moreover, both agree that the practice of supranational exceptionalism and/or its normalization depends not on traditional forms of state power based on monopoly over the means of coercion, or even on material resources, but rather on rhetorical powers of legitimation that serve to rationalize emergency politics. Such legitimizing rhetoric includes the ideational content, in rhetorics of exceptionalism to legitimize the emergency measures in terms of necessity and temporariness (White 2019: 18-26), and the discursive processes, in the rhetorical power of executive actors to legitimize their emergency politics or of those opposed to delegitimize it, leading either to ratcheting effects (normalization) or rollback (Kreuder-Sonnen 2019).

But while both authors describe instances of such rhetorical power, they don't actually define the rhetoric, differentiate theoretically among different kinds of rhetorical power, or discuss how rhetorical power may work to legitimize executives' governing authority or activities, whether in terms of policy effectiveness (output legitimacy), political responsiveness (input legitimacy), or procedural quality (throughput legitimacy) For such rhetorical legitimation, it is useful to turn to discursive institutionalist theorization about the power of ideas and discourse. But note that here we use the term 'rhetoric' as shorthand for a more elaborate conceptualization of the ways in which the substantive content of ideas conveyed through contextualized discursive interactions can serve agents as significant sources of power for the legitimation of their actions (Carstensen and Schmidt 2016, 2018).

Scholars whose works fit under the rubric of discursive institutionalism have long considered the ways in which ideas and discourse serve to empower actors. These include agents who use ideas as 'narratives' to shape understandings (Roe 1994), as 'weapons' (Blyth 2002) in battles for control, and as 'discourse' that furthers elite domination (Foucault 2000) as well as those who engage in 'discursive struggles' to create shared meanings (Stone 1988) or in 'agonistic struggles' to contest existing meanings (Mouffe 2005). Building on these many ways of understanding the relationship of ideas and discourse to power, Carstensen and Schmidt (2016, 2018) provide three main ways of conceptualizing how our expanded notion of rhetoric as contextualized ideas and discursive interactions may be linked to power. In so doing, they add a fourth ideational and discursive approach to the traditional lexicon of power focused on coercive, structural, and institutional power. This fourth approach to power serves as a linkage to legitimacy for all actors, including those with other sources of power (whether coercive, structural, or institutional), because it enables them to influence peoples' perceptions of legitimacy via ideas and discourse, as opposed to simply coercing people, structuring relations, or instituting rules (Carstensen and Schmidt 2018, p. 760).

Power *over* ideas via discourse is the coercive capacity of actors to control and dominate the meaning of ideas and discourse. It may be used directly by executives to impose their ideas and control the discourse, for example, through a monopoly on the means of information diffusion. But it may also be indirect, when executives ignore alternative interpretations or when opponents shame executives into changing their policies, like it or not. Power *in* ideas and discourse focuses on the authority certain ideas or discourses enjoy in structuring thought at the expense of other ideas. This kind of rhetorical power can be seen as either structural—when ideas and discourse are so hegemonic that they set the limits of the imaginable and serve to consolidate identities—or institutional—when embedded in institutions in ways that constrain what ideas agents may take into consideration or discourses they may articulate. Finally, power *through* ideas via discourse consists of agents' ability to persuade others of the cognitive necessity and/or normative appropriateness of their proposals and actions in coordination with other policy actors (coordinative discourse) and/or in communication with the public (communicative discourse) (Carstensen and Schmidt 2016).

In what follows, we employ the three forms of legitimizing mechanisms together with the three kinds of rhetorical power to consider the legitimacy of political and technical executives' governing activities during both the Eurozone and Covid-19 crises.

Legitimacy in Multilateral Emergency Politics: The Council

In the multilateral emergency politics of the Council, member-state leaders tend to assume that they retain legitimacy through their (input) representation of their citizens. At the height of the Eurozone crisis, for example, member-state leaders legitimated their emergency governance processes on these grounds, including Sarkozy who used his rhetorical power *over* ideas to define a more democratic Europe as “a Europe in which its political leaders decide” (Speech in Toulon, Dec. 1, 2011), and Chancellor Merkel when she explicitly commended the new “Union Method” (Speech at the College of Europe in Bruges, Nov. 2, 2010).   But the Council is far from a (input-legitimate) representative forum, since member-state leaders’ intergovernmental decisions often go beyond any individual member-state’s national aggregation of interests (see Scharpf 2013).

Eurozone Crisis

In the Eurozone crisis, Council decision-making which reinforced the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact while imposing harsh conditionality on countries forced into bailouts was seen as problematic not only in terms of output and input legitimacy but also in terms of throughput legitimacy. Many scholars saw EU governance as involving ‘excessive intergovernmentalism’ (Fabbrini 2013), due to member-state leaders’ lack of accountability, transparency, or more input-legitimate co-decision processes with the EP (Schmidt 2015, 2020a, Ch. 5). Traditional rationalist intergovernmentalist accounts added that the negotiations in the Council involved a bargaining game with an unequal balance of (coercive) power, in which Northen European ‘creditors’ forced the ‘debtors’ to pay for the costs of the crisis (e.g., Schimmelfennig 2015; Tsebelis 2016).

As for rhetorical power exercised during the fast-burning crisis, there was certainly a lot of it, judging from the high degree of emergency language deployed at the time as well as subsequently (see Rauh, this issue). Germany with its Northern Europeans allies used power *over* ideas via discourse when they insisted that moral hazard was the greatest danger, austerity and structural reform the only solution. Power *in* ideas and discourse was also prevalent as a result of the German ordo-liberal economic philosophy that structured thought on what could be done, and was institutionalized through the ECB Charter and the Stability and Growth Pact (Brunnermeier et al., 2016). Finally, also in play was the persuasive rhetorical power *through* ideas of narratives that (mis)framed the crisis as caused by high public debt (which was the case only for Greece) rather than private debt (Blyth 2013); that therefore (mis)diagnosed the crisis as resulting from bad behavior rather than the structure of the euro; and in consequence promoted rules-based governance focused on austerity and structural reform rather than alternatives proposed by opponents, such as mutual risk sharing through Eurobonds (Schmidt 2020a, Ch. 9).

Kreuder-Sonnens' (2019) test of proportionality applied here would ask whether output legitimacy balanced out problems of input and throughput legitimacy. Any independent observer considering Eurobarometer polls (2007-2014, 2019) would come to a negative answer, given the precipitous drop in citizens' trust in the EU from a high of 57 percent in 2007 to a low of 31 percent between 2011 and 2014, and the very slow rise thereafter, to only 43 percent in 2019. Economic outcomes also suggest a lack of output legitimacy in view of the comparatively weak economic performance of the EU as a whole during the first five years of the crisis as well as of national economies in Southern Europe even longer (e.g., Blyth 2013; Mody 2018; Schmidt 2020a, Ch. 9).

There is however also another way to evaluate the legitimacy of Council decision-making, which could lead to a somewhat more positive assessment. Building on constructivist 'new intergovernmentalist' theories of the Council as a body engaged in deliberative consensus-seeking (Bickerton et al. 2015), we could argue that the Council exercises a kind of (throughput-legitimate) mutual accountability as a deliberative body in intergovernmental decision-making (Schmidt 2020, Ch. 5). Certainly Council deliberations could be seen as mutually accountable with regard to, say, the establishment of the European Semester and the setting up of the European Financial Stability Facility (despite coming outside the treaties), since all member-states seemed to approve. Even a recent traditional rationalist intergovernmentalist account supports this view, arguing that the negotiation process was characterized by procedural fairness since Germany "traded gains and concessions" and "exchanged wins and losses" (Lundgren et al. 2019). Moreover, Council deliberations over time even involved a modicum of rollback, as successive Italian leaders backed by the French President used their persuasive rhetorical power *through* ideas to move the Council from a discourse focused on stability alone (2010) to to one of growth *and* stability (2012), then flexibility *within the stability rules* (2014), and finally investment with the new Commission (2015) (Schmidt 2020a, 136-138). But such rollback would suggest that however deliberatively accountable on some initiatives, the Council ultimately failed to rhetorically legitimize its main emergency practices let alone to normalize them, as evidenced by the fact that they were incrementally softened as the crisis slowed.

Deliberative mutual accountability does not in any event apply to the bailout negotiations for countries under conditionality, and especially for Greece's third bailout, in which the Council stands accused of authoritarian imposition (Kreuder-Sonnen 2019, 119-123; White 2019, 20, 147ff.; Schmidt 2020a, Ch. 5). This was a case of coercive power *over* ideas via discourse, or even coercive power *tout court*, which no amount of persuasive power *through* ideas mustered by the discourse of Greek Finance Minister Varoufakis could counter (Carstensen and Schmidt 2018), let alone through hard-nosed bargaining (Tsebelis 2016). As for Southern Europe more generally, the rhetorical legitimation of austerity was not just a top-down imposition but involved national collaboration in the discursive co-construction of austerity (Ramalho 2020), thereby also putting input legitimacy at risk from such domestic emergency politics (see Kreuder-Sonnen and White, this issue).

Covid-19 Crisis

The Council response to the Covid-19 crisis was different, despite the fact that the first few months did look like the Eurozone crisis all over again, raising questions for legitimacy. Initially, member-state leaders engaged in unilateral emergency politics (see Kreuder-Sonnen and White, this issue). They closed borders precipitously in breach of Schengen; and they broke the Eurozone's rules on low deficits and debts, thereby suspending a core tenet of Eurozone crisis emergency practices. Moreover, they also engaged in domestic emergency politics (see Kreuder-Sonnen and White, this issue), as they abrogated citizens' rights to free circulation while parliaments disbanded following the initial votes of emergency powers. In most such cases, these actions can be legitimated in terms of the principle of proportionality, given the output effectiveness of stopping the death toll rising from the spread of the virus while saving citizens' jobs and supporting businesses. But there were exceptions involving crisis exploitation, as in Hungary and Poland.

Moreover, at the EU level during this initial period, the Council did little, and as such was low on output performance and throughput efficacy or accountability. The same splits as in the Eurozone crisis reappeared, looking like a replay of Northern Europeans' power *over* ideas as German leaders again resisted action in tandem with Northern European allies while France pushed for quick action supported by Southern European countries.

But this stalemate was resolved relatively quickly. The breakthrough came as the culmination of France's persuasive power *through* ideas via discourse with Germany, as it argued in the name of Europe for solidarity in a health crisis in which all countries were equally at risk of contagion, but some had been hit harder than others and did not have the wherewithal to recover economically without support (Crespy and Schramm, 2021). Proof of France's rhetorical power is evidenced by the fact that Germany switched sides, agreeing to a major grant-based recovery fund financed by EU level bonds, which broke the long-standing taboo against EU level debt. The shift resulted from discursive interactions over a period of months between French President Emmanuel Macron and Chancellor Merkel, backed up by discursive coordination deep into the executive bureaucracies of both countries, as well as with the Commission (Crespy and Schramm, 2021). But whether the multilateral negotiations in the run-up to the Council agreement of July 2020 should be characterized as sufficiently accountable, either via constructivist deliberation or rationalist bargaining, is open to debate. It was a compromise in which all member-states equally exercised their voice and vote, including the so-called 'Frugal Four' countries which unsuccessfully pushed to scuttle the recovery fund but nonetheless succeeded in altering the ratio of grants to loans, and Hungary and Poland, which vetoed robust rule of law conditionality (although later agreed to a compromise). But however one wishes to interpret the throughput legitimacy of the negotiations, any outside observer would have little doubt, following the proportionality principle, that overall output legitimacy in economic policy during the coronavirus crisis was generally assured (arguably in contrast to public health, in particular with regard to the vaccination rollout).

Legitimacy in Supranational Emergency Politics: The ECB

Technical executives such as the ECB, needless to say, lack even the assumed input legitimacy of political executives. Their legitimacy is mainly characterizable in terms of output performance and throughput procedures. The ECB has significant autonomy to set its own agenda within the limits of its mandate, given the independence granted in its charter (in particular from the Council) and its comparatively weak formal accountability to the EP (Fraccaroli et al. 2018). Its four yearly mandated meetings give the ECB the opportunity to ensure its "discursive accountability" (Tucker 2018) to the EP via its persuasive power *through* ideas, but it need not heed EP advice. The ECB arguably therefore also benefits from power *over* ideas, since it can in principle do what it wishes. But in practice, it has been careful to use its rhetorical powers of persuasion to legitimize any new actions, by consulting widely before proceeding.

Eurozone Crisis

The discussion by Kreuder-Sonnen and White (this issue) of the dangers of supranational executives "expanding their executive discretion by undermining or circumventing the constraints that bind their authority in normal times" appears to cast doubt on the ECB's legitimacy. The ECB expanded its executive discretion significantly as it reinterpreted its mandate over time while engaging in a great deal of crisis communication (see Rauh, this issue). It started with a very restrictive definition of what it could do in terms of monetary transactions—as embodied by ECB President Jean-Claude Trichet's declaration in an ECB press conference on May 7, 2009, even prior to the inception of the Eurozone crisis, that the ECB could not act as a Lender of Last Resort (LOLR). But it moved to a more and more expansive definition, culminating in its 2015 launch of quantitative easing (QE), which brought it very close to a LOLR. In this context, it was ECB President Mario Draghi's declaration on July 26, 2012, in a speech at the Global Investment Conference in London that, "within our mandate," the ECB would do "whatever it takes to preserve the euro," which effectively stopped market attacks, and was the game-changer in the crisis (Kreuder-Sonnen 2019, Ch. 5.2) This statement alone was a clear instance of the ECB's persuasive rhetorical power *through* ideas via discourse to the markets. But the ECB consciously engaged in extensive discourse not only to the markets but also to the people, in particular in response to increasing politicization (Moschella et al., 2020). In the process, it was able to hide its reinterpretations of its mandate 'in plain view,' by claiming at every juncture that it was acting within its mandate to ensure 'stability in the medium term' (Schmidt 2020a, Ch. 6). The ratcheting effects of such rhetorical power ensured the normalization of the ECB's emergency politics of monetary easing.

So were the ECB's normalizing reinterpretations of its mandate legitimate? One could argue that they were not in terms of throughput accountability and of legality, as did the German Constitutional Court, the Bundesbank, and a slew of German economists with regard first to the (never deployed) Open Monetary Transactions progam (OMT) that accompanied Draghi's 2012 declaration, and as they did again for the 2015 QE. But one could equally argue the opposite, that such reinterpretations were throughput accountable on the grounds that most member-state leaders in the Council along with the EP tacitly accepted ECB discursive legitimization of its actions (see e.g., Spiegel 2014). Even more importantly, however, if we apply Kreuder-Sonnen's (2019) principle of proportionality, we could argue that output legitimacy—as evidenced by the fact that the ECB's incremental reinterpretations served to save the euro while ensuring the slow improvement of the EU's economy as a whole—overrides any concerns regarding throughput legitimacy.

Assessments of the ECB's overall legitimacy, however, depend upon which aspect of its governing activites we consider. Most evaluations of the ECB's monetary policies give it high marks on output legitimacy because of its having 'saved the euro.' But be this as it may, there are those who question the throughput efficacy of the response, given how long it took to deploy QE in comparison with other central banks (e.g., Blyth 2013; Mody 2019). Even more problematic, however, were the ECB's secret letters to input legitimate heads of governments of countries in trouble—using coercive rhetorical power *over* ideas to threaten (to use their coercive and institutional power) to pull the plug on those governments' economies if they did not immediately make major cuts in public spending. These were illegitimate in input and throughput terms since completely outside the ECB's mandate--even if some might claim output legitimacy on grounds of necessity, to save the euro. Similarly, one can question both the output and throughput legitimacy of the ECB regarding its *quid pro quo* demands of austerity from all the member-states at the inception of the crisis, and its crisis communication more generally (see Rauh, this issue) along with its involvement in the Troika (Kreuder-Sonnen 2019, 136-140; White 2019, 23; Schmidt 2020a, Ch. 6). But at least these demands could be seen as part of the ECB's persuasive rhetorical power *through* ideas, as Trichet argued that the ECB could not succeed in countering market attacks unless the member-states also did their part to put their public finances in order by rapidly reducing deficit and debt through fiscal consolidation (however problematic in terms of output performance those consolidations turned out to be).

Covid-19 Crisis

In contrast with the Eurozone crisis, in the Covid-19 crisis the ECB managed to ensure both output and throughput legitimacy. This came, however, only after an initial hiccup, when ECB President Christine Lagarde, arguably exercising her rhetorical power *over* ideas, claimed that it was not in the ECB's mandate to deal with spreads between German and Italian bonds (triggering an increase in the spreads for Italian bonds). Within days, though, the ECB had corrected its misstep to once again become the 'hero' of the crisis as it ratcheted up its major bond purchasing programmes to even higher levels than before while largely abandoning the ratios of bond-buying that had limited its ability to help countries most in need. As such, it seemed to do 'whatever it takes' to save the euro yet again, and this time without any of the (output problematic) *quid pro quo* demands of the Eurozone crisis. Here, the ECB again consciously deployed its persuasive rhetorical power *through* ideas to legitimate its actions with a discourse that was largely welcomed without challenge. The one exception was the German Constitutional Court which, in its judgment of May 2020 questioning the legality of the ECB's 2015 program of quantitative easing, cast a shadow on the legality of ECB monetary policy during the pandemic (Terpan and Saurugger 2020).

Conclusion: EU Political and Technical Executives in Crises over Time

As Kreuder-Sonnen and White (this issue) note, Jean Monnet believed that the EU would move forward through crisis, confident that executive actors, both political and technical, would be able to solve problems in time to avert the worst, arguably using their rhetorical powers to legitimize and normalize their crisis responses. Monnet's faith in the ability of such actors to deepen integration by resolving crises with output effectiveness and throughput efficiency would have been sorely tested during the Eurozone crisis, although the Covid-19 pandemic economic response might have restored his faith in the positive effects of crises.

What emerges from our investigation of EU political and technical actors' emergency politics in the Eurozone and Covid-19 is that legitimacy and rhetorical power matter a great deal to the fate of emergency practices. In cases where such practices appeared to ensure output performance and were rhetorically legitimated by agents whose discourse deployed persuasive power *through* ideas, emergency actions tended to be normalized, even where input responsiveness or throughput quality initially appeared to be in short supply. ECB emergency actions with regard to monetary easing in the Eurozone, which were further racheted up during Covid-19 pandemic, are the best examples of this. In contrast, no amount of coercive power *over* ideas via discourse, structural power *in* ideas and discourse, or even persuasive power *through* ideas could make up for emergency actions that were perceived to fail the test of output performance, let alone of throughput procedures and input responsiveness. A case in point is Council emergency politics with regard to the reinforcement of the austerity rules, which were for the most part delegitimated and rolled back as the crisis slowed, and then suspended once the Eurozone crisis gave way to the Covid-19 pandemic.

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