The Return of Intergovernmentalism?

De-Europeanisation and EU Foreign Policy Decision-making

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Abstract: This article develops a theoretical framework for analyzing the implications of de-Europeanisation for decision-making processes and policy outcomes in EU foreign policy. As de-Europeanisation progresses, EU foreign policy decision-making is less likely to fit the sociological theories of Normative Suasion, Policy Learning, Normative Entrapment, and Cooperative Bargaining and more likely to fit the intergovernmentalist theories of Logrolling and Competitive Bargaining. These same dynamics will make it more difficult for the EU to achieve unity on complex and sensitive foreign policy issues and create opportunities for foreign powers to manipulate divisions among EU member states as they seek to shape a new world order radically different from the EU's professed commitment to effective 'rules-based multilateralism.'

I.   The question

This article explores the implications for theory and practice of growing evidence that foreign policy in the European Union is being de-Europeanised. It thus complements the theoretical propositions developed by the introduction to the special issue (Müller, Pomorska and Tonra 2021) and explored empirically at the member state level by the other contributors (Raimondo, Tsardanidis and Stavridis 2021, Monteleone 2021, Dyduch and Müller 2021, Weiss 2021, Raik and Rikmann 2021). As such, the article's propositions can be read as a research agenda inspired by the special issue's focus on the de-Europeanisation of EU foreign policy at the member state level.

In the early years of the new millennium, the decline of American influence and the uncertain ambitions of China created an opportunity for the European Union to exert unprecedented influence on the world stage. This opportunity coincided with a number of cognitive,

rhetorical and institutional changes that observers described as the "Europeanisation" of foreign policy in Europe (Tonra 2001, Gross 2009, Wong and Hill 2012). In the words of a senior member state official, "The foreign policy process has become Europeanised, in the sense that in every international issue, there is an exchange of information and an attempt to arrive at a common understanding and a common approach – compared to how things were in the past, where most issues were looked at in isolation without addressing the attitudes of other member states or a European dimension" (cited in Aggestam, 2004: 81). This combination of opportunity abroad and Europeanisation at home seemed to augur well for the EU's emergence as a major world power.

However, this expectation may not be realized: veteran French and EU diplomat Pierre Vimont commented recently that the member states have "backtracked" in their willingness to develop an EU foreign policy (Szalai 2019). In fact, a growing number of scholars suspect that the development of a true EU foreign policy has slowed or even been reversed by "de-Europeanisation," which Tonra (2018) defines as a progressive re-nationalisation of foreign policy in three dimensions: "the structural disintegration of collective policy making institutions"; "the reconstruction of professional roles in exclusively/predominantly national terms"; and "a repudiation (implicit or explicit) of well-defined and established foundational norms – either procedural or substantive."

De-Europeanisation is thus distinct from the normal practices of political contestation that have always characterized foreign policy development in the EU, including both the contestation of basic principles and the contestation of particular policy choices. According to the introduction to this special issue (Müller, Pomorska and Tonra 2021), de-Europeanisation can take different forms across time and space. Its mildest form would be "re-nationalisation"

whereby member states seek to protect national prerogatives and policy preferences and thus reduce consultation and coordination at the EU level. A stronger form would be "disengagement," whereby member states invest less diplomatic energy and resources in joint EU missions and other initiatives. An even stronger form would be "circumvention," whereby member states actively bypass EU institutions and pursue their foreign policy goals through alternative channels, including channels that effectively reduce the EU's coherence as a presence in world affairs. Finally, the strongest form of de-Europeanisation, short of a Brexit-like withdrawal from the Union, would be "resistance," whereby member states "explicitly question, disregard, or even contest common EU foreign policy institutions, norms, routines, role expectations and the EU´s established political acquis."

This begs the question of how de-Europeanisation affects the process by which the EU's member states deliberate over their foreign policy preferences and arrive (or not) at common EU policies. As a first step toward answering that question, this article offers a theoretical exploration of how de-Europeanisation is likely to affect foreign policy decision-making at the EU level. In so doing, it builds upon recent reflections on the consequences of the politicization of EU external relations (Barbé and Morillas 2019, Costa 2019). So unlike other contributions to this special issue, this article does not attempt to determine whether foreign policy in Europe is indeed undergoing de-Europeanisation, nor to measure the geographic or policy breadth of the process, nor to predict its future course. Instead, it assumes that de-Europeanisation is occurring and considers its likely consequences for the process and outcome of EU foreign policy decision-making.

The scope of the inquiry is limited in two ways. First, its scope is shaped by the variety of EU decision-making processes across policy domains. Its argument is most clearly relevant to the

development of common positions and joint actions under the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, including the Common Security and Defence Policy, where the Treaty on European Union accords a dominant role to member states, both individually and collectively. The argument is less relevant to other aspects of EU external relations, such as trade policy, environmental policy, enlargement policy, and development cooperation, where de-Europeanisation would have somewhat different effects because the treaty gives the European Commission a more salient role in these domains.

Second, the inquiry relates most clearly to three of the four forms of de-Europeanisation theorised in the introduction to this special issue (Müller, Pomorska and Tonra 2021). Of the four, re-nationalisation, circumvention and resistance are directly relevant because they all affect the readiness of member states to consult their EU counterparts and to compromise their preferences in order to reach agreement on common policies. In contrast, disengagement is largely about policy implementation and thus less relevant to this article's focus on decision-making.

II. The analytical approach

To think systematically about the consequences of de-Europeanisation, it is first necessary to be clear about one's assumptions and expectations regarding the sources and dynamics of EU foreign policy. This article's exploration of the likely effects of de-Europeanisation is guided by six theories drawn from international relations scholarship and explored in prior work on EU foreign policy-making (Thomas 2009, 2011). Each theory is labeled by the policy-making dynamic that it considers most important: Normative Suasion; Policy Learning; Normative Entrapment; Cooperative Bargaining; Logrolling; Competitive Bargaining. Each theory also has different expectations regarding EU foreign policy outputs.

In reality, EU foreign policy has always been formed through multiple modes of policy-making, some more intergovernmental and others more supranational, some involving rational bargaining over material interests and others more intersubjective considerations. This variation is shaped by the evolution of the Union's institutions, changing political tendencies within and between the member states, and the nature of the issues they face, among other factors. As such, it has always been a fool's errand to attempt to determine which single theory explains the EU's entire foreign policy process and output in any given historical period.

However, all well specified theories are "bound by 'scope conditions' that put limits on their generality" and therefore on their potential explanatory power (Mahoney 2007: 128). The potential explanatory power of a particular theoretical model thus depends upon the fit between its hypothesized scope conditions and the actual conditions prevailing in the world. For example, past research suggests that the relative explanatory power of many of the theories outlined here depends on the fit between the policy issue in question and the scope conditions of the respective theories (Schimmelfennig and Thomas 2009).

A strong fit between scope conditions and empirical conditions does not necessarily ensure explanatory power, but it does make it logically more likely. Just as important, a weak fit suggests that the theory in question will have little explanatory power. Focusing on how de-Europeanisation relates to each theory's scope conditions is not the same as an empirical test, but it offers a sound logical basis for evaluating how de-Europeanisation is likely to affect prevailing tendencies in EU foreign policy-making.

III.   De-Europeanisation and EU foreign policy-making processes

Theories of EU foreign policy decision-making can be organized along a spectrum from more sociological to more intergovernmentalist approaches. Each of the six theories below is based on distinctive assumptions regarding the nature of the EU and the fundamental sources of EU foreign policy behavior. All six address a common set of closely-related questions – whether, how and under what conditions EU member states overcome their divergent preferences to reach agreement on common policies regarding issues and actors beyond their collective external border. This is the core challenge of EU foreign policy, where the treaties give every member state a powerful voice over the Union's policy positions and instruments. The issue here is not which theory is correct, but rather how de-Europeanisation is likely to affect their relative explanatory power.

Theory 1: Normative Suasion

The theory of normative suasion derives from Constructivist theories of international relations that emphasize a relationship between the interactions of states and the understandings of self and self-interest that drive their behavior (Adler, 2002; Risse, 2004). It portrays the EU as a densely-integrated political community whose existence inexorably transforms the policy preferences of its member states. In particular, the argument emphasizes complex learning provoked by argumentation between EU and member state officials involved in collective deliberations over competing policy options (Risse, 2000; Checkel, 2003, 2005). Suasion is pursued through the communication of normative reasons why particular member states should reconceive their identities and fundamental interests and thus their views on why particular policies are more desirable or more appropriate, particularly with reference to the target's identity as an EU member. They are likely to be

exchanged through bilateral channels between member states and within various Council formations such as CFSP working groups, the 133 Committee on trade policy, or Coreper.

Member states may engage in normative suasion under a variety of circumstances. For example, when policy preferences are polarized within Council formations, representatives of both positions may exchange arguments in an effort to persuade the other. "Old" member states may direct their arguments at "new" member states in an attempt to socialize them to EU norms, or "new" members may seek to overturn an "old" policy consensus. A majority grouping of member states may direct their arguments at whichever member states are blocking consensus. But whatever the circumstance, successful normative suasion produces a convergence of member state preferences that facilitates consensus on EU common policies.

In short, the 'Normative Suasion' explanation for EU policy outcomes can be represented as follows:

Divergent preferences + Normative arguments → Persuasion → Preference convergence → Consensus policy

Although attempts at normative suasion are likely whenever EU member states disagree, these attempts will not always be successful. Research on socialization in international institutions identifies a number of conditions under which efforts at normative suasion are most likely to be successful. First, the target of the suasion attempt "is in a novel and uncertain environment and thus cognitively motivated to analyze new information." Second, the target "has few prior, ingrained beliefs that are inconsistent" with the reasons offered for redefining its interests or policy preferences. Third, the actor seeking to persuade "is an authoritative member of the ingroup to which the target belongs or wants to belong [and/or] does not lecture or demand but, instead, acts out principles of serious deliberative argument."

And fourth, the interaction "occurs in less politicized and more insulated, in-camera settings" (Checkel, 2005:813). All of these are potentially relevant to the various actors and institutional contexts involved in making EU foreign policy.

Several aspects of contemporary de-Europeanisation are likely to reduce the explanatory power of Suasion as a theory of EU foreign policy decision-making. First, most of the "new" member states have now been in the EU for more than a decade, which reduces the novelty of membership and thereby makes national leaders less motivated cognitively to consider new ways of understanding or acting on foreign policy issues (Baun and Marek 2013). Second, many of the leaders who have come to power in the latest populist wave are committed Euro-skeptics, or at least publicly committed to Euro-skeptic positions, which makes them less susceptible to arguments about the priority of EU unity or the right-ness of the EU's normative and policy commitments (Balfour 2016, Woertz and Soler i Lecha 2020). And third, the extreme politicization of EU affairs in recent years has ended the 'permissive consensus' of earlier times and thereby made it less likely that the member states will be swayed by discussions made behind closed doors (Costa 2019). The point here is not that EU leaders and diplomats will stop trying to convince or persuade each other on foreign policy matters, but that such efforts are less likely to succeed, so a theory of decision-making focused on this dynamic will lose explanatory power.

Theory 2: Policy Learning

In contrast to the preceding theory, which expects a transformation of the actors' conception of self and self-interest, it is possible to imagine a far less profound mechanism by which ideational exchanges among member states affect policy outcomes. The theory of policy

learning expects that interactions lead member states to recalculate which policy is most likely to realize their interests. This is part of a larger family of theories regarding how state actors "learn" new policy preferences from each other as they grapple with the complexity and interconnectedness of international issues (Goldstein and Keohane, 1993; Levy, 1994).

EU member states face considerable uncertainty regarding the implications of various foreign policy options for their interests and values. This uncertainty is most common, and policy learning is thus most likely to occur, when highly-technical scientific or economic issues are under discussion. However, the frequent opportunities for consultation offered by EU institutions enable them to reduce uncertainty by exchanging policy-relevant ideas and information. Seen in this light, the principal value of intra-EU foreign policy consultation is its contribution to a learning process whereby member states whose policy preferences were originally divergent eventually converge around policy preferences indicated by particular bodies of information or causal ideas. Once preference convergence has occurred, agreement on common and community policies is not difficult.

In sum, the 'Policy Learning' explanation for EU policy outcomes can be represented as follows:

> *Divergent preferences + Exchanges of information* → *Policy learning* → *Preference convergence* → *Consensus policy*

The dynamics of policy learning are most likely to occur when EU decision-making is de-politicised, when the issues under discussion are more technical than normative, and when there are good opportunities for dense exchanges of information. Depoliticisation promotes learning by reducing the pressure on decision-makers to stick to past commitments. Technical issues are more conducive to learning than normative issues because they invite problem-

solving rather than insistence on principles. Dense exchanges of information facilitate learning by enabling decision-makers to re-evaluate the wisdom of past policy choices.

Two aspects of contemporary de-Europeanisation are likely to reduce the explanatory power of learning as a theory of EU foreign policy decision-making. First, the reduced autonomy of member state representatives makes them more likely to defend positions communicated by their government rather than to engage in open-ended discussions with their counterparts in Brussels. Second, in contrast to the permissive consensus of earlier decades, the growing politicization of EU affairs has reduced the political space necessary for senior decision-makers to re-evaluate past policy choices in light of new information related to pending policy choices (Costa 2019). As such, the Policy Learning theory of EU foreign policy decision-making is likely to lose explanatory power as de-Europeanisation progresses.

Theory 3: Normative Entrapment

This is the first of two explicitly institutionalist theories. Both Normative Entrapment and Cooperative Bargaining (theory 4, below) treat the EU as a community of states whose rules and supranational organizations exert a significant impact on policy outcomes. While recognizing that member states dominate the creation of EU institutions, both theories assert that these institutions come to exert an independent effect on member states' subsequent negotiating behavior and policy choices. In short, "membership matters" (Sandholtz 1996).

Whereas some versions of Institutionalism emphasize the EU's supranational organizations and transnational policy entrepreneurs, and others emphasize formal rules such as the EU treaties' distribution of policy-making competences, these theories emphasizes the behavioral

impact of standards of appropriateness established by the community's substantive and procedural norms including normative and policy commitments already made by member states in the course of creating the Union's institutions, enlarging its borders, and adopting policies to govern its internal dynamics and external relationships. According to both Normative Entrapment and Cooperative Bargaining, the likelihood that the EU will adopt a common policy on a given issue, as well as the content of that policy, thus depend upon both the distribution of preferences among the member states (which varies from issue to issue) and how EU norms and policy commitments affect their choices in pursuit of those preferences.

In particular, the theory of normative entrapment hypothesis assumes that while the policy preferences of EU member states may diverge on particular issues, they value coherence and consistency in EU foreign policy and value being seen as acting in accordance with the community's normative and policy commitments. As a result, the policymaking behavior of member states is shaped significantly by shared perceptions regarding which policy options are consistent or inconsistent with pre-existing EU norms and commitments. Those member states whose policy preferences are seen as inconsistent with the EU's substantive norms or policy commitments are less willing to insist on their preferences and more acquiescent to those with norm-consistent preferences. They thus compromise their preferences and "play along" with the norm-consistent policy because they expect the social rewards for doing so to exceed the costs of the compromise. As a result, once member states have committed themselves to a particular set of norms and/or policy course, they are likely to find themselves entrapped, constrained to take further actions that do not reflect their original intentions and/or current preferences (Schimmelfennig, 2001, 2003, 2004). This dynamic affects all member states, including potential veto players.

Normative Entrapment theory thus leads us to expect that EU common and community policies will be consistent with pre-existing EU norms and policy commitments. Its logic of can be summarised as follows:

Divergent preferences + Rhetorical framing → Entrapment → Norm-consistent policy

However, a number of scope conditions make normative entrapment more likely to occur. First, entrapment is more likely when the relevant substantive norms are determinate – that is, when actors, regardless of their preferences, have little doubt about which norm applies to the issue at hand, which policy behavior it condones and which it condemns (Franck 2000). Second, entrapment is more likely when the EU has already made policy commitments on the issue at hand – that is, already invested its resources and reputation on behalf of one principle or party involved in the issue at hand. Third, entrapment is more likely when external conditions are consistent with the assumptions that underlay the existing EU norm or policy commitment. Where conditions are inconsistent, actors are disentrapped (or released) from their normative or policy commitments. Fourth, entrapment is more likely when policy deliberation occurs within forums where EU norms and policy commitments are salient and thus exert strong compliance pull. When member states negotiate in a forum shielded (at least partly) from the compliance pull of EU norms, which is most likely outside the EU, then entrapment is less likely. And finally, entrapment is more likely when the issue under discussion has received significant public attention, which increases the likelihood that non-compliance with existing EU norms or policy commitments will be noticed and subject to disapproval.

Processes of de-Europeanisation challenge these conditions. The normative and policy commitments that once seemed so powerful (Thomas 2009, Schimmelfennig and Thomas 2009, Thomas 2012) are now increasingly questioned by elite decision-makers and mass publics across the EU. For example, the meta norms of joint action as an intrinsic value, including support for the functionality and credibility of the EU as a global actor, and consistency and coherence in EU policy-making across time and issue-areas, now ring hallow in many EU capitals. Substantive norms related to support for democracy and the rule of law, human rights, conflict prevention, the strengthening of multilateral institutions, free trade, and the promotion of development as the principal goals of EU foreign policy are increasingly incongruous with assertions of national interests and the legitimacy of "illiberal democracy" (Rivera Escartin 2020). As a result, the 'compliance pull' of the hundreds and hundreds of past EU commitments is weakening rapidly.

In addition, procedural norms that developed informally over decades -- including regular communication and consultation before taking public positions, confidentiality in the use of shared information, and decision-making by consensus – are also fading (Michalski and Danielson 2020). As a result, EU member states pursue their foreign policy preferences within an institutionalized setting that is less and less conducive to the processes and outcomes that seemed normal less than a decade ago. EU foreign policy decision-making is thus far less likely to be entrapped by the Union's past normative and policy commitments. As such, the Normative Entrapment theory of EU foreign policy decision-making is likely to lose explanatory power as de-Europeanisation progresses.

Theory 4: Cooperative Bargaining

Another institutionalist theory emphasizes cooperative bargaining. The growth and institutional stability of the EU created the conditions that foster a cooperative approach to negotiations: identification with common goals and values and trust in the dynamics of diffuse reciprocity (Elgström and Jönsson, 2000; Scharpf, 2006). These conditions encouraged EU negotiators "to remember some identities and common ties, and to forget identities that tend to create cleavages and conflicts" (March and Olsen, 1998: 961). Over time, these conditions were reinforced by procedural norms that encourage policymakers to consult each other before publicizing their preferences, to seek consensus, and to refrain from making veto threats. Hence the tendency among scholars to refer to a "consultation reflex" shared by foreign policy makers in EU Member states (Nuttall, 1992).

The increased identification with Europe, the consensus norm and consultation reflex did not eliminate divergences in member state preferences, but they made member states less willing to act on their veto rights and more inclined to discount such threats made by others. It is therefore reasonable to hypothesize that as member states' deliberation over potential common foreign policies is dominated by cooperative tactics (also known as "integrative bargaining" or "problem-solving") rather than the competitive tactics that prevail in less-institutionalized settings (Lax and Sebenius, 1986; Hopmann, 1995; Elgström and Jönsson, 2000). And when the collective goal is to reach an agreement that comes as close as possible to satisfying the preferences of <u>all</u> member states, a different type of policy outcome is sure to result (Elgström and Jönsson 2005; da Conceição-Heldt 2006).

If this hypothesis were correct, we would expect intra-EU negotiations to be characterized by a great deal of give-and-take in the context of an intensive search for solutions that are acceptable (if not ideal) for the greatest number of member states. We would also expect that

common policies resulting from this process would embody mutual compromises by all member states, including those with the formal ability to avoid compromise by defending their preferences with a veto threat. Yet since politicians are generally reluctant to publicize their concessions, we would expect EU and member state spokespeople to justify their negotiated agreements before European and foreign audiences by referring to the Union's pre-existing substantive norms and policy commitments.

The 'cooperative bargaining' explanation for EU policy outcomes thus expects that member states with considerable bargaining power will make concessions in order to achieve a common policy that is partly responsive to the preferences of weaker member states. As a result, the theory suggests that the EU will sometimes agree on new common policies even when some of the member states prefer the status quo over all alternative policies on the table. In short, the theory can be represented as follows:

> *Divergent Member State preferences + Consensus norm + Consultation reflex →*
> *Cooperative bargaining → Mutual compromise policy*

EU foreign policy-making is most likely to follow the logic of cooperative bargaining when one or both of the following two conditions is present. First, cooperative bargaining is more likely to emerge when the issue in question is subject to collective deliberation within EU forums, where the EU's procedural norms are most salient. And second, cooperative bargaining is more likely to emerge when deliberations occur *in camera* -- that is, away from the media spotlight that raises the domestic political costs of compromise.

The dynamics of de-Europeanisation weaken both of the aforementioned pre-conditions for cooperative bargaining in EU foreign policy-making. Even in its weakest form, re-nationalisation, de-Europeanisation increases the likelihood that member states make foreign

policy decisions within national settings, far from the procedural norms that prevail in EU institutions. And given that national political institutions are more subject to direct public scrutiny, whether via media coverage or NGO and lobby pressure, decisions made there are more likely to prioritise national interests over shared European interests or the interests of other member states. As a result, de-Europeanisation will reduce the likelihood of cooperative bargaining among EU member states and thereby reduce the explanatory power of the theory associated with this form of foreign policy decision-making.

Theory 5: Logrolling

This is the first of two theories based on intergovernmentalist approaches to European governance, which treat the EU as an international forum in which member states act strategically in pursuit of their interests and policy preferences on particular issues. Intergovernmentalism typically attributes these preferences to the interaction of international pressures and domestic political considerations, and assumes that preferences are unaffected by participation in EU institutions (Moravcsik 1998, Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig 2009).

The 'logrolling' theory of EU foreign policy decision-making suggests that certain constellations of issues and preferences create incentives for Member States to link concessions on off-setting issues and thus enable them to avoid the cooperation-undermining dynamics of fully competitive bargaining (McKibben 2010). This is well-known in other areas of EU decision-making: in Council voting on the Commission's legislative proposals, member states often achieve agreement by "logrolling across proposals that either belong to the same policy domain or are negotiated during the same period" (König and Junge 2009). Given the large number of member states with diverse foreign policy preferences and

intensities of commitment to various issues, a great variety of reciprocal deals is theoretically possible.

In short, the logrolling theory of EU foreign policy decision-making can be represented as follows:

Divergent Member State Preferences + Opportunity for mutual and off-setting concessions → Reciprocal bargains → Compromise policy

The dynamics expected by this theory are most likely to occur under two conditions. First, when the policy issue under discussion contains sub-issues that offer potential gains for various member states apart from their preferences regarding the main issue, or when the main issue can be bundled with some other issue(s) in a manner that ensures all member states achieve some gain. This is unlikely to be affected by de-Europeanisation. And second, when member states feel free to engage in bargaining determined only by their own calculations of national advantage. Because de-Europeanisation would make member states less responsive to EU norms and procedures, it is likely to make them more willing to pursue and accept reciprocal bargains that might otherwise be seen as inconsistent with EU values or past commitments. As such, there is reason to expect the explanatory theory of logrolling theory to increase as de-Europeanisation progresses.

Theory 6: Competitive Bargaining

Like the logrolling theory presented above, the competitive bargaining theory of EU foreign policy assumes that divergences in member states' policy preferences are not significantly compensated by a shared commitment to common goals or values. However, instead of focusing on the possibility of mutual gains, it emphasizes the fact that each member state

wields a potential veto over policy proposals (Hoffmann, 1966; Moravcsik, 1998). This pessimistic reading of intergovernmentalism expects member states to treat intra-EU negotiations as zero-sum games in which each seeks to maximize its own preferences. Member states may trade concessions on off-setting issues and thus shift their bottom-line in bargaining over policy choices, but such exercises in "specific reciprocity" (Keohane, 1986) do not constitute a shift in their underlying preferences.

These assumptions regarding the preferences and calculations of member states lead to the expectation of competitive bargaining (also known as 'hard bargaining') over policy alternatives (Scharpf, 1988). In particular, whichever member state is least receptive to change will dominate EU foreign policy by threatening to veto any proposal that is further from the status quo than its own ideal policy (Jupille, 1999). As a result, the EU will have difficulty acting decisively, if at all, in world affairs: as long as common policies require unanimous support, "the EU will be hampered... by the constant threat of having one of its numerous member states break from its ranks" (Meunier, 2000:132).

This theory is consistent with two possible policy outcomes: deadlock or lowest common denominator. Where member states' policy preferences are mutually exclusive (such as the choice between cutting and expanding ties to a particular country), competitive bargaining will prevent the adoption of any common policy – an outcome known as deadlock. Where the disagreement of the member states is a matter of degree (such as how much aid should be given to a particular country), competitive bargaining will likely result in agreement on whatever policy is acceptable to all member states and closest to the ideal outcome of the one least receptive to change (i.e., the "lowest common denominator" or LCD). In practice, this LCD policy may be the status quo (agreement not to change an existing policy) or a new

policy that reflects the preferences of the veto player. And since EU enlargement increases the number of potential veto players, the likelihood of agreement on non-LCD policies is further reduced by the adhesion of every new member state (Tsebelis, 2002).

In short, the intergovernmentalist theory of competitive bargaining can be represented as follows:

Divergent Member State preferences + Veto option → Competitive Bargaining →
Deadlock or Lowest Common Denominator policy

The dynamics expected by this theory are most likely to occur when any of three conditions are present. First, when EU decision-making is highly politicised within national debates, which reduces the impact of any substantive or procedural norms at EU level. Second, when the governments of the member states share few if any goals or values, which reduces the incentive to compromise particular national policy preferences. And third, in the most extreme situation, when member states have mutually-exclusive policy preferences, which eliminates any basis for compromise. Combining these logics, competitive bargaining is highly likely when all three of these conditions are present, as one would expect in the context of de-Europeanisation. As such, the further that de-Europeanisation progresses, the more that EU foreign policy decision-making will result in deadlock or lowest common denominator policy outcomes, as expected by competitive bargaining theory.

Table 1 summarises the preceding discussion as follows:

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IV. De-Europeanisation and EU foreign policy outcomes

The preceding theoretical analysis suggests that de-Europeanisation will exacerbate the central difficulty in EU foreign policy decision-making: the challenge of reaching agreement on common policies despite divergences in the interests and preferences of member states. Furthermore, by transforming the cognitive, rhetorical and institutional context in which EU member states deliberate, de-Europeanisation will undermine the conditions that tended to push them in recent decades to converge on common policies consistent with the Union's prior commitments (Thomas 2011). The greater the depth and extent of de-Europeanisation, the more that EU foreign policy decision-making will resemble hard-nosed diplomacy among sovereign states rather than a normatively-bounded process among members of a political community. As a result, de-Europeanisation will bolster the explanatory power of two intergovernmentalist theories of decision-making – one emphasizing logrolling, and the other emphasizing competitive bargaining – while weakening the explanatory power of more sociological theories of normative suasion, policy learning, normative entrapment and cooperative bargaining.

Just over a decade ago, the expectations of normative institutionalism, namely the entrapment and cooperative bargaining models presented above, fit EU foreign policy processes and outputs across a range of issue-areas better than alternative theories (Schimmelfennig and Thomas 2009). As a result, it seemed reasonable to expect that EU foreign policy outputs in the coming years would typically be characterized by policies consistent with the Union's prior normative commitments and/or compromises designed to accommodate the concerns of all member states. This trend would narrow the famous "capabilities-expectations gap" in EU foreign policy (Hill 1993) and contribute to the Union's emergence as a foreign policy actor whose influence finally matched its collective resources.

But if the political context of EU decision-making is indeed shifting toward de-Europeanisation, then the salience of prior commitments and procedural norms will be replaced by logrolling and competitive bargaining. In this environment, EU foreign policy outputs will be shaped by a combination of bargains based on national preferences, lowest common denominators and the risk of deadlock on the most sensitive topics. The typical process and output of EU foreign policy-making will thus resemble an unrestrained version of intergovernmentalism more closely than normative or supranational intergovernmentalism (Thomas 2009, Howorth 2012).

This conclusion has implications well beyond academic debates. The EU's ability to exert influence abroad is already weakened by the member states' reluctance to transfer greater foreign policy competences to the EU level and by the diversity of values and regime types among the member states (Meunier and Vachudova 2018, Badell 2021). If de-Europeanisation is real and not reversed, and the theoretical expectations outlined above are correct, then it will be increasingly difficult for the EU to build a foreign policy identity based on shared interests and values, to act coherently, and thus to achieve the 'strategic autonomy' sought by many political leaders across Europe.

Unrestrained intergovernmentalism is likely to result in an increase in 'hostage-taking' by member states willing to obstruct EU agreement in one area in order to shift the EU's position in another area (Hofmann 2019), as was evident in the recent stalemate over Belarus. All of the member states supported, albeit to varying degrees, an EU plan to impose sanctions on senior figures in the Lukashenko regime involved in the violent suppression of Belarusian citizens peacefully protesting the apparently-fraudulent results of the last presidential election. But despite this consensus, backed by the EU's long-standing commitment to

democracy, the rule of law and human rights, Cyprus decided to withhold its approval for the sanctions in an effort to mobilise EU support for its position in an unrelated dispute with Turkey. As Nathalie Tocci put it, "Cyprus was able to hold the process hostage, not because its national security was under threat from the move to sanction Belarus, but because it saw an opportunity to horse-trade and exert pressure on the EU to act in its interest on another issue" (Tocci 2020).

As long as political conditions in the EU fit the expectations of normative institutionalism, the dynamics of normative entrapment and cooperative bargaining reduced the risks associated with the EU principle that foreign policy decisions require unanimous member state support or at least acquiescence. But if the Belarus sanctions episode is indeed a sign of things to come, there will be voices urging the EU to abandon its unanimity principle. In an atmosphere of heightened politicization and de-Europeanisation, such a move would further undermine the popular legitimacy of EU decision-making.

Of course, de-Europeanisation does not necessarily progress evenly across all the member states: some may remain committed to the norms and institutions that promote joint action, while others disengage or even resist joint action. In addition, the EU's own foreign policy institutions – most importantly, the EU High Representative/Vice President of the European Commission and the European External Action Service, over which the HR/VP presides – appear to have increased their autonomy in recent years (Barbé and Morillas 2019, Morillas 2020). However, assuming that Qualified Majority Voting remains marginal in the foreign policy field – and this is unlikely to change – then de-Europeanisation among a small number of member states will move the Union as a whole toward stricter intergovernmental decision-making. And even if de-Europeanisation of EU foreign policy values somehow co-exists with

informal and illiberal forms of Europeanisation, the tension is likely to undermine the consistency of EU foreign policy (Rivera Escartin 2020).

These dynamics will make it more difficult for the EU to achieve unity on domestically-sensitive issues like climate change and migration (Lockwood 2018, Woertz and Soler i Lecha 2020, Badell 2021, Monteleone 2021). It will also create inviting opportunities for foreign powers such as China, Russia and the United States to manipulate divisions among EU member states as they seek to shape a new world order amenable to their ambitions, which are sometimes radically different from the EU's professed commitment to liberal values and effective 'rules-based multilateralism'(Council of the European Union 2019). And in such circumstances, the EU will find it significantly more difficult to achieve 'strategic autonomy' for Europe (Michel 2020).

Such developments are also likely to result in more 'ad hoc minilateralism' (Moret 2016, also Helwig 2020), where smaller groups of member states with overlapping preferences adopt their own common foreign policy positions, as allowed by Article 46 of the Treaty on European Union. Depending on the issue at hand and the resources and commitment of the member states involved, these small groups might be able to exercise considerable influence in world affairs. Nonetheless, this outcome would be very different from that envisioned a decade ago when the member states seemed increasingly inclined to work together in foreign policy and the EU seemed headed toward 'ever closer union' on the world stage.

V.   Conclusions

Unlike other contributions to this special issue, which focus on the sources, dynamics and extent of the de-Europeanisation of EU member state foreign policy, this article has

considered the implications of de-Europeanisation for how foreign policy is made at the EU level and thus for the type of policies that the Union is likely to adopt and its effectiveness in world affairs. The analysis is based first on an assessment of how de-Europeanisation affects the scope conditions assumed by various theories of EU foreign policymaking. It concludes that de-Europeanisation is likely to decrease the salience of policy-making dynamics emphasized by sociological approaches, such as normative suasion, policy learning, normative entrapment and cooperative bargaining, and to boost the salience of dynamics emphasized by intergovernmental approaches, such as logrolling and competitive bargaining.

Such a revival of intergovernmentalist dynamics will make it more difficult for the EU to achieve unity on complex and sensitive foreign policy issues, thereby widening the "capabilities-expectations gap" in EU foreign policy that seemed to be shrinking just a decade ago. This outcome will create opportunities for foreign powers to manipulate divisions within the EU as they seek to shape a new world order radically different from the EU's professed commitment to effective 'rules-based multilateralism.' If foreign policy-making in Europe continues to de-Europeanise, scholars will have more and more opportunities to test these expectations empirically.

Table 1: Theories and their explanatory power in light of de-Europeanisation

Theory	Drivers	Mechanisms	Expected policy type	Supportive conditions	Expected explanatory power
Normative Suasion	Divergent preferences + Normative arguments	Persuasion	Consensus policy	Uncertain environment; few prior beliefs; in-group persuader; insulated decision-making.	↓
Policy Learning	Divergent preferences + Exchanges of information	Preference convergence	Consensus policy	De-politicisation; technical issues; dense exchanges of information.	↓
Normative Entrapment	Divergent preferences + Rhetorical framing	Entrapment	Norm-consistent policy	Strong & salient prior commitments; determinate norms; decision-making in EU forums.	↓
Cooperative bargaining	Divergent preferences + Consensus norm + Consultation reflex	Cooperative bargaining	Compromise policy, likely norm-consistent	Clear common goals & values; trust in diffuse reciprocity; decision-	↓

				making in EU forums; insulated decision-making.	
Logrolling	Divergent preferences + Opportunity for mutual gain	Mutual concessions	Compromise policy, likely not norm-consistent	Issues that offer reciprocal bargains; little normative constraint on self-interested bargaining.	⬆
Competitive bargaining	Divergent preferences + Veto option	Competitive bargaining	Deadlock or Lowest Common Denominator	Few common goals & values; high politicization; mutually-exclusive policy preferences.	⬆

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