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De-Europeanisation in European foreign policy-making: assessing an exploratory research agenda

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ABSTRACT

This Conclusion poses a number of cross-cutting questions, and explores the ways in which the Special Issue has addressed them. The questions are: (1) Is de-Europeanisation in European foreign policy-making simply an 'internal' process? (2) Is de-Europeanisation a tactic or a trend? (3) Is de-Europeanisation in European foreign policy-making just 'politics'? (4) Is de-Europeanisation about capacity, or about legitimacy? (5) How does de-Europeanisation relate to the potential costs and risks of European foreign policy? (6) Is de-Europeanisation a one-way street? In addressing these issues, the article identifies a number of potential areas for further research relating to the forms, processes and implications of de-Europeanisation.

In the Introduction to this Special Issue, the editors provide a clear framework for consideration of the effects of de-Europeanisation in the EU's foreign policy. Working on the assumption that processes of de-Europeanisation are both visible and significant, they first of all specify the nature of the phenomenon:

> De-Europeanization 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 multi-lateral 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. (Müller, Pomorska, and Tonra 2021, XX)

It is tempting to see this as a definition of a collective action problem, in which the strength of collective commitments is eroded either by free-riding or by active defection on the part of Member States, reflecting their material interests. And in many ways, that is what we can observe from a study of the articles that follow: they focus predominantly on the ways in which individual Member States define and redefine their commitments to action at the EU level, and on the ways in which Member State positions and actions constrain or actively damage the prospects of collective EU action. There is another important assumption at work here, though: that action at the EU level in an ideal world should take precedence over action at the national level, that collective European

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action is preferable to bilateral or unilateral, and that de-Europeanisation reflects erosion of the central normative commitments entailed in 'European foreign policy'. Thus, an important task for any overview of the Special Issue is to explore the extent to which the empirical evidence supports both these two assumptions and the initial assumption that de-Europeanisation is a significant phenomenon. Added to these two central areas of enquiry, it is clearly important also to explore the extent to which a fourth assumption is supported: that there is a strong link between processes of national political change (in particular the rise of populist or nationalist political forces) and the phenomenon of de-Europeanisation.

The Editors proceed from their initial assumptions to construct a set of key propositions about the nature of de-Europeanisation, and thus to provide the basis for empirical enquiry into the phenomenon:

> In our understanding, de-Europeanization involves three main elements: the reconstruction of professional roles in exclusively/predominantly national terms; the repudiation (implicit or explicit) of well-defined and established foundational EU foreign policy norms; and finally, the consequential structural disintegration of collective policy making institutions. (Müller, Pomorska, and Tonra 2021, XX)

These linked propositions have two sets of implications. The first is that they narrow down the understanding of what constitutes de-Europeanisation, making it essentially an inward-looking process to do with the operation of the EU's systems of roles, values and institutions. The second is an implied idea of causation: the reconstruction of professional roles interacts with and is reflected in the repudiation of norms, and this in turn – consequentially – leads to the disintegration of institutions. So, the overall argument runs that national interests and values create issues for collective action at the EU level; that these issues centre on the playing of roles by national officials and their observance or repudiation of foundational norms in their practice; and that where national preferences, values and roles predominate, effects follow for the legitimacy and effectiveness of EU institutions and practices. This argument is most directly observable in the article by Daniel Thomas (Thomas 2021) in which he links de-Europeanisation to modes of policy-making: at one end of the spectrum, Europeanisation generates processes characterised by socialisation, learning and integration, whilst at the other end of the spectrum, de-Europeanisation generates a retreat to intergovernmental processes of log-rolling and hard bargaining. As a generalised working out of the implications of the Editors' argument, this has the advantage of rigour and clarity, but as Thomas indicates, the real world of policy-making might well be much more complex, variable and multi-layered.

It is this tension between the clarity of the initial assumptions and arguments and the test of empirical evidence that is at the core of the Special Issue, and constitutes its key contribution to a developing research agenda. In exploring it, this overview focuses especially on six questions that encapsulate the tension and also indicate how it might work out in specific cases. The final part of the overview relates these to the initial assumptions and propositions, and to the potential further development of work on de-Europeanisation in European foreign policy.

(1) Is de-Europeanisation in European foreign policy-making simply an 'internal' process? If not, what role is played in it by external forces and by the linkages between internal and external forces?

As noted above, the argument put forward by the Editors in their Introduction rests essentially on the assumption that the key drivers and logics of de-Europeanisation will have their impact on the processes and institutions of European foreign policy-making. Daniel Thomas takes this further, with a focus on internal logics, and their potential to 'renationalise' EFP. In order to pursue this, Thomas assumes de-Europeanisation as part of the context for policy-making, and explores its implications for decision-making. As a result, he largely – and logically – ignores the broader external context for policy-making. There is, though, a point to be made here about what the potential external challenges are and how they affect his view of the processes. External interventions (via Member States or otherwise) can be quite significant, either in themselves or because they link with national political processes. This suggests a kind of 'second image reversed' process of internalisation of external challenges or pressures, in which the positions and preferences of actors external to the EU and its Member States can infiltrate the process of policy-making.

This possibility becomes more explicit in a reading of several of the subsequent articles. For example, Raimundo, Stavridis and Tsardanidis (2021) underline the primacy of Greek and Portuguese national interests – particularly economic interests – in their approaches to European foreign policy, but they also highlight in both cases the influence of China and Chinese economic diplomacy. As a result, both the Greek and the Portuguese cases show that traditional national interests are significant drivers of the fluctuating balance between Europeanisation and de-Europeanisation and that internal forces can shape what is presented as a more or less pragmatic approach (more in the case of Portugal, less in the case of Greece) to action at the EU level. But they also highlight in both cases the search for political and economic support beyond the EU, and the ways in which this might influence foreign policy positions adopted by Athens or Lisbon. The interplay of forces internal and external to the EU can also be evidenced from the article by Dyduch and Müller (2021) on Poland: in this case, the most salient one in which populists and nationalists have been in power, there is a strong emphasis on the balance of internal forces, but there are also strong hints that links between the PiS regime and Donald Trump's USA have underlined the tension between EU values and institutions and the positions adopted by the Polish government. The attempt to reconcile a 'European' and an 'Atlanticist' orientation can also be observed in the case of Estonia, as assessed by Raik and Rikmann (2021): although populist pressures can be observed, the overwhelming influence of geopolitics and thus the importance of NATO and the US on the front line with Russia must play a substantial role in the choice of institutional and political affiliations. Thomas Weiss (2021) in his study of the Czech Republic underlines this geopolitical factor in evaluating the extent to which the 'eastern orientation' creates a distinctive set of expectations, centred in this case on EU frameworks and practices. Whilst Carla Monteleone's (2021) focus is more on the performative aspects of Italian policy under a populist government, and on the ways in which they are balanced by substantive concerns, her focus on the UN as an arena for potential de-Europeanisation provides further evidence that a narrow concentration on the Brussels arena does not tell the whole story.

The evidence, therefore, points to the effect of external forces on the tendency to de-Europeanise. But that does not dilute the force of the initial argument that developments in national political arenas are central drivers of the process. In all of the case study

countries, there are strong populist and nationalist movements, and whilst they might not be in government (with the exception of the Polish and Italian cases) they certainly influence debates about the orientation of foreign policy, more or less directly. This is not a constant: there are very different balances between forces tending towards Europeanisation and de-Europeanisation in different national settings. Most obviously, in a number of cases, the impact of populist or nationalist pressures on the professional diplomats is much less than might be predicted – indeed, the continuity of professional communities, and their adherence to established norms and practices, is a striking feature of the Italian, Czech and Estonian cases. This may not, of course, be a permanent feature: the determined attempts by the Polish government to reconstruct the apparatus of foreign policy may not yet have borne substantial fruit, but they indicate the ways in which over the medium term the terms on which European foreign policy is conducted might be re-shaped.

Another dimension of this problem is the 'rhetoric/reality' tension. In Monteleone's terms, much of what seems to indicate a de-Europeanising tendency is at the level of rhetoric and 'performance', with much more limited impact at the level of policy substance. This conclusion seems on the evidence assembled here to apply in the Greek, Portuguese, Czech and Estonian cases. This in turn bears out the overall impression that whilst professional roles and practices have not (yet) been effectively de-Europeanised, political discourse has been affected more broadly by populist and nationalist pressures. The extent to which this may eventually filter through into diplomatic practice and the performance of official roles will ultimately shape the extent to which European (collective) foreign policy retains legitimacy and credibility (see below). And it is important to remember that the cases dealt with here constitute a set of 'most likely' cases; studies of Scandinavian policies, or of French, Spanish and German policies, might produce very different results.

(2) Is de-Europeanisation a tactic or a trend? In other words, what is the role of agency either at the EU or the national level in making the choice for de-Europeanisation in European foreign policy-making, or is it a fact of life in the EU of the 21ˢᵗ century?

There is a lot of evidence in the cases to illuminate the extent to which de-Europeanisation is either a purely tactical device or a more sustained trend in the making of EU foreign policy. In broad terms, this leads us to reflect on whether de-Europeanisation is a contingent, a structural or an agent-centred process – questions which correspond to major streams of thinking in foreign policy analysis and international relations more generally, and of course to processes of Europeanisation themselves. In contrast to the 'choice for Europe', here we are confronted by the 'choice against Europe', but the underlying question remains – how substantial, cumulative or potentially permanent are such choices in European foreign policy? Daniel Thomas, in discussing modes of behaviour that might reflect the impact of de-Europeanisation, in many ways pursues an agent-centred approach: the focus is on the ways in which national officials operate within the EU institutions as a consequence of processes of de-Europeanisation. In principle, this is an analysis that could be applied to a wide range of EU policy domains, and in which the linkages between those domains might also be significant. In this context, the disputes between Poland, Hungary and the EU institutions, as well as with other Member States, in recent years, have provided an example of both the strengths and the limitations of such an approach, with the purely institutional problems reflecting

powerful underlying conflicts of values and interests. The extent to which this reflects a structural decline in the legitimacy or credibility of the EU institutions is a matter for much broader debate, but in terms of foreign policy it raises important questions about the continuing strength of commitments and values, and about what might broadly be termed cultural dimensions of de-Europeanisation.

The issue of commitments and values is apparent in the treatment of Greece and Portugal by Stavridis, Raimundo and Tsardanitis. In the case of Greece, there are powerful historical and cultural forces at play, that directly condition behaviour. De-Europeanisation is thus likely to be most evident and to affect and reflect issues around Greek-Turkish relations, but is that part of a more general trend? This tension has been built into Greek membership of the EU from the outset, and the question is whether it leaches into other aspects of European foreign policy-making. In the case of Portugal, there is evidence both of de-Europeanisation and what might be termed re-Europeanisation, with traditional Atlanticist foreign policy concerns to the fore. The role of China in both cases suggests that de-Europeanisation might also respond to economic calculations as well as geopolitics, and thus be affected by longer term trends in the global political economy; in this context, the argument that both Greece and Portugal have attempted to increase their leverage at the EU level by introducing the possibility of limited realignments at the broader global level, is interesting and demands further investigation. Since the evidence in these and other cases relates to relatively short periods in which domestic politics has been impacted by populist or nationalist forces, there is a natural tendency for analysis to highlight the tactical element to de-Europeanisation; evidence of more profound and structural changes will only be available in the longer term.

This provisional conclusion is given added weight by other case studies in the Special Issue. For Monteleone, the focus on coalitional behaviour in the UN provides evidence mainly at the level of tactics rather than of longer-term deviation from underlying EU positions or norms. The broad commitment to multilateralism is striking in the Italian case, and it is clear that in many cases of apparent de-Europeanisation there is the echo of a conflict between commitment to multilateral solutions in general and to EU solutions in particular. It might be argued that this is especially likely in foreign and security policy, since there are viable alternatives to a purely EU focus for policy, at least in the medium term. The case of Italy also suggests that the rhetoric of de-Europeanisation may be deployed tactically in the domestic arena without affecting policy at the EU or international level, and this is borne out by other cases, such as those of the Czech Republic and Estonia, where at least in the short term the impact of populist and nationalist parties has mainly been confined to the domestic arena, with little evidence of an impact on the foreign policy community or the substance of foreign policy. Where – as in Poland – the governing party is antagonistic to a range of EU processes and procedures, the picture is more complex; as described by Müller and Dyduch, the PiS government seems to have been engaged in a kind of discursive balancing act, between a European and an Atlanticist position, but with strict limits on the extent to which this affects substantive positions in the EU arena. Whether there is a cumulative effect of broader geopolitical issues, in which on accession there is close adherence to EU positions but this is replaced by a tendency to defect as time goes by, is an interesting question, but should be explored in the light of domestic political change, especially in the Polish case. Likewise, in the case of Estonia, the

fragmentation of domestic politics might potentially be a significant influence on foreign policy, but with little evidence of consistent or cumulative effects on policy at the EU level, whilst in the case of the Czech Republic some of the same influences seem to be at work, with domestic politics the prime focus of anti-EU forces and foreign policy as yet relatively unaffected by de-Europeanising pressures. . These examples underline the essential continuity of much of the foreign policy process and many foreign policy positions described in the papers, but also the variety of ways in which this continuity is expressed across different national contexts.

(3) Is de-Europeanisation in European foreign policy-making just 'politics'? If not, what is the role of economic, social and cultural forces in furthering de-Europeanisation?

The Special Issue logically focuses on the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy positions, but there is significant evidence in the case studies that a broader range of economic, social and cultural forces come into play in shaping the domestic context for foreign policy-making and in mediating or focusing the impact of political forces. This reflects the empirical reality that economic factors in particular should be seen as a key conditioning factor in EFP, given their status as a key source of EU power in the global arena, and that social and cultural forces have a key bearing on the EU's self-perception as a normative power – that is to say, that 'politics' cannot be disconnected from such coexisting influences. Daniel Thomas's review of different potential frameworks for understanding de-Europeanisation does give a role to normative and what might be called broader cultural influences – but within an organisational/institutional context. So, for example, 'normative suasion' and 'policy learning' are clearly underpinned by a number of implicit cultural assumptions and ideas about socialisation. Thomas doesn't take an expansive view of external action as a broad field of EU engagement with the outside world – and the Special Issue as a whole doesn't really, given its focus on 'European foreign policy'. This has implications, since there are clearly linkages (empirical or constructed) between political and economic issues – and of course, populists thrive on economic discontents as well as on cultural discontent and identity politics.

Stavridis, Raimundo and Tsardanidis when dealing with Greece and Portugal mainly focus on interests and geopolitical pressures, so they don't say much about identity issues. But they do say quite a lot about economics, and the role of China in particular, as crystallised by the effects of the economic and financial crisis and by subsequent development of the '16 + 1' process and Belt and Road Initiative (both in Greece and in Portugal – and see also Italy?) So, their overall emphasis is on political/economic linkages within a changing global arena – but the effects are seen as largely visible in political domains (for example in relation to conflict in the South China Sea, or to human rights questions). There is evidence here of the ways in which economic forces can amplify the tendency to defect from EU positions, but this demands additional exploration and analysis

Elsewhere in the case studies, there is ample evidence of the ways in which national cultures (both broadly defined and more narrowly conceived as political cultures) can impact upon the potential for de-Europeanisation. Monteleone focuses quite strongly on national political culture in Italy and its fragmentation. But this has to be seen in the light of the argument already outlined about the discontinuity between national discourses and diplomatic action; it simply does not seem to be the case that the 'populist turn' in Italian politics has penetrated, let alone permeated, the Italian foreign

policy community. As a result, multilateralism (both at the EU and at the global level) persists in Italian diplomatic practices – but the empirical evidence on which Monteleone centres her analysis doesn't really enable this to be connected this to broader economic or cultural issues. One clear implication is that norms are seen very much as objects of politics – instrumentalised as part of the pursuit of fluctuating European and Atlanticist interests. This is an important conclusion in light of the original propositions put forward by the Editors, and it is supported by evidence from other cases in the Special Issue, which appear to demonstrate that normative contestation (insofar as it might affect foreign policy positions) has thus far been largely contained at the domestic level. In Estonia and the Czech Republic, as shown by Raik and Rikmann and by Weiss, there is a clear role for norm contestation as part of the increasing salience of identity politics at the national level, but it is not clear that this has led to any substantial contestation at the EU level. One apparent implication of their arguments is that a strong concentration on the politics of national security in foreign policy creates a tendency to align with EU (and indeed with NATO) norms, and that this is resistant to the politics of populism. There simply does not seem to be a simple or linear progression between identity politics and normative contestation at the national and EU levels, at least in the short to medium term, and this is an important finding. For Poland, it might be expected that there would be a more direct feed-through of discordant norms from the national to the EU level, with the predominance of the PiS government, but it seems that in foreign policy the impact of geopolitical forces is more significant – there are tensions between the EU and the Atlanticist orientations, but these are largely contained within the 'discursive balancing act' identified earlier.

(4) Is de-Europeanisation about capacity, or about legitimacy? In other words, is it about the material capacity to act collectively in foreign policy, or is it bound up in more fundamental questions about the commitment of EU member states and institutions to ideas, norms and practices?

By implication, the Editors in their Introduction feel de-Europeanisation is potentially more about foundational norms and institutions then it is about simple capacity and resources – although the two things are linked. On the basis of this assessment so far, there is not much evidence in the papers that either foundational norms or institutional capacity have so far been threatened by de-Europeanisation. There might be conditions in which widespread defection might take place, and the capacity for collective action might be severely eroded, but it is currently quite difficult to identify these. A major geopolitical crisis, accompanied by the threat of economic collapse, might hold the seeds of some such disintegration, but in the short term this seems unlikely. In this context, it is very logical for Daniel Thomas to focus on the established institutional frameworks, and effectively to ask how these might be used in different stages or states of de-Europeanisation. His frameworks tend to make assumptions about both capacity and legitimacy – in the sense that the key dependent variable for him is the ability to agree and to overcome divergent preferences within an established structure. In this process, his frameworks are aimed at highlighting different ways of achieving agreement rather than at broader questions of legitimacy or authority. Nonetheless, each approach has implications for capacity and legitimacy – in further work on this area, it might be a good idea to tease these out and show how they can co-exist – for example, because even log-

rolling and competitive bargaining take place within a specific social context and within a set of formal and informal rules.

Many of the other articles in the Special Issue do raise important questions about the level of commitment to established practices, norms and institutions, and about the scope and depth of any deviation, and this is one of the strengths of the de-Europeanisation approach. Thus, Stavridis, Raimundo and Tsardanidis raise help us to focus on the relative superficiality of Europeanisation – since it has effects on levels of commitment to collective action and on perceptions of appropriate behaviour. This is true both in the case of Greece and in the case of Portugal, and the argument is that material geopolitical and geo-economic pressures are the key factors in determining the extent of deviant behaviour. As noted above, the use of links to China as a means of leveraging influence within the European foreign policy process is a potentially interesting angle, but the practice is not without its risks for those that deploy it (see below). In a way the EU context provides a 'safe space' for moderate levels of rhetorical and material deviation – but the disjunction between domestic politics and the EU level is also noticeable – what are the implications of this? One of the implications of the article by Monteleone is that the UN provides another 'safe space' for moderate deviation. By extension maybe NATO might also perform this function, not only for Italy but also for others such as Greece and Portugal – but this is not her concern. Monteleone provides evidence of deviation, mainly in the discursive realm, but not conclusively when it comes to the specific UN context.

Müller and Dyduch provide more evidence that deviation is selective and that contestation at the discursive level doesn't really challenge fundamental EU norms. On the Middle East front, as relates to their specific policy focus, there are far more powerful forces preventing the EU from developing its capacity – and here we meet the influence of geopolitics and geo-economics again. The four dynamics identified by Müller and Dyduch (renationalisation, disengagement, circumvention and resistance) are primarily about tactics, practices and commitments – and the latter is an important element – although the longer-term effects of Polish opposition to international institutional commitments are also potentially very important. In this context, the use of the US and the Visegrad group as potential distancing channels is in line with what has been noted elsewhere, although Visegrad appears from their evidence to have very little leverage. For Raik and Rikmann, a key feature is the interaction of internal identity politics with roles in European foreign policy. This implies challenges to multilateralism and other norms of EU external action (and this is evident in one or two other cases). Their focus on geopolitics means that future potential geopolitical shifts could impose far more pressure than internal fragmentation – or rather, could interact potently with that set of processes.

An interesting additional dimension is added by Weiss in his focus on the Czech Republic. He argues that the institutional design of European foreign policy may create problems of capacity and legitimacy and the possibility of defection – a point that relates back in a general way to Thomas's arguments about the relationship between de-Europeanisation and changing patterns of institutional behaviour. This implies that capacity and legitimacy might be challenged by institutional design as well as by the divergent preferences of Member States; in some ways this is a circular argument, since it is divergent preferences of Member States that have been responsible at different stages for developments in the EU's institutional design, but it is nonetheless a potentially important area for further research. In the case of the Czech Republic, the lack of domestic

legitimacy for an explicit de-Europeanisation project is important – and this applies in other cases as well, such as those of Estonia and Portugal. As a result, there is contestation, but no definitive de-Europeanisation turn. Weiss argues convincingly that legitimacy conferred by expertise is important and that the logic of expertise imposes limits on the potential for de-Europeanisation in Czech policy. This argument also implies that the Czech focus on the neighbourhood and the EaP poses a different test of capacity and legitimacy; the relevant arena is close to home, and more entangled with domestic concerns. As a result, there is Instability of foreign policy in general, but actually a lot of continuity and commitment on the EaP – so does geopolitical and geo-economic proximity make a decisive difference to perceptions of capacity and legitimacy? In addition to such considerations, and despite the variety of positions outlined here, it remains the fact that in 2017–2018 all of the states explored in this Special Issue decided to sign up for PESCO and thus for increased (but predominantly intergovernmental) defence cooperation at the EU level. This apparent paradox requires further investigation as the study of de-Europeanisation proceeds.

(5) How does de-Europeanisation relate to the potential costs and risks of European foreign policy? In other words, does de-Europeanisation entail a set of expectations and understandings about appropriate levels of cost and risk, both material and normative?

One issue that is largely implicit in the Special Issue, but is closely linked to a focus on de-Europeanisation, is that of cost and risk. References are made to displacement and to leverage at the EU level in several of the case studies, for example Greece, Portugal, Estonia and the Czech Republic, and thus to the potential for 'political economies of scale' that spread costs and risks, but this is not given sustained attention. Given the focus on domestic political pressures this is logical, but it is surely something to bear in mind – for example, what is the likelihood of de-Europeanisation if the costs and risks of EU action are seen to be too great for domestic audiences, or they are the subject of domestic contestation? Daniel Thomas doesn't really concern himself with costs and risks, and this is perfectly logical since he is conceptualising a relatively sealed universe of European foreign policy-making. But it is possible to go beyond his argument and ask how different modes of policy-making might reflect or be affected by notions of cost and risk. For example, in a situation of geopolitical crisis, where Thomas would predict that log-rolling and hard bargaining might well be the dominant policy-making modes, how would behaviour be shaped by perceptions of danger that might themselves be amplified by the commitments assumed through the EU? This gets us into the realm of alliance politics – but it also reflects the fact that if EU foreign policy-making were to become typified by log-rolling and hard bargaining, it would be much more like an alliance than some of its Member States might be willing to admit.

Such an assessment is particularly relevant to points made by Stavridis, Raimundo and Tsardanidis about Greece and Portugal. Clearly the Turkey element plays a major role here for Greece, especially given the impact this has in the NATO context, since both Greece and Turkey are members of that alliance. Has the EU therefore got a role in managing the costs and risks associated with the Greek-Turkish dispute and potential conflict? Or would that be the cue for several if not many Member States actively to de-Europeanise the issue in the hope of containing risks and potential costs? As has already been noted, both Greece and Portugal have apparently tried to leverage their links to China at the EU level, but without really substantial consequences. Can the 'China card' and the threat of

defection be played advantageously, or is this a potentially risky manoeuvre? Whereas the Greek-Turkey dispute raises the question of material risks and costs in the security realm, and the China issue raises the possibility of economic costs and risks, for other Member States the costs and risks are more symbolic. Thus, Monteleone's article explores what is often symbolic position-taking by Italy in the UN, so not really about material costs and risks – but does it have implications for reputational costs and risks? Italian links with US and Russia are relevant in this context, as is BRI and 16 + 1. On the other hand, there is no real defection here, so no material costs, and it is difficult to pinpoint examples of the costs of EU policies (unless reputational costs related to human rights might be an issue?).

On the whole, it seems clear from the cases that most of the countries concerned have steered carefully away from potentially costly deviations. As Müller and Dyduch show, Poland under PiS has exemplified this tendency, and has performed an essentially discursive balancing act between potentially conflicting alignments. There is some evidence that the Polish government would prefer not to deviate unilaterally, and that alignment with others such as Greece or the Visegrad Group might give 'cover' where the potential costs are significant. In the specific instance of Middle East policy, the fact that the region is only an indirect interest (mediated by the EU) is clearly relevant here, and must play a significant role in moderating positions (this might not be the same in the case of Greece, for example – but even there, defection has been largely symbolic, as noted above). In the case of Estonia, as explored by Raik and Rikmann, clearly the 'Russia risk' is important. This leads to a heightened perception of security risks and reactions through commitments to both NATO and the EU. It might be thought that getting too close to the Trump Administration in the US would also heighten risks, but these are mediated through NATO in what (to repeat a point already made) is not just a matter of EU foreign policy. And Trumpism is a thing of the past, though not necessarily for ever. The geopolitical elements are clear, and the question of the extent to which the EU can mitigate the risks associated with these is ripe for further exploration. For Weiss, in the case of the Czech Republic, risks and costs are strongly mediated through domestic politics – with the EaP as a form of risk mitigation. This assessment could be pursued through further investigation of Ukraine and other conflicts, following up on the mixed messages on Crimea and other areas.

(6) Is de-Europeanisation a one-way street? In other words, is it possible to envisage processes of re-Europeanisation in European foreign policy-making, entailing re-engagement and re-commitment, and how can we know when and if this is happening?

It is evident from the articles in the Special Issue that de-Europeanisation is not a constant or a cumulative process. Rather, it is a fluctuating and often mercurial process that in some ways could be thought of as a variation of Europeanisation rather than its conceptual opposite. Just as Europeanisation cannot be thought of as a uni-directional or linear process, so de-Europeanisation is a complex and non-linear phenomenon. This means that Daniel Thomas's conceptual exploration of the consequences of de-Europeanisation for European foreign policy-making has to be taken as demonstrating a set of often co-existing tendencies, not a set of dichotomous alternatives. Although he explicitly takes de-Europeanisation as read, that only opens up the range of potential combinations or fluctuations in its impact. He defines the task as tracing ways in which this impact might affect decision-making. In pursuing this enquiry, he sets out a spectrum of potential effects, but the reality is that these can be seen as multiple overlays in

a complex policy-making context, in which processes of re-Europeanisation can exist alongside those of Europeanisation and de-Europeanisation. The issues and arenas that are at stake, the domestic contagion of policies made or contemplated at the EU level, and the costs and risks of potential policy decisions, all enter into this process. By implication, re-Europeanisation would entail a reversion to moral suasion and learning, rather than competitive bargaining and log-rolling, but it might also entail hard-headed policy decisions by Member States and could be part of a complex policy mix pointing in several different directions at once.

This complexity is visible in most if not all of the cases covered in other articles. Stavridis, Raimundo and Tsardanidis mention the possibility of re-Europeanisation, but emphasise that this exists alongside the existence of Europeanisation (albeit superficial in some areas) and the practices of de-Europeanisation. The very superficiality of Europeanisation in Greece and Portugal is seen as allowing a pragmatic response to challenges and opportunities, rather than any kind of committed alignment. In this context, ideas of foreign policy orientations, and of alignment and de-alignment come to mind – the concept of foreign policy orientations in particular might help since it deals with the long term rather than the short and medium term which are the logical focus of most if not all of the articles here. Economic risks are seen as a key in both cases, and this is likely to be a key factor in shaping the mix of orientations in the Greek and Portuguese cases. Carla Monteleone in exploring Italian behaviour identifies a pattern of low-cost rhetorical and positional actions, which do not challenge the underlying Europeanisation of foreign policy. There is space for deviation at the declaratory level, but this is not borne out by Monteleone's study of actions even in the UN context. As with other examples it may simply be too early to say whether de-Europeanisation is actually taking place at a systematic level, and thus very difficult to point to evidence of re-Europeanisation. It might also be the case as noted earlier that 'loose' Europeanisation provides a 'safe space' for discursive defections as opposed to material defections.

The stakes might be higher in the case of Poland as explored by Müller and Dyduch, since it seems clear that re-Europeanisation would only be possible if domestic regime change takes place – and that is an open question in the short term. Although recent events linked to rule of law create other possibilities, these are not firmly linked to foreign policy – they are about domestic autonomy and capacity to defect much more directly from EU foundational norms. The discursive/material contrast is one of the most frequent observations by the authors of the case studies – even when populists are in power, the impact of de-Europeanisation on foreign policy is limited, but of course it could be linked to wider fragmentation/defection on core EU practices in other realms. This is borne out by Raik and Rikmann in their study of Estonia; maybe the Baltics and others are still in the process of Europeanisation, uneven as it may be, rather than specific de-Europeanisation? Identity politics might have an impact on discourses but not on actions – at least in the short term. In this context, it would be interesting to see more on relations with Hungary and Poland in the context of European foreign policy to give some weight to this kind of argument. They are mentioned, but not explored. It is clear that Estonian policy-makers see a continuing need to balance pressures of US, Russia and the EU – there might be a case for linking de-Europeanisation ideas to concepts such as strategic hedging in taking this kind of analysis further. The picture of complexity is underlined by Weiss in his study of the Czech Republic which emphasises the unevenness of the relevant

processes, alongside their interaction with geopolitical issues in the EaP and neighbour-hood. It is worth reflecting on the possibility that for any EU Member State there might be a hierarchy of issues in which some are more likely to lead to Europeanisation or re-Europeanisation and others more likely to lead to de-Europeanisation, depending on the structural significance of the issues, their political salience and the level of perceived costs and risks attached to action at the EU or the national level. Mixed messages noted by some authors seem to indicate that this has at least some relevance. As with other cases, it might be that the articles are looking for de-Europeanisation at too early a stage, when populists are mainly focused on domestic and identity politics, and when the more material and structural influences are not yet felt.

Where does this leave us in terms of the initial assumptions and propositions advanced by the Editors of this Special Issue? What is clear is that the Special Issue represents the beginnings of something, rather than the conclusion of a de-Europeanisation project. As such, it inevitably raises more questions than it provides answers, and it moves towards a more differentiated view of the phenomenon from a relatively clear-cut starting point. Thus, there is evidence of the reconstruction of professional roles in the context of European foreign policy, but also of strong elements of continuity in foreign policy communities that militate against 'strong' de-Europeanisation. Equally, there is evidence of discursive challenges to foundational norms of EU foreign policy, but this is at least matched by evidence that discourse and rhetoric have not bled through into consistent or cumulative defection from the normative framework. Finally, in terms of the initial propositions, there is little evidence of the fragmentation or erosion of collective policy-making institutions: there is evidence of some competition among EU and other institu-tions, and across policy arenas, but it is far from clear that the consequences foreseen by 'strong' de-Europeanisation ideas have (yet?) occurred. What appears likely is that 'weak' rhetorical or discursive de-Europeanisation, enabled by the function of EU foreign policy as a 'safe space' for such deviations, has become a continuing feature of EU foreign policy-making, encouraged in some cases by geopolitical or geo-economic forces outside the EU itself. The Special Issue's definition of de-Europeanisation itself admits this possibility; what it cannot do at this stage is predict the kinds of pressures that might encourage a 'strong' version of de-Europeanisation and the consequences that follow from it. In this respect, the initial assumptions about the visibility and significance of de-Europeanisation, its links to domestic politics in EU Member States, and its implications for EU collective action as well as the value consensus that is central to its credibility and legitimacy, are in part confirmed by this collection, but also modified in important respects that promise fruitful additional avenues for research. It might also be argued that what is advanced by the Special Issue is as much a way of developing a more sophisticated and less tele-ological way of understanding Europeanisation itself, and of situating it in larger debates about the resilience of European and more global institutions, as it is a way of under-standing the process and impact of de-Europeanisation. This in its turn would provide a valuable basis for further investigation in this area of EU external action.

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