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The Domestic Challenge to EU Foreign Policy-Making: From Europeanisation to de-Europeanisation?

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ABSTRACT

Developing a novel conceptualization of ‘de-Europeanisation’, this introduction provides a common theoretical framework to advance our understanding of EU foreign policy-making in times of internal and external challenges. De-Europeanisation relates to situations where EU foreign policy-making runs against the grain of certain Member States’ declared values and interests; where Member States are less willing to engage in collective foreign policy-making at the EU-level, prioritising other multilateral frameworks or (unilateral) national actions; and where the results of that policy-making are, on occasion, explicitly undermined by Member State practice. Departing from the understanding that (de) Europeanisation is an overarching ‘framework’ rather than a theory, authors focus on – and theorize about – different ‘drivers’, ‘elements’ and ‘dynamics’ of de-Europeanisation’. The theoretical framework developed in this introduction provides guidance for the following individual articles, which are mapped against a common understanding of de-Europeanisation and which locate themselves within the overarching conceptual framework. This will allow for a systematic analysis, comparison and evaluation across the different case studies included in this special issue.

KEYWORDS

CFSP; Europeanisation; De-Europeanisation; Foreign Policy

1. Introduction

The EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) faces major challenges from the outside but also from within (European Union 2016, 3). Externally, the EU is struggling with a shifting US foreign policy, which was particularly pronounced during the Trump presidency (2017–2021), a rising China, a more assertive Russia, and an increasingly fragmented and contested geopolitical environment (Raik 2019; Nitoiu and Sus 2019). Internally, the EU is confronted with the rise of populism and democratic regression in several Central-Eastern European Member States, the legacy of the 2008 sovereign debt crisis and austerity politics and the Union’s ongoing challenges with its legitimacy and responsiveness to public demands. More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic and related economic challenges have added further aspects to the multitude of challenges faced by the EU. The substantive challenges faced by EU foreign policy over recent years also raise

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the question as to how we should study EU foreign policy-making. For the most part, research exploring the link between national and EU-level foreign policy has focused on the process of deepening institutional co-operation and community building in the CFSP-framework (e.g. Smith 2003; Tonra 2003) as well as on the Europeanisation of national foreign policies of EU Member States (Hadfield et al. 2017; Tonra 2015, 2003; Pomorska 2007; Müller 2012; Wong and Hill 2011; Irondelle 2003; Major 2005; Manners, Whitman, and Allen 2000). Conversely, we still know relatively little about the corrosive forces that put past achievements of Europeanisation to the test, which have the potential to undermine the cohesion of EU foreign policy and its institutional capacity to address external developments.

Developing a novel theoretical conceptualization of ‘de-Europeanisation’, this special issue aims to advance our understanding of EU foreign policy-making in times of internal and external challenges. We understand de-Europeanisation to relate to situations where EU foreign policy-making runs against the grain of certain Member States’ declared values and interests; where Member States are less willing to engage in collective foreign-policy-making at the EU-level, prioritising other multilateral frameworks or (unilateral) national actions; and where the results of that policy-making are, on occasion, explicitly undermined by Member State practice. Such behaviour may emerge from within the Union’s foreign policy process and institutions, it may be conducted unilaterally by member states in other multilateral fora (such as the UN), or it may arise in bilateral or mini-lateral relations with third parties.

Departing from the understanding that (de)Europeanisation is an overarching ‘framework’ rather than a theory, authors focus on – and theorise about – different ‘drivers’, ‘elements’ and ‘dynamics’ of de-Europeanisation’. The theoretical framework developed in this introduction guides the following individual articles, which are mapped against a common understanding of de-Europeanisation and which locate themselves within the overarching conceptual framework. This will allow for a systematic analysis, comparison and evaluation across the different case studies included in this special issue. De-Europeanisation will be explored in relation to both individual EU Member States and their EU-level consequences, including on decision-making modes (see Thomas 2021). As an intergovernmental policy area that depends on voluntary and deeply socialised cooperation and mutual solidarity, CFSP is particularly vulnerable to de-Europeanisation dynamics. CFSP not only lacks direction from supranational institutions and credible enforcement mechanisms; it is also predicated on the sovereign rights of member states to conduct their own foreign policies alongside the CFSP framework (Orenstein and Daniel Kelemen 2017). The core justification and rationale of CFSP have been that it strengthens national foreign policies, never that it was intended to supersede or replace them. It cannot, therefore, be compared to the EU’s Common Commercial Policy or the Common Agricultural Policy which replaced separate national policies in these sectors. The stage is thus inevitably left open to member states to judge – for themselves – that common EU policy positions and strategies no longer serve their national foreign policy interests or fail to reflect national values or norms.

The concept of Europeanisation gained popularity among the scholars dealing with European Foreign Policy at the end of the 1990s. In an expanding literature, a Google Scholar search in February 2021 reveals that this concept, linked to ‘EU foreign policy’, was cited in a total of 6,570 academic publications. However, this very

growth has led to criticism. As noted elsewhere (Tonra 2015), Europeanisation has been criticised as having limited explanatory capacity (Lodge 2006), as being confused as to its causal status (Wong and Hill 2011) and as being the emblematic example of concept stretching (Radaelli 2000).

Recently, the Europeanisation concept returned, even though in its 'mirror' image. Following the reforms introduced by the Lisbon Treaty, academics and diplomats have started referring to 're-nationalisation' or 'de-Europeanisation' of European foreign policy. There is also an increased attention to the processes of contestation of established norms by several member states and especially the impact of populism (for example Escartin, 2020). Those references have been mostly based on observations and anecdotal evidence, rather than a thoroughgoing analysis. 'De-Europeanisation' is now tentatively peering over the scholarly ramparts. While it is making an appearance in conference programs – usually qualified by a question mark – scholars have been slow to commit scarce time and resources to publishing on the topic. A Google Scholar search in February 2021, for example, uncovers just 75 results, covering, *inter alia* cases in Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Malta, Slovenia and Turkey.

2. Conceptualising de-Europeanisation: a mirror image or a concept in its own right?

In policy-making terms, the thesis of de-Europeanisation is clear. It describes a contemporary reality in which EU foreign policy-making runs against the grain of certain member state declared values/interests, where member states are less willing to engage in collective policy-making and where the results of that policy-making are, on occasion, explicitly undermined by member state practice up to, and including, regular and even systematic use or threatened use of the veto. In part, this is argued by policy makers to be a function of a broader contestation of core values. Domestic (populist) politics is often mentioned as a potential source of such behaviour in Brussels. Here, those member states that are subject to a populist, nativist, and/or semi-authoritarian political dynamics (either within or outside government), challenge well-established collective EU foreign policy processes and positions. In addition, some national policy makers and EEAS officials also point to post Lisbon institutional changes for an explanation. They argue that with the loss of the rotating member state presidency within the Foreign Affairs Council and its associated structures (PSC, Military Committee, CFSP Working Groups etc.) member states are less positively engaged, and a certain diplomatic *esprit de corps* has been lost (having been identified early on as a feature of Europeanisation – see Nuttall 1992). They insist that even the distant prospect of chairing these institutions engendered a certain sense of responsibility and ownership of collective policymaking on the part of the member states. Expressed in its crudest terms it meant that member state diplomats shared the burden of leadership and that any failure on their part to support the chair's effort at crafting and implementing agreed policy outputs would return to haunt them when they later occupied that post. In the words of the practitioners, the working environment becomes difficult as undermining the chair entails fewer costs.

Europeanisation of EU foreign policy is broadly understood to encompass three policy dynamics; uploading, downloading and cross-loading (for a review see Tonra 2015; Alecu

De Flers and Müller 2012). Uploading looks at how, when and to what extent national foreign policy goals are elevated to the EU policy-making table as a means of adding collective European weight to national preferences – even at the cost of some level of compromise. For its part, downloading is then seen to be the means and implications of a process by which collectively agreed EU foreign policy positions are embedded within national foreign policies and how such national policies evolve as a result. Cross-loading (Major 2005; Major and Pomorska 2005; Czulno 2021) is a later addition to the more classic Europeanisation literature. It is concerned with how member states learn from one another and are socialised in the same norms also by working together outside of the EU institutions (but because of belonging to the EU and participating in CFSP). It takes place against the backdrop of a dense system of shared information, analysis, and policy-making structures.

Based on this general understanding, one can then take an established working definition of Europeanisation and test the extent to which its mirror image offers us a useful cut at something to be called de-Europeanisation. For our purposes, we assume in this introduction that Europeanisation is a ‘transformation in the way in which national foreign policies are constructed, in the way professional roles are defined and pursued and in the consequent internalization of norms and expectations arising from a complex system of collective European policy’ (Tonra 2018).

It is important to underline what we do not understand as de-Europeanisation. De-Europeanisation cannot be defined as policy disagreements, reversals, weaknesses, failures, or limitations. All of the preceding is within – and must be seen to be within – the realm of normal political contestation that takes place during the negotiations in the Council. Whether that is a challenge to the EU’s position on peace in the Middle East, the balance between sanctions and constructive engagement towards Russia or a recalibration of power balances in global governance vis a vis China and/or the United States of America, all this must be framed as being within the legitimate remit of foreign policy change and adaptation; it has been long accepted within the various Council decision-making levels that even a member state blocking a certain collective EU position is understandable if conducted for important reasons of national interest – and there is usually broad license offered where this is seen to apply in particular circumstances. It is crucial, however, that the other member states understand the reasons behind the behaviour of the objecting state, which normally would require that there is a process of deliberation and an effort on its part to justify the position taken. How does one then conceptualise a continuous and repetitive contestation of behavioural and normative expectations across the spectrum of topics included in European Foreign Policy? In other words, when does a common-or-garden contestation of agreed EU policy (perhaps based on a change of government, or reformulation of national interests or rebalancing of values), move from being an effort to ‘upload’ reframed priorities and instead become part of a ‘de-Europeanisation’ agenda?

Distinguishing Criteria of De Europeanisation

It is possible to identify at least three intersecting criteria that indicate a boundary between simple policy contestation – which must be accepted as part and parcel of EU foreign policy evolution – and a clear shift towards de-Europeanisation. The first is the

scope or discursive tone of the challenge. Where member state(s) challenge well-established policy positions or principles from within the parameters of foundational European norms it must – at least *prima facie* – be accepted as a simple policy challenge. This might be evident, for example, with a change of government and a reassessment or even reversal of judgment on where contested claims to justice reside. If it is then argued that the established EU policy position privileges an unjust actor – or fails to vindicate the rights of particular actors in a conflict, then this can well be seen within the frame of legitimate policy contestation. If, however, the proposed policy shift is one that does obvious and clear violence to core foundational norms underpinning EU foreign policy, e.g. by vindicating or justifying gross human rights abuses, transgressing international law or undermining multilateral institutions, then the Member State may well be judged to be pursuing a different agenda on that issue. The same is true with respect to core procedural norms – like information-sharing, consensus-seeking, the respect of ‘agreed language’ and established EU foreign policy positions – that make up CFSP’s culture of cooperation. Whilst occasional disregard of these procedural norms and hard bargaining behaviour is part of the normal EU politics, outright opposition to the EU’s culture of cooperation can also amount to de-Europeanisation.

The second distinguishing criterion of de Europeanisation is the scale of the challenge. In the case of a few key policy challenges – where the political/ideological landscape of the Member State has clearly shifted to privilege a different foreign policy perspective – simple political contestation may well be at play. However, if this contestation is visible across a larger range of policy positions, in other words, if it is pervasive, then a more profound de Europeanisation of the member state’s foreign policy may be the issue. Such a pattern of challenge across a wide range of issues would suggest a basic re-orientation of the member state away from European norms and its associated Europeanisation.

The third criterion which indicates that a Rubicon is being crossed with respect to de Europeanisation is where the associated policy challenges place the state across the wide spectrum of member state policy positions. Notwithstanding the agreement of certain policy positions within EUFP, it is well understood that each carefully crafted common statement encompasses a range of national policy positions and preferences. Each statement, each position, each longstanding policy orientation, is itself a creature of compromise. Within each of these, there is, therefore, a range of national positions from ‘hawks’ to ‘doves’. Thus, for de-Europeanisation to be evidenced, there must be the expectation that the Member State(s) concerned is consistently positioning themselves either outside the range of existing Member State positions or else consistently at their furthest fringes.

A critical point to bear in mind here is an obvious assumption that ‘Europeanisation’ is a process that does indeed have its own normative foundation beyond the mere fact of deriving a common policy. For example, if one were to see a broad shift among EU member states towards authoritarian/illiberal politics and the development of an associated foreign policy based on a rejection/inversion of the founding values of the EU – would that not too be ‘Europeanisation’ but just in a different ideological direction? We disagree. We would argue that this might indeed entail a process of foreign policy harmonization and coordination, but it would not be defined as Europeanisation as has been commonly understood, as it would represent a rejection of foundational European values.

The above criteria offer an informal evaluation of whether de-Europeanisation may be at issue – as opposed to normal political contestation. If that *prima facie* case can credibly be made, then the second phase of our assessment is to determine the process by which de-Europeanisation may occur at both the member state level and within the policy-making of the Council in Brussels.

Three elements of de-Europeanisation

As Copeland (2016) has put it, for de-Europeanisation to occur, a certain level of Europeanisation must have occurred first. Building on this view, we consider core previous achievements of Europeanisation as a central benchmark against which the level of de-Europeanisation is to be judged.

The first element, the ‘reconstruction of professional roles’ in exclusively or predominantly national terms, involves de-Europeanisation dynamics that relate to both substantive foreign policy as well as institutional and procedural aspects. Concerning the level of policy substance, Europeanisation has been described to lead to an increased salience of the European political agenda and a definition of roles and priorities in common European, rather than narrow national terms. This process has been particularly far-reaching in smaller EU Member States, which traditionally have a more limited foreign policy outlook and participate in an increasingly wide spectrum of joint EU foreign policy issues. Conversely, de-Europeanisation refers to dynamics where Member States pull back from previously established common European understandings, roles and priorities that have emerged through Europeanisation. At the level of foreign policy discourse and official diplomatic rhetoric, national officials may represent themselves increasingly as champions of their Member States’ national interests, whilst questioning or actively opposing joint European priorities, interests and positions. Such discursive opposition to a common EU foreign policy might not only follow from traditional foreign policy rationales but might also (or even exclusively) be directed towards domestic political audiences. At the level of substantive foreign policy positions, a Member State may re-nationalise previously Europeanised foreign policy objectives, withdrawing to a more national foreign policy agenda.

Moreover, the de-construction of professional roles may also relate to a Member States foreign policy bureaucracy. Member State governments that seek to regain national control over Europeanised foreign policies might take active steps to counter processes of elite socialization and the empowerment of Brussels-based national officials. To strengthen national control, Member State governments may take steps to (re)centralise decision-making and to limit the leeway and authority of Brussels-based national officials. Simultaneously, governments with a strong national-minded agenda may seek to counter Europeanisation processes of elite-socialization and identity formation by instilling a more national-minded agenda in the selection, training, promotion and posting of diplomats, or even replace existing staff with ‘loyal’ officials and increase the frequency of rotation in Brussels. Whilst such re-nationalization processes relate to developments at the level of EU-Member States, we still consider them as an important element of de-Europeanisation as they refer to dynamics where Member States regress from past accomplishments of top-down Europeanisation and the ‘cross-loading’ of learning one from another. Simultaneously, re-nationalization processes within EU Member States are also crucial

for our understanding of how Member States contribute to de-Europeanisation dynamics at the EU-level, which is the subject of the subsequent two elements of de-Europeanisation.

Repudiation of fundamental norms, our second element of de-Europeanisation, involves a regression from a commitment to well-defined procedural and substantive EU norms. Several decades of institution-building, EU-level cooperation and elite-socialization have produced a unique EU foreign policy system, marked by a distinctive foreign policy identity, based on norms such as human rights, the rule of law, and democracy (Manners 2002), as well as a common sense of purpose, ideational commitment and 'culture of cooperation' (Nuttall 1992, 2000; Manners, Whitman, and Allen 2000; Tonra 2003). Taking the unique normative foundation of EU foreign policy as our point of departure, our perspective on (de)Europeanisation differs from works that appear to argue that *any* common policy produced through EU-level cooperation amounts to Europeanisation, even if they result in a regression of foundational EU norms and values (e.g. Escarting, 2020).¹ Our argument is that a regression from foundational EU norms and values (prescribed in the Union's treaties) is at odds with core accomplishments of Europeanisation. Similarly, it is important to emphasise that not all cases of EU-level conflict, contestation and even failure to agree on joint policies amount to de-Europeanisation. As mentioned earlier in the introduction, space must remain open for day to day, even robust political contestation, debate and conflict which must be seen as part and parcel of 'normal', EU politics. Again, it is when EU Member States disagree with and oppose the fundamental and foundational aspects of EU foreign policy that we speak of de-Europeanisation.

In the context of the institutional development of CFSP, a key characteristic of foreign policy Europeanisation has been the evolution of a culture of cooperation in the Council and its various working groups and committees based on procedural norms such as 'information sharing', 'consultation', 'consensus-seeking', 'compromise', and the respect of previously agreed foreign policy positions (so-called 'agreed language'). EU foreign policy is also based on substantive norms, such as democracy and the respect for the rule of law, the universality of human rights, democracy, and respect for multilateralism and global governance institutions. These mark the core of Union's identity as an international actor. Critically, for our purposes, it is not enough that a member state occasionally objects to well-established CFSP-norms, rules and principles. As the literature on international norms notes, a certain level of norm contestation – as well as occasional breaches – does not necessarily imply the erosion, regression or even death of a norm. Rather, de-Europeanisation relates to more stable trends or pattern of objection to well-established CFSP norms in a member state's foreign policy discourse and practice. At the level of the EU foreign policy system, this entails processes of norm regression and reverse norm cascade (Sikkink 2013; McKeown 2009), which can undermine the EU's culture of cooperation and its capacity to find consensus and build compromise, which are both at the heart of its foreign policy-making process.

The third and final element of the de-Europeanisation perspective developed here relates to the structural disintegration of collective policy-making institutions. At the most fundamental level, structural disintegration involves de-Europeanisation dynamics that are directed towards both the formal disbandment of EU foreign policy structures and/or processes or their substantive degradation to the point at which they become near-

irrelevant. Here, Member States may be seen to object to and oppose established EU structures and foreign policy-making processes, in their foreign policy discourse and behaviour. Structural disintegration might also result from a loss of relevance of EU foreign policy structures as a result of de-Europeanisation dynamics that lead to a Member State's 'disengagement' from EU-level foreign policymaking or the 'circumvention' of EU foreign policy institutions. Disengagement relates to a member state's level of active commitment to CFSP cooperation in terms of leadership, diplomatic support and initiatives and foreign policy resources. It builds on the understanding that Europeanisation involves a member state's active effort to affect and contribute to the development of EU foreign policy, as member states give an increasing importance to the EU-agenda (e.g. Whitman et al. 2017; Wong and Hill 2011). Member states that disengage from CFSP may thus give less diplomatic backing to EU foreign policy and dedicate less time, staff, and resources to (particular) CFSP matters, reducing their level of active participation in the various stages of the policy cycle (i.e. agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, and implementation).

In turn, 'circumvention' relates to situations where a member state increasingly expresses commitment and loyalty to or relies on alternative multi-lateral, mini-lateral or bilateral frameworks, rather than the CFSP. For instance, the existence of NATO – which occupies a similar institutional space and overlaps significantly with Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) in terms of membership, mandate and resources – has influenced the development of CSDP and vice versa (Hofmann 2011). Moreover, individual member states, or sub-groups of member states, are part of a number of smaller groupings like the Visegrad 4, the Nordic Group, or the Weimar triangle. Some also maintain strong bilateral relationships, increasingly also with powerful economic actors like China (such as the 17 + 1 framework) that can be seen to take precedence over EU-level cooperation. Circumvention thus highlights that member states have a choice between the CFSP framework and alternative routes of actions, whereby Europeanisation involves a growing reliance on the CFSP (Gross 2009, 1). At the discursive level, circumvention manifests itself in statements and declarations through which a Member State expresses its principal loyalty and commitment to mini and multi-lateral foreign policy frameworks other than the EU in previously Europeanised foreign policy domains. At the level of substantive policy actions, it manifests itself as the growing reliance on alternative frameworks in the actual conduct and implementation of foreign policy. In practice, the member states may choose to use a specific smaller grouping as a vehicle for 'pre-cooking' and coordinating its policies and as such it should not be viewed as an alternative forum to EU's CFSP. However, they may also choose to use it in order to circumvent EU's policies, as the V4 did for example in the case of the migration crisis and subsequent migration policy proposals. Another example may be the relationship between the V4 and China.

Thus, we have an interlocking set of three elements of potential de-Europeanisation; the reconstruction of professional norms, a sustained challenge to foundational norms – both procedural and substantive leading ultimately to structural disintegration. What has yet to be determined here, of course, is the ranking, relative weight and individual measurement of these elements. Serious methodological issues also arise concerning the definitional issues involved and means by which measurement over time and trajectories may be plotted.

The three elements are interconnected with one another. If at the level of Member States, we would observe a progressive de-Europeanisation, then, if there are sufficient

cases or if there is a backlash on the part of the member states, we would also observe de-Europeanisation in the first element. However, there can also be an increased Europeanisation of those that may wish to progress faster, resulting in a fragmented integration. One can also imagine the reverse: if at the European level we have the breakdown of trust and the diminishing of the foundational norms, this may then cause de-Europeanisation at the national level in member states.

We now move to assess how we operationalise these elements. The aim here is to better study and assess the degree to which, if at all, we can measure de-Europeanisation and assess the extent of its impact [Table 1](#).

3. Drivers of de-Europeanisation: Domestic and External Factors of Change

Whilst a de-Europeanisation perspective can facilitate a better understanding about ‘corrosive’ forces confronting EU foreign policy, previous research reminds us that internal and external developments, challenges and crisis do not have a uniform, unidirectional effect on the EU and its member states. Indeed, challenges and crises can even facilitate ‘further integration’, stimulating important policy and institutional reforms across a wide array of EU policy areas, including in the foreign policy domain (e.g. Falkner 2016; Müller 2016). Hence, our argument is not that de-Europeanisation is the only – or the dominating – trend in EU foreign policy-making, which is an empirical question. Rather, we are

Table 1. Elements, Dynamics and Indicators of de-Europeanisation.

Elements of de-Europeanisation	Dynamics and Indicators
De-construction of professional roles	<p><i>Role de-construction as ‘re-nationalization’ of discourse and policy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Officials present themselves as national champions in foreign policy discourse ● Member State re-defines substance of previously Europeanised policy agenda, positions and priorities in narrow, national terms <p><i>Role de-construction as ‘institutional/procedural re-nationalization’</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Counter socialization through diplomatic training and hiring-process ● Counter Brusselization through bureaucratic re-organization and centralization
Repudiation of fundamental norms	<p><i>Resistance of ‘procedural norms’</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National officials repudiate CFSP’s procedural norms like information sharing, consultation, consensus-seeking, compromise and consistency in their policy discourse; ● National officials contest or even violate CFSP’s procedural norms in their foreign policy conduct/practices <p><i>Resistance to ‘fundamental norms’</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● National officials repudiate fundamental EU-foreign policy norms (e.g. human rights, rule of law, democracy) in their foreign policy discourse ● Member states contest or even violate fundamental EU-foreign policy norms in their foreign policy conducts/practices
Structural disintegration	<p><i>Disbandment of EU foreign policy structures/processes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opposition to established EU foreign policy institutions (e.g. demands for scaling back or even dissolving institutions) in rhetoric or action. ● Opposition to formal institutional processes <p><i>Disengagement from EU foreign policy structures</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Member State reduce its rhetoric support and diplomatic commitment to CFSP or even question its relevance ● Member State reduces its investment in CFSP in terms of leadership, staff, resources, expertise and time <p><i>‘Circumvention’ of EU-foreign policy structures</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Member States give greater priority/commitment to other multi, mini, or bilateral frameworks as opposed to CFSP in its foreign policy discourse ● Member States increasingly pursue its foreign policy preferences through other multi or mini-lateral frameworks as opposed to CFSP in its foreign policy discourse

concerned that the dominant focus on the integration and Europeanisation of foreign policy results in an incomplete, unbalanced and potentially even distorted picture.

Established and even emerging theories of EU foreign policy-making offer limited purchase on 'domestic drivers' of de-Europeanisation. Foreign policy-making is frequently conceived as an insulated policy domain dominated by executives, senior civil servants, diplomats and policy experts that are guided by well-established foreign policy traditions, geopolitical situations, identities and interests. While this remains largely the case, such accounts are ill-equipped to explain the implications of important domestic developments like the rise of populist, illiberal and nationalist tendencies in several Member States for EU foreign policy. Conversely, theories that engage with domestic foundations tell us that states may well alter and redirect their foreign policies in response to developments at the national level, e.g. when the composition of governments change or when political leaders feel compelled to respond to new demands by domestic groups and the political opposition in the making of foreign policy (e.g. Putnam 1988; ; Hagan 1993). Domestic change becomes particularly pronounced and long-lasting when it comprises the institutions that structure politics, including the foreign policy apparatus and bureaucracy (Mattes et al., 2015).

Developments such as the rise of right-wing nationalism, populism, and Eurosceptic movements in several EU member states may also change the EU's own internal political landscape. Little has thus far been written about populism's challenge to the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy. Schori Liang (2007) for example, links right-wing populism to a strictly intergovernmentalist, but not necessarily anti-European or Eurosceptic position. This would conceptualise their approach to the CFSP's development as being more explicitly self-interested and instrumentalist rather than oppositional, per se. At the same time, many of these same parties and their leaders have a political profile which is profoundly antithetical to core normative values which have been seen to underpin the 'Europeanisation' of member state foreign policies to date. Moreover, several are also associated with specific policy positions which are critical of traditional 'Western' lines of foreign policy strategy and sympathetic to what might best be described as 'revisionist' powers such as the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. More generally, populist parties in government have been identified as having no intrinsic difficulty with the mechanics of foreign policy cooperation at the EU level but that they re-emphasise the centrality of national interest in its construction, perceive this frequently in zero-sum terms and challenge key aspects of the Union's normative foundations in sensitive policy areas such as migration, human rights and asylum (Verbeek and Zaslove 2015; Balfour et al. 2016). Such parties, it is argued, pursue more tactical foreign policy priorities and engage in vigorous discursive contestation surrounding broader foreign policy goals.

EU foreign policy cooperation is not isolated from wider intra-EU developments, as has been apparent in the case of Brexit. The UK's exit from the EU marks a case of gross de-Europeanisation of its foreign policy, the extent of which may be determined by future agreements between the UK and the EU. However, within months of the UK's 2016 referendum result, the Union itself embarked on a significant acceleration in security and defence policy cooperation, as the UK's withdrawal removed a significant veto player from CFSP policy circles. Moreover, intensified defence cooperation was seen as something which would counter narratives of EU collapse and fragmentation. Another prominent example of growing divergences within the

EU are the Art. 7 proceedings against Poland and Hungary. These were activated in the context of alleged breaches of fundamental values referred to in Art. 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU). These foundational values – which include a commitment to human dignity, freedom, democracy the rule of law and the respect for human rights – are not only central for the internal constitution and functioning of the EU but are also widely seen as marking the very core of its international identity (Manners 2002). To the extent to which political developments in individual member states may challenge or seek to redefine common purpose, identity, and mutual solidarity within the EU, they can also contribute to de-Europeanisation dynamics of EU foreign policy.

In the multi-level EU governance system, changes in a member state's national foreign policy may not only originate at the national level but may also occur in response to EU-level developments. EU member states interact with, and are affected by, the EU governance system in manifold ways, which can also impact how they understand EU foreign policy cooperation. For instance, a perceived lack of solidarity on part of the EU in dealing with major policy challenges such as the 2008 financial collapse, the 2015 migration crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic – have been argued to have spilled-over into the foreign policy realm. If 'loyalty and mutual solidarity' are seen to be visibly missing in one area it is difficult to demand it in another. Moreover, EU foreign policy cooperation has traditionally struggled with a 'logic of diversity' (Hoffmann 1966). The 'logic of diversity' maintains that given the member states' distinct geographies, histories, cultures and foreign policy traditions, external developments and pressures often generate different national responses. The absence, therefore, of a common strategic culture is also germane (Rynning 2003; Cornish and Edwards 2005). In this view, salient political events and crisis developments that are experienced, or perceived, by EU member states differently have a potential to trigger sometimes very divergent national responses. The logic of diversity is reinforced by external actors – including major powers like Russia and China but also the United States (US) – who increasingly seek to influence EU foreign policy from the outside and may be obviously anxious to privilege bilateral engagement over dealing with the Union as a collective actor. As a result, EU member states may have strong incentives – or even pressures – to resile from or even actively to contest well-established lines of common EU positions.

4. The Scope and Scale of de-Europeanisation

As argued above with respect to core distinguishing criteria, to speak of de-Europeanisation requires a certain scope and scale in the way previous accomplishments of foreign policy Europeanisation are challenged, undermined or even reversed. This does not mean, however, that de-Europeanisation is a uniform process that impacts on all aspects of a member state's foreign policy or that affects all member state to a similar degree.

In judging the scope and scale of any process of de-Europeanisation consideration too must be given to its overall balance and significance. As apparent in our discussion of different Europeanisation dynamics, de-Europeanisation may primarily manifest itself at the level of political 'discourse' or in 'substantive' terms. In its foreign policy discourse, a Member State may begin publicly to question the relevance and legitimacy of EU foreign policy cooperation, criticise fundamental EU values or even call for scaling back

CFSP-institutions, without really altering its foreign policy conduct. Thus, de-Europeanisation may be performative rather than substantive. Conversely, de-Europeanisation may be substantive (e.g. with a Member State violating fundamental EU norms, disengaging from Europeanised foreign policy issues, or circumventing EU institutions) while public statements retain the rhetoric of 'Europe' at their core.

Moreover, it may become clear that de-Europeanisation is a localised phenomenon in a limited number of policy areas or only applying to particular member states. Just as Europeanisation has not proceeded similarly in scope and scale across EU member states – and has also varied concerning different geographical and thematic aspects – this should also be the case with de-Europeanisation. In terms of policy areas, these may map onto traditional areas of 'domaines réservés' (Manners, Whitman, and Allen 2000; Juncos and Pomorska 2006) where member states have traditionally exercised greater national focus and policy reservations. The key here is to assess whether policy divergence in such existing areas is widening and the principle of national reservations is being extended to such a point as to justify the judgment that de-Europeanisation is the dominant phenomenon. A further consideration here is to assess whether – in a situation where there is a visible mix of policy areas where dynamics of both Europeanisation and de-Europeanisation are evident – that the one or other phenomenon dominates in policy areas of greater political salience. In other words, if de-Europeanisation predominates on the 'big ticket' foreign policy issues as opposed to those of lesser political salience, it would be justifiable to determine that systemic de-Europeanisation was in the ascendant. Moreover, there must also be analytical scope left open to the possibility that while particular states are visibly de-Europeanising, the system as a whole may remain robust and Europeanising.

5. Structure of the Special Issue

The articles in this special issue will examine de-Europeanisation in relation to both the EU foreign policy system and with respect to individual EU Member States. The empirical focus is first and foremost on CFSP and CSDP. These policies have always been considered the least likely subjects for any Europeanisation processes. This is because of the inter-governmental nature of cooperation in foreign policy and defence with unanimity still reserved for the most important decisions. For those researching de-Europeanisation, it means that CFSP and CSDP are the most likely cases, for the same reasons. Therefore, de-Europeanisation processes discussed in this special issue have their own unique dynamics and are contingent on the specific nature of the policies analysed. The special issue zooms in on the foreign policies of key EU member states, featuring articles on Poland, the Czech Republic, a comparative study of Greece and Portugal, Italy and Estonia. While ensuring a diversity of cases in terms of geographical location and size, the editors decided to include countries in which Europeanisation had not yet been extensively studied in the scholarly literature. Among other things, the contributions focus on national approaches to EU-foreign policy coordination at the UN, foreign policy cooperation on EU priorities like the Middle East conflict, finding a common approach towards China and the Eastern partnership countries, and managing transatlantic relations in times of a more volatile US foreign policy.

At the level of EU Member States, the SI makes an innovative contribution by exploring domestic drivers of de-Europeanisation. In particular, the SI aims to provide novel insights

on those EU Member States whose domestic politics are considered to pose serious challenges to EU-governance and the way this may lead to de-Europeanisation in the foreign policy domain. At the time of writing, the context of domestic politics in several EU member states has been characterized by the rise of populist parties. The fact that populist parties have formed governments in a number of EU member states – including in Poland, Italy, Greece, the Czech Republic and Estonia that are examined in this special issue – creates new opportunities to study their implications for foreign policy. Though the capacity of populist parties to influence foreign policy is not limited to situations where they are in power, populists in government certainly have the greatest ability to shape the direction of foreign policy. Simultaneously, populist parties – and particularly their right-wing brand – have acquired a reputation for their ideological scepticism of core EU foreign policy norms and values (see Dyduch and Müller this SI) as well as for departing from important established foreign policy positions of their countries (Henke and Maher 2021). This not only turns populists in government into potential agents of de-Europeanisation, but it may also bring them into the focus of other international actors that seek to influence, or even undermine, a common EU foreign policy from the outside. By exploring the role of populism as a potential driver of foreign policy de-Europeanisation, this SI thus also makes a timely contribution to the emerging debate on the relationship between populism and foreign policy.

De-Europeanisation is most apparent in the case of Brexit, but also applies to Central European countries like Poland (Dyduch and Müller 2021) and the Czech Republic (Weiss 2021). Here, the rise of populist actors has led to substantive foreign policy change in previously Europeanized foreign policy domains. At the level of foreign policy position, similar changes have been identified with respect to the radical right-wing populist party 'Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE)', which recently formed part of a government coalition (Raik 2021). Important policy changes in terms of discourse, positions and foreign policy norms are also observed under the Tsipras government in Greece, whose commitment to EU foreign policy has notably decreased (Raimundo, Stavridis, and Tsardanidis 2021). As in the case of Portugal, this trend has been reinforced by the 'Troika experience' in the management of the financial crisis, which undermined elite support of the EU and its foreign policy. Domestic developments, alongside other factors at the EU and international levels, also had a discernible de-Europeanisation impact on Italy's coalition behaviour at the United Nation's General Assembly, as demonstrated by the study on the Conte/Salvini government (2018–2019) (Monteleone 2021). At the EU-level, the paper by Thomas (2021) provides us with a theoretical framework for analyzing the implications of de-Europeanisation for EU-level decision-making processes and policy outcomes. The paper concludes that the progressing dynamics of de-Europeanisation is likely to cause the shift in decision-making towards a more intergovernmentalist logic and result in more ad hoc unilateral co-operation between the member states.

The special issue concludes with an article by Michael Smith (2021) that examines core findings from the individual articles from a comparative perspective. The author also briefly discusses the power of external forces when it comes to de-Europeanisation. It needs to be considered in addition to the domestic factors, which had been examined in this Special Issue. Smith also concludes that most evidence in this collection shows the tactical element of de-Europeanisation while time will show whether we will also be able to observe

structural changes. At the same time, he notes that we can see from the contributions that the normative contestation has been mostly limited to the domestic level.

As the articles explore de-Europeanisation with respect to different EU member states and different geographical and thematic areas, the intent therein is not to offer any determination as to whether or not EU foreign policy as a whole or the foreign policies of its individual member states are being de-Europeanised. Rather, building on a common conceptual understanding of de-Europeanisation we seek to highlight important facets of this under-explored phenomenon and establish certain patterns that emerge between cases. As Smith (2021) put it in the concluding article, while we started with a more clear-cut view of the phenomenon of de-Europeanisation, the Special Issue shows a much more differentiated picture and thus hopefully opened and stimulated future discussions and research.

Note

1. Escarting's (2020) timely research on the Europeanization of migration governance describes a trend towards illiberal policy preferences, which were successfully promoted by populist right-wing governments of Italy and Hungary at the EU-level. While we agree that democratic backsliding and illiberal and authoritarian developments are important phenomena that merit scholarly attention, we consider such regressions from the EU's core constitutional values as instances of 'de-Europeanization' of foreign policy.

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