University of Zagreb

Faculty of Political Science

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Contestation of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy: continuation of Europeanisation by other means

DOCTORAL THESIS

Zagreb, 2024

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Fakultet političkih znanosti

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Osporavanje Zajedničke vanjske i sigurnosne politike EU-a: nastavak europeizacije drugim sredstvima

DOKTORSKI RAD

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Zagreb, 2024.

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Before these roles, dr. sc. Robert Barić was an assistant defense advisor in the Office of the President of the Republic of Croatia. During the two terms of President Stjepan Mesić (2000-2010), he was involved in major programs related to Croatia's defense reform processes and preparations for NATO membership. As an expert representative of the President's Office, he participated in the preparation of key Croatian strategic documents (National Security Strategy, Defense Strategy, Military Strategy, Strategic Defense Review, Counter-Terrorism Strategy). He was also involved in management processes within the defense system, modernization of the Armed Forces, and the formulation of Croatian security and defense policy.

Dr. sc. Robert Barić has lectured at the War College of the Croatian Armed Forces (international relations and geopolitics), the Faculty of Political Science (European security, national security policies, Euro-Atlantic integrations), and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb (modern history - topics related to modern international relations and the role of military power).

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Dr. Heidrun Maurer is a Senior Scientist at the e-Governance Department of the University for Continuing Education Krems and Co-Convenor of the UACES Research Network *RELATE: European Studies in a Relational Universe*. Her research focuses on EU foreign policy cooperation, European diplomacy, and the EU as an international actor, particularly how states and bureaucracies interact diplomatically in a polycentric, networked, and increasingly digitalized 21st-century environment.

Dr. Maurer's work explores the value and expectations states attach to their diplomatic interactions, examining how they balance tradition and innovation, especially in light of ongoing digital transformations. Her empirical focus lies on the European Union (EU), analyzing how its member states, institutions, and citizens perceive the added value of diplomatic and political cooperation—whether face-to-face, hybrid, or online—against the backdrop of increasing calls for "European sovereignty."

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Dr. Maurer has held key leadership roles in professional associations, including serving as a Committee Member of the University Association for Contemporary European Studies (UACES), Co-Convenor of the "Teaching the EU" section of the European Union Studies Association (EUSA), and as Coordinator of the Jean Monnet Network NORTIA: *Network on Research and*

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Her research has been published in leading journals, including the *Journal of Common Market Studies, International Affairs, European Security, European Political Science, The Hague Journal of Diplomacy,* and the *Journal of European Public Affairs*, among others.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the very beginning of this thesis, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the people without whom its completion would not have been possible.

First and foremost, I thank my wife, Ivana, the most important person in my life, who has blessed me with unparalleled happiness and support. Her love and unwavering belief in me have been my greatest source of strength.

I am also deeply grateful to my parents, Marina and Krešimir, my sister Maja, and my grandmother Barica. Throughout my life, they have sacrificed so much to support me in all my endeavours. For their endless love and encouragement, I will always be thankful.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to my supervisors, dr. Heidrun Maruer and doc. dr. sc. Robert Barić, for their invaluable academic and personal guidance throughout this challenging research journey. Every page of this thesis reflects their wisdom and insight.

In addition to my supervisors, I wish to thank Professor dr. sc. Dario Čepo, whose encouragement and support have been instrumental in my pursuit of this PhD. I am also grateful to the good professor dr. sc. Zoran Kurelić, who has served as both a mentor and an inspiration since my undergraduate studies.

I would like to acknowledge the Faculty of Political Science, the PENPET project, and COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology)'s Action ENTER for funding my participation in various research events such as spring schools, workshops, field research trips, and conferences during my PhD studies.

Finally, I express my gratitude to all my friends, extended family, neighbours from my home village of Kupljenski Hruševec, and all other kind people whom I have encountered in my personal, academic or professional life over the past six years.

It is my sincere hope that in the years to come, I will be able to give back at least a portion of the love, kindness, and assistance that all these wonderful people have provided me.

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the phenomenon of internal contestation within the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Drawing upon a Sociological Institutionalist framework, it examines the interplay between contestation and Europeanisation, exploring how these processes shape member state behaviour and influence the development of EU foreign policy.

The research employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing in-depth interviews with policymakers within the CFSP structure to gather empirical data. Thematic analysis is used to systematically organize and interpret the findings. Process tracing is then employed to establish causal relationships between variables, leading to the development of a novel theory of "constructive contestation" in CFSP.

The thesis argues that external pressures, particularly major international crises such as the Russian aggression on Ukraine, have significantly increased the pressure on member states to cooperate in foreign policy. This pressure, coupled with the growing influence of EU institutions and certain member states, incentivizes member states to adopt more flexible positions in CFSP decision-making. However, when faced with proposals that clash with their national sensitivities, member states often resort to contestation as a means of navigating the tension between collective action and individual preferences.

The research identifies a spectrum of contestation practices, ranging from passive and symbolic strategies to more active and formal methods. Importantly, these contestation practices are increasingly becoming accepted and legitimized within the CFSP framework. This is because contestation allows for the advancement of EU foreign policy while respecting member states' core national interests, paradoxically strengthening the CFSP's ability to respond effectively to external challenges.

The thesis concludes by proposing a new theory of "constructive contestation" in CFSP, which provides a conditional mechanism approach to explain how and why member states choose specific contestation strategies. It further outlines avenues for future research, including empirical testing of the theory, exploring the long-term effects of contestation, and incorporating additional factors into the conditional mechanism. By illuminating the complex dynamics of contestation and

its relationship with Europeanisation, this thesis contributes to a deeper understanding of the evolving nature of EU foreign policy cooperation.

Keywords: CFSP, contestation, European foreign and security policy, Europeanisation, Ruso-Ukrainian war

SAŽETAK

Ova disertacija istražuje fenomen internog osporavanja Zajedničke vanjske i sigurnosne politike (ZVSP) Europske unije. Koristeći teorijski okvir sociološkog institucionalizma, rad ispituje međusobni odnos između koncepata osporavanja i europeizacije, istražujući kako ti procesi oblikuju ponašanje država članica i utječu na razvoj vanjske politike EU-a.

Istraživanje koristi kvalitativnu metodologiju, koristeći intervjue s kreatorima politika unutar strukture ZVSP-a za prikupljanje empirijskih podataka. Tematska analiza se zatim koristi za sustavno organiziranje i interpretaciju nalaza. Na kraju, metodom *process-tracing*a uspostavljuju se uzročne veze između varijabli, što dovodi do razvoja nove teorije "konstruktivnog osporavanja" u ZVSP-u.

Rad tvrdi da su vanjski pritisci, posebno velike međunarodne krize poput ruske agresije na Ukrajinu, značajno povećali pritisak na države članice da surađuju u vanjskoj politici. Taj pritisak, zajedno s rastućim utjecajem institucija EU-a i određenih država članica, potiče države članice da usvoje fleksibilnije pozicije u donošenju odluka unutar ZVSP-a. Međutim, kada se suoče s prijedlozima koji se sukobljavaju s njihovim nacionalnim interesima, države članice često pribjegavaju osporavanju kao sredstvu navigacije između kolektivnog djelovanja i individualnih preferencija.

Istraživanje identificira širi spektar oblika osporavanja, od pasivnih i simboličkih strategija do aktivnijih i formalnih metoda. Ti oblici osporavanja postaju sve prihvaćeniji i legitimniji unutar okvira ZVSP-a jer osporavanje omogućava napredovanje vanjske politike EU-a uz poštivanje temeljnih nacionalnih interesa država članica. Time se paradoksalno jačaja sposobnost ZVSP-a da učinkovito odgovori na vanjske izazove.

Disertacija zaključuje predlaganjem nove teorije "konstruktivnog osporavanja" u ZVSP-u, koja pruža uvjetovani mehanizam za objašnjenje kako i zašto države članice biraju određene strategije osporavanja. Nadalje, iznosi smjernice za buduća istraživanja, uključujući empirijsko testiranje teorije, istraživanje dugoročnih učinaka osporavanja i uključivanje dodatnih čimbenika u uvjetovani mehanizam. Osvjetljavanjem složenih dinamika osporavanja i njegovog odnosa s europeizacijom, ova disertacija doprinosi dubljem razumijevanju evoluirajuće prirode suradnje u vanjskoj politici EU-a.

Ključne riječi: ZVSP, osporavanje, Europska vanjska i sigurnosna politika, europeizacija, Rusko-ukrajinski rat

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) represents the European Union (EU) framework for coordinating and conducting its external relations in the realm of foreign policy and security (Treaty of Lisbon, 2007). CFSP aims at increasing the EU's (or member states') influence on the global stage, which would allow for the successful promotion of its interests, values and, not least, strengthening its security, making it a decisive policy for the future of the EU. Its role became especially prominent in the context of major international crises such as the Russian war in Ukraine or the intensified competition between the United States and China. To be able to respond and manage these global dynamics, the EU has developed and expanded the CFSP and its capabilities, especially in the domain of security. Russia's aggression in Ukraine especially has intensified demands for the EU to strengthen its security posture and proactive capabilities.

Various academics assume that member states cooperation in CFSP will, through the process of Europeanisation, gradually lead to foreign policy convergence (Bremberg et al., 2022; Wong & Hill, 2011, pp. 7–9, 232). Still, as the history of European integration has shown, member states are very reluctant in transferring their foreign policy sovereignty to the supranational level as well as changing their foreign policy preferences. However, even the actions the EU was able to take in response to crises seem to be increasingly contested (Costa, 2019; Wagner, 2017) with contestation being most novel at the intra-EU level (Johansson-Nogués et al., 2020). These dynamics have caught the attention of EU practitioners (EUGS, 2016) and EU researchers, who have produced numerous studies (Costa, 2019; Hegemann & Schneckener, 2019; Koenig, 2016; Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017), edited volumes (Góra et al., 2020; Johansson-Nogués et al., 2020), and special issues (Alcaro & Dijkstra, 2024; Biedenkopf et al., 2021; Hackenesch et al., 2021; Petri et al., 2020) to examine the internal contestation of various aspects of CFSP, which also points to the increased importance of the process.

The academic and political importance of the phenomenon of internal contestation provides the primary impetus for this thesis. By integrating theoretical discussion, empirical research, and analysis, this work aims to develop a novel theory on the origins and purpose of CFSP contestation. This integrated approach will contribute to a deeper understanding of internal contestation and its intricate relationship with the process of Europeanisation. Consistent with the theoretical

framework, contestation is conceptualized as an instance where an actor undermines, resists, or attempts to displace the CFSP. Here, CFSP encompasses both the cooperative system among member states and the policies it generates. Europeanisation is defined as a process of change driven by European integration. The central research objective of this thesis is to systematically investigate the interplay between contestation and Europeanisation. This exploration seeks to illuminate the seemingly contradictory nature of contemporary CFSP cooperation, where the EU demonstrates increased foreign policy engagement while simultaneously facing heightened contestation.

This thesis is structured into six chapters. The introductory chapter presents the research questions and explores the historical development and current trends in EU foreign policymaking, particularly as influenced by the 2022 Russian aggression on Ukraine. Chapter two justifies the use of a qualitative research design and interviews as the primary data collection method for investigating CFSP contestation. It concludes by acknowledging the limitations and outlining the scientific contributions of the dissertation. Chapter three establishes the theoretical framework, integrating Europeanisation and politicization with a Sociological Institutionalist approach. It deconstructs the core definitions of Europeanisation and contestation, then reconstructs new definitions from their shared elements. These refined definitions enhance compatibility with a broader range of theoretical perspectives. Building on this, the chapter critically examines existing literature to identify evidence on the relationship between Europeanisation and CFSP contestation. The findings of this examination are distilled into propositions that guide the empirical research through interview questions.

Chapter four presents the results of the empirical research, which has taken the form of interviews with policymakers within the CFSP structure. To systematically organize the findings, thematic analysis is employed as an initial structuring tool. In chapter five, the research findings are interpreted in relation to the existing literature and then analysed using process tracing. This method aims to establish a chain of causal relationships between variables, facilitating the development of a novel theory that explains the origin and current purpose of CFSP contestation. The final chapter, or conclusion, provides a comprehensive overview of the theoretical, empirical, and normative aspects of the work, along with the research results. Additionally, this chapter addresses the research questions initially posed.

1.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this thesis is to understand the change in member state behaviour inside the institutionalized framework of CFSP cooperation that facilitated the increase of member states' contestation of CFSP as a system of foreign policy coordination and the policies it has produced. To establish if and what kind of change has occurred and why, this thesis will investigate the influence of external (global events and crises), horizontal (influence of other member states and EU institutions), as well as internal (domestic politics) factors on member states' choices in discussing, formulating and implementing CFSP. Considering the above, one main research question and four sub-questions have been developed.

RQ1: why do we see an increase of contestation in the CFSP, instead of decades of Europeanisation making internal contestation less likely?

RQ1.1: what influences member states behaviour in CFSP cooperation?

RQ1.2: what are the recent changes in member states' behaviour in CFSP cooperation?

RQ1.3: why do member states choose to contest CFSP?

RQ1.4: how do member states chose a particular form of CFSP contestation?

The main research question (RQ1), as well as the four sub-questions, will be answered by the empirical research which will collect most of its data points from interviews conducted with policymakers in the CFSP framework and the analysis of that data with thematic analysis and process-tracing. Different interview questions (see Appendix A) relate towards answering one of the states sub-questions (RQ1.1-4), while all of them relate to answering the main research question. The interview questions (Appendix A) are designed to elicit insights relevant to the sub-questions, collectively contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the main research question. Due to the inherent fluidity of qualitative interviews, responses may address multiple research questions simultaneously. Therefore, the sub-questions serve as a conceptual framework to guide analysis and ensure a thorough exploration of the core phenomenon.

1.2. SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTION

This PhD thesis makes a multifaceted contribution to the scientific understanding on CFSP. Firstly, it addresses the identified research question, thereby filling a significant gap in the existing literature pertaining to the paradoxical increase in contestation after decades of Europeanisation. Secondly, it introduces an innovative analytical framework specifically designed to examine contestation and Europeanisation processes within the CFSP. This framework's novelty lies in its ability to capture until now “invisible” forms of contestation. Thirdly, the thesis bridges the previously disparate fields of Europeanisation of EU foreign policymaking and contestation of EUFP. By integrating these perspectives, it fosters a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the complexities inherent in CFSP development and implementation.

Additionally, the thesis develops a novel theory that illuminates the constructive nature of contestation as a practice within the CFSP. This theory demonstrates significant explanatory and predictive power, providing a fresh lens through which to analyze and anticipate CFSP dynamics. Finally, the research generates a wealth of new empirical data through in-depth case studies and elite interviews. This primary data provides rich insights into the perspectives and experiences of key actors involved in CFSP processes, offering valuable evidence to support the theoretical advancements presented in the thesis.

1.3 THE HISTORY OF EUROPEAN FOREIGN-POLICY COOPERATION AND ITS CONTESTATION

The purpose of this part of the thesis, which lays out the historical development of European foreign policy cooperation, is to demonstrate that it has almost always been internally contested[1]. While it is impossible to quantify precisely, it can be argued that the level of contestation we witness today is not unprecedented; rather, what is novel is its structure and content (Biedenkopf et al., 2021, p. 327). This has led researchers to investigate not only why the EU is contested today, but also how it has endured for so long under constant contestation (Costa et al., 2024).

If contestation was always present but looked different at different times in CFSP history, understanding—and possibly explaining—those historical developments become essential for this thesis. Therefore, the following sections will provide a comprehensive examination of CFSP's historical trajectory, highlighting notable instances of internal contestation. Additionally, they will explain the current institutional framework under which the CFSP operates and, finally, take a closer look at the EU's response to the pivotal event of Russian aggression against Ukraine.

This subchapter will proceed as follows: First, analysing the CFSP's evolution will shed light on the shifting dynamics and power relations among member states, providing a contextual backdrop for understanding contemporary patterns of contestation. Furthermore, scrutinizing the institutional framework, particularly as shaped by the 2009 Treaty of Lisbon, will reveal the decision-making processes and potential points of friction that can ignite internal dissent. Lastly, exploring the EU's unexpectedly decisive and comprehensive response to the Russian aggression will serve as a critical case study, unveiling the conditions that can trigger shifts in cooperation patterns within the CFSP and facilitate the advancement of the EU's foreign policy capabilities.

1.2.1. The beginning of EU foreign policy cooperation

The first initiative for establishing an organized foreign policy and defence cooperation system among European states was out forward already in 1950 by French prime minister René Pleven.

[1] The examples of CFSP contestation presented in this chapter will follow the definition of contestation as outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

The *Pleven Plan* the creation of a European army that would be controlled by a European ministry of defence (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, pp. 13–14). The fact that this proposal came at the early stages of the negotiations on the *Schuman Plan* (1950) which would serve as the basis for establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) two years later, reveals the foreign policy and defence aspect of European cooperation was perceived as crucial from its very beginning. Additionally, it reveals the key role of France in the development of European foreign policy cooperation (Nuttall, 1992). The initiative laid the foundation for the 1954 creation of the West European Union (WEU), under the support from, but also considerably limited by, the US (Keukeleire & Delreux, 2022, p. 48). Three years later, the treaties for establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) included adding elements of foreign competencies to the new European organisation, mostly in terms of its trade and tariff, commercial, enlargement and development policies (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, pp. 14–15; Keukeleire & Delreux, 2022, p. 50).

In 1958, another French proposal (this time by President Charles de Gaulle) called for stronger cooperation among the six EEC member states in the domain of foreign policy, proposing regular meetings between their ministers of foreign affairs. The proposal was approved and launched a practice of regular meetings that would later become the General Affairs Council (GAC), the crucial institution in the CFSP framework. De Gaulle also pushed for regular meetings between head of EEC states, laying the foundation for the European Council. A landmark moment occurred during the Kennedy round (1964-67) of GATT negotiations in which the six member states were represented by the ECC. The 1970 report by Belgian Foreign Ministry political director Etienne Davignon, formally established the regular meetings of EEC foreign ministers and political directors, as well as regular consultations on foreign policy matters among the member states (Keukeleire & Delreux, 2022, pp. 51–52). As a result, a formalized and institutionalized European Political Cooperation (EPC) was established in 1970 (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, pp. 16–19). This historical overview indicates that informality, or a "gentlemen's' agreement" (M. E. Smith, 2004, p. 11), lies at the heart of establishing foreign policy cooperation on the European level, as well as indicating that the integration is possible even without formal or institutional arrangements.

At this stage of its development, European foreign policy was facing almost no internal contestation for the simple reason that it was not doing much one could contest. The EPC was a purely intergovernmental forum for an exchange of views on international politics (Keukeleire &

Delreux, 2022, p. 52; M. E. Smith, 2004, pp. 89–9), separate from the EEC, with the purpose of preventing "international problems from disrupting the Community and, to a lesser extent, to make sure a common European voice was heard in international affairs" (M. E. Smith, 2004, p. 4). Following the 1973 Copenhagen Report, the EPC established a quarterly meeting of ministers of foreign affairs, which will be prepared by the Political Committee, alongside with creating a "Group of Correspondents", various subcommittees and working groups, as well as a coordination mechanism via the European telex (COREU) (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, p. 19). Thereby the EPC laid the institutional foundation for much of the current structure of EU foreign policy cooperation. Its development is only partially explainable by intergovernmentalism as the approach can hardly account for its "multi-diplomatic structure, socialization processes, reliability, continuity, and its de facto binding character" (M. E. Smith, 2004, pp. 89–9). In order to do so, researchers need to apply an institutionalist perspective which can explain how EPC has over time changed to be a unique framework which is "less than supranational but more than intergovernmental" (Wessels, 1982, p. 15) through the effects of institutional isomorphism (introducing EC rules and permanent EC organizations into the EPC), information-sharing, trial and error, honest consensus-foreign, and informal customs that foster cooperation (M. E. Smith, 2004, pp. 76–83).

The EPC, as well as all its predecessors, and its development was heavily conditioned by the geopolitical context of the time. Apart from the dependence on the US position (Nuttall, 1992), the EPC's importance was affected by several international events and crises. The Arab-Israel wars, oil crises, the Vietnam war, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Iranian hostage crisis, USSR's weakened grip in Central and Eastern Europe and others increased the pressure for EEC states to engage in international affairs, with very limited success (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, pp. 20–21). The EPC's success in responding to these events was hampered by absence of permanent institutions and ambivalent relationship with the Community (Nuttall, 1992). These factors were recognized and provided the basis for institutional reforms to come (Keukeleire & Delreux, 2022, p. 55).

It is interesting to note that during the 1980-ies, most notable cases of internal contestation of European foreign policy originated from the European parliament. Although it has had (and still has) very limited tools for affecting foreign policy, EP frequently ignored the distinction between EC and EPC, intentionally delayed negotiations with third countries, particularly in response to

human rights violations, defunded financial aid to South Africa during the apartheid era in the mid-1980s, publicly criticized the 1983 Code of Conduct in South Africa, and enforced the first monitoring mechanisms for economic sanctions (M. E. Smith, 2004, p. 171).

This period also saw an increase in membership from the founding six to twelve in 1986, a format for which the Community believed would remain stable for a longer time. That is why, throughout the 80-ies, the EEC undertook a series of reforms which included the London report (1981) which formalized EPC functions in EEC, the Solemn Declaration (1983) which expanded the EPC's scope to include political and economic aspects of security, and finally the Single European Act (1986) codifying the EPC and the European Council into the treaty framework, formalized intergovernmental cooperation in foreign policy, defined roles for key institutions (European Council, Commission, and Parliament), and established a secretariat in Brussels to support the EPC (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, pp. 23–25).

In the late 1980-ies, Europe started doing more in foreign policy. It launched its first ever sanction mechanisms: first against Libya and Syria in 1987, and on China in response to the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre (Portela, 2005, Appendix I). However, this marked the beginning of certain challenges. In what can be seen as a textbook case of resistance through *lack of formalization* (Portela, 2015, p. 46), the first sanctions mechanisms ever enacted were at first not reflected in a legally-binding document. The China arms embargo still remains the only case of a sanctions regime which was never formalized into a common position (Portela, 2015, p. 46). The absence of any formal requirements allowed member states to interpret the embargo according to their national standards and priorities with some states such as France and the UK continued exporting weapon components, related materials, or dual-use goods (Bräuner et al., 2015).

By the end of the decade, another major international event – the end of the Cold War - profoundly influenced the EEC's development (primarily due to the integration of East Germany). Additionally, the Persian Gulf War and the Yugoslav civil war further exposed the EU's weaknesses in crisis management and the need for a more robust European security policy (Keukeleire & Delreux, 2022, p. 58; M. E. Smith, 2004, p. 179). Close to home, the disintegration of Yugoslavia especially exposed European disunity and highlighted the EU's limitations in conflict resolution (Müller, 2016, p. 359). In 1991, Europe tried to be the peacemaker in Yugoslavia, exercising influence by suspending trade agreements and enforcing an embargo on

arms and military equipment. The push for an UN-level oil embargo ultimately failed. During the whole time, Greece was actively expressing its opposition due to possible repercussions to its economy. However, in the end, Athens decided not to block the decision-making process, to signal its goodwill at the prospect of the future of European foreign policy cooperation (de Wilde d'Estmael, 2004, p. 69). Lack of unity between member states on the issue was also visible in the cases of Germany's 1991 unilateral recognition of Croatia and Slovenia "breaking with the declared Community policy to postpone recognition" (Jakobsen, 1995, p. 406), as well as the member states not making financial contributions to the EU's administration of Mostar in 1994 (M. E. Smith, 2004, p. 219)**.** The US ultimately brokered the Dayton Agreement (Müller, 2016, p. 359) putting an end to most of the wars in former Yugoslavia.

At the same time, the need for ensuring "democratic legitimacy, institutional efficiency, the EEC's unity, and coherence in the economic, monetary, and political sectors and eventually a common foreign and security policy" (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, p. 26) triggered a coordination process resulting in the enactment of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, or Treaty on the European Union (TEU), which created the new European Union and its Common Foreign and Security Policy formally replacing the EPC (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, p. 26).

The TEU is the most important event in the development of European foreign policy cooperation since the establishment of the EPC. Its creation of the CFSP (the second pillar of the EU) was a response to the increased expectations by both the member states, as well as states outside Western Europe, for the Eu to translate its economic power into political influence in the international system (Whitman, 1998). It is a result of an incremental, but still significant, reform process that incorporated a complex mix of intergovernmental and supranational elements, extending and enhancing institutional mechanisms developed under the EPC (M. E. Smith, 2004, pp. 177–180).

The CFSP closely associated the Western European Union (WEU) as a bridge to NATO and opened the door to addressing defence matters, potentially leading to a common defence system. The Presidency was designated to represent the EU in CFSP matters, while member state diplomatic missions and European Commission delegations were mandated to cooperate abroad. The European Parliament's role remained consultative, with the European Council defining general CFSP guidelines and the Council of Ministers implementing them through unanimous decisions. The European Commission gained a joint right of initiative and became associated with the CFSP,

and provisions were made for extraordinary Council meetings in emergencies (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, pp. 26–28). Following Maastricht, European foreign policy cooperation reached the "Governance" stage marked by "a more collective or social rationality characterized by legitimate procedures of governance and corresponding changes in their domestic politics" (M. E. Smith, 2004, p. 39).

During the 1990s, the EU grew to 15 members and witnessed the dissolution of the USSR, creating the incentive for establishing the partnership with Central and Eastern European Countries, fostering their democratic and economic development, and paving the way for their eventual EU membership. The need for reforming EU institutions in preparation for future member states, as well as strengthening its role and capabilities in foreign policy, set the stage for an agreement on further reforms brough about by the Amsterdam (1997) and Nice (2001) treaties (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, pp. 28–34). This case again demonstrates how crises and external relations challenges "provide a window of opportunity to upgrade EU foreign policy" (Müller, 2016, p. 359).

The Amsterdam Treaty, an unprecedented effort to reform key elements of the Union (Monar, 1997), established the High Representative for the CFSP, introduced (but later abandoned) "common strategies," and strengthened the EU-WEU relationship, granting the EU access to WEU operational capabilities for Petersberg tasks. Decision-making was streamlined through qualified majority voting and "constructive abstention," while CFSP financing was clarified with the EC budget as the default. The treaty also made an EU defence policy more feasible and extended international negotiation possibilities in external economic relations. Additionally, Amsterdam incorporated the Schengen agreements, establishing the Area of Freedom, Security, and Justice (AFSJ). The Nice Treaty, driven by the upcoming fifth enlargement, focused on institutional adjustments. It simplified enhanced cooperation procedures in the CFSP and expanded the scope of qualified majority voting, further empowering the Political and Security Committee in crisis management (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, pp. 34–36). This period was marked by "competition between the Commission and the Council for the ultimate control of European foreign policy" (Allen, 1998, p. 59).

In 1998, the EU once again focused its attention on the Balkans, attempting to leverage its economic size and influence to exert an effective foreign policy in the region. This time, the EU's

actions were surprisingly swift and decisive, as it imposed its first-ever autonomous[2] sanctions regime. However, the tough sanctions announced by EU foreign ministers were initially prolonged and later diluted into weak regulations that lacked substantial economic impact. Ironically, the states most vocal in pushing for sanctions in the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), such as Germany, were also those that complicated the production of these regulations. Ultimately, even the weak sanctions that were enacted faced challenges in application. Notably, the UK failed to implement the EU flight ban on Yugoslav commercial flights (Buchet de Neuilly, 2003). Similar instances of contestation of EU foreign policy during that period include France's decision to maintain aid to Côte d'Ivoire after the 1999 military coup, and both the UK and France providing aid to the Central African Republic while under EU sanctions (Portela, 2015, p. 55).

The development of the EU's security capabilities and a European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) was foremostly driven by the conclusions of the 1998 Saint-Malo conference (Bailes & Messervy-Whiting, 2011). The subsequent evolution, which was only formally codified in the treaties a period in which it was already conducted in practice (Keukeleire & Delreux, 2022, p. 60), saw the integration of the WEU into the EU, the establishment of new political and military bodies under the European Council, and the articulation of a European Security Strategy (ESS) in 2003. The ESS identified key threats and strategic priorities, emphasizing multilateral cooperation and engagement with neighbouring regions. The creation of the European Defence Agency in 2004 aimed to bolster defence capabilities. Enlargement brought external border security to the forefront, while counterterrorism became a major focus following 9/11 and subsequent attacks. The EU adopted a comprehensive counterterrorism plan and strategy, engaging in external cooperation and supporting UN counterterrorism initiatives (Bindi & Angelescu, 2012, pp. 37–38; Keukeleire & Delreux, 2022, pp. 61–63).

At the beginning of the century, the CFSP was marked by numerous cases of internal contestation that varied significantly in form. On one hand, France actively contested EU's visa sanction on Zimbabwean dictator Mugabe by inviting to attend a summit in Paris. Italy later did the same thing by inviting him to the country on three separate occasions (Portela, 2015, p. 52). Next, the Czech Republic resisted the EU's 2024 decision to suspend diplomatic sanctions on Cuba by continuing to invite Cuban dissidents to national day celebrations at their embassy in Havana. This defiance

[2] Autonomous in the sense that they were not adopted out of UN Security Council resolutions.

maintained a practice that other member states had agreed to halt, leading to ongoing tensions with Cuban authorities (Portela, 2015, p. 52). Finally, Germany openly contested the EU embargo on Uzbekistan, allowed Uzbek military personnel to train in Germany, and pushed for lifting them despite a stagnant human rights situation arguing that the sanctions are pushing the country towards Russia. This made the embargo not operational, and was ultimately lifted amidst divisions between member states (Kranz, 2016).

1.2.2. CFSP after the Treaty of Lisbon

At the same time, the EU embarked upon its most consequential foreign policy act: its enlargement to ten more states in 2004 and another two in 2007. This radical expansion was preceded by internal treaty negotiations on adapting the institutional framework to be able to accommodate the future member states. Externally, the shocks of 9/11 and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, further raised the pressure to build up foreign policy and security capabilities (Keukeleire & Delreux, 2022, p. 65). This is the context in which the failed European Constitution and then the Lisbon Treaty (LT) were formulated and enacted. In terms of its impact on EU foreign policy, LT formally abolished the pillar system and formally integrated CFSP in the EU framework. However, this prescribed change did not remove the major differences between CFSP and other EU policies (Eeckhout, 2012).

Institutionally, LT created the High Representative (HR/VP) role and established the European External Action Service (EEAS) to enhance policy coherence, thereby strengthening supranational elements in CFSP and creating new opportunities for EU actors and bureaucrats to act as facilitators and process mangers (Müller, 2016, p. 362) and formally granting them a leadership position in CFSP. This did not come without its problems as the top-down implementation process has sparked intergovernmental clashes over structure and staffing, as well as bureaucratic power struggles among EU institutions (M. E. Smith, 2013). Additionally, a permanent President of the European Council was introduced to represent the EU externally on CFSP matters which opened up the possibility of conflict with the role of HR/VP (Duić, 2018). Furthermore, a possibility was opened for “the Commission to intervene in EU foreign policy-making on matters located between the security and economic spheres” (Müller, 2016, p. 362). While the Treaty renamed ESDP to CSDP and formalized its provisions, CSDP's momentum declined somewhat due to France's

renewed emphasis on NATO. Notably, the Lisbon Treaty missed the opportunity to strengthen the EU's coherence within international organizations, and it included provisions in internal policy areas like energy and space with foreign policy implications (Keukeleire & Delreux, 2022, pp. 66–67).

These institutional changes have resulted a shift inside CFSP in which the centre of political gravity has shifted from the Council, not to EU institutions, but to the European Council which has taken the leading role in coordinating EU's foreign policy (Szép, 2020). This can be explained by the dominance of "new intergovernmentalism" in which member states clearly see EU integration as beneficial, but stubbornly resist further supranationalism in terms of transferring more power to the Commission or the Court or introducing majority voting in foreign policymaking. Rather, member states turn to deliberation and consensus seeking as their decision-making guiding norm and, as a last resort, delegate power to newly created bodies such as EEAS. This paradoxical situation of rise in integration and EU activity without supranationalism is called "new intergovernmentalism" (Bickerton et al., 2015).

Today the CFSP framework basically looks like a pyramid with the European Council on top setting the general direction of CFSP meeting roughly every quarter. One level lower sits the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), consisting of member states' ministers of foreign affairs and chaired by the HR/VP, which adopts all CFSP acts trough unanimity in monthly meetings. The FAC meetings are prepared by council bodies, foremostly Coreper II made up the member states' permanent ambassadors to the EU who meet each week. Effectively beneath Coreper II, the Political and Security Committee (PSC), chaired by a representative from the EEAS, is responsible for monitoring international events and providing strategic recommendations to the Council. At the bottom of the pyramid are numerous Council working groups (CWGs) or parties specialized either for specific geographical regions or policy fields. They are compromised by member states' delegates with the role to prepare decisions for Council levels above them. When looking at the policy cycle, CWGs act as the initial stage in the decision-making hierarchy. They work to find consensus on delegated issues, minimizing the number of unresolved matters escalated to higher levels. Their frequent meetings and high pre-Council agreement rate (up to 90%) demonstrate the significant political attention member states devote to foreign affairs. If a CWG cannot reach consensus, the issue is referred to the PSC. PSC ambassadors possess greater political weight and

authority to negotiate compromises. When the PSC also fails to find consensus, the issue is then sent to Coreper II, the highest-ranking CWG. In the absence of consensus at Coreper II, the draft Council Conclusion is either presented to the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) for discussion or tabled for future consideration (Bremberg et al., 2022, pp. 57–61).

The new institutional framework was designed to make the EU more coherent in its foreign policymaking, but it also resulted in role conflicts between member states and EU actors over leadership in the CFSP (Aggestam & Johansson, 2017). Among the largest member states also, horizontal contestation of EU's foreign policy role was evident in the 2011 Libyan crisis (Koenig, 2016). This situation prompted some states to rely on unilateral foreign policy actions breaking away from established EU consensus. A notable example is Sweden's decision to recognize Palestine in 2014 (Aggestam & Bicchi, 2019). During the Eurozone crisis, both Greece and Portugal intensified their bilateral relations with China, prioritizing national goals and bypassing EU foreign policy mechanisms. While Greece's engagement was more determined, even blocking EU declarations on human rights in China, Portugal maintained a more balanced approach, aligning its actions with EU principles and avoiding direct confrontation with Beijing (Raimundo et al., 2021, pp. 545–546). After coming to power in 2015, the Law and Justice (PiS) government steered Polish foreign policy away from CFSP. This is evident in its policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict where it has circumvented CFSP and unilaterally supported US positions, such as moving their embassy to Jerusalem (Dyduch & Müller, 2021). Finally, even EU actors were noted to contest CFSP; during the 2018 migrant crisis, EC President Jean-Claude Juncker openly criticized the member states for considering establishing 'disembarkation platforms' in Tunisia (Rivera Escartin, 2020, p. 1204).

1.2.3. CFSP and the Russian war in Ukraine (2014-2024)

The Russo-Ukrainian War began in February 2014 when Russia, following Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity, annexed Crimea and backed pro-Russian separatists in their fight against the Ukrainian military in the Donbas region. The conflict will turn out to be a central and decisive event for the development of European foreign policy cooperation: never has the EU done so much in foreign policy and, at the same time, never did it seem to be so heavily internally contested. This is why this case is taking a focal position in my thesis as it could reveal the seemingly paradoxical relationship between integration and contestation in CFSP.

The EU's response to Russian aggression was multifaceted and swift, demonstrating the Union's capacity to act decisively in the face of a crisis (Cardwell & Moret, 2023). Initially, member states held diverse positions, with some hesitant to impose sanctions or support Ukraine due to economic concerns or existing ties with Russia (Cross & Karolewski, 2017, p. 6; Giumelli, 2017, pp. 1062–1063; Howorth, 2017, p. 131; Karolewski & Cross, 2017, pp. 149–150). However, through a process of internal consensus-building and after developments on the ground, such as the downing of flight MH-17, the EU implemented a range of measures (Haukkala, 2015, pp. 11–12; Natorski & Pomorska, 2017, pp. 59–60; Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017, p. 95). These included diplomatic pressure through condemnations and suspension of talks (Natorski & Pomorska, 2017, p. 61), comprehensive economic sanctions targeting key Russian sectors (Cardwell & Moret, 2023; Kranz, 2016; Rieker & Blockmans, 2021), and financial and organizational support for Ukraine to prevent its political and economic collapse (Cross & Karolewski, 2017, p. 6). Additionally, the EU played a role in brokering peace agreements, such as the Minsk and Minsk II accords (Cross & Karolewski, 2017, pp. 6–7).

On the one hand, the crisis highlighted the crucial role of trust and respect for vulnerabilities in achieving a unified EU response, as well as the increase in trust in EU institutions, such as the European Commission and the European External Action Service, which played a significant role in preparing policy proposals and monitoring the effectiveness of sanctions (Natorski & Pomorska, 2017, pp. 59–60). On the other hand, despite the EU's unified front, the case also exposed the enduring challenge of disaggregation within the Union.

Following the enactment of the sanctions however, they were directly and heavily criticized by numerous leaders of EU member states: Spain, Greece, Italy, Bulgaria and others (Portela et al., 2021). The most vocal and frequent critic of the sanctions was Hungarian PM Orban (Karlović et al., 2021). Some member states, influenced by economic or political ties with Russia, pursued policies that undermined the sanctions regime: Orban warmly hosted Putin in Budapest in February 2015, a week later Cyprus signed a deal with Russia allowing their vessels access to Cypriot ports, in June 2015 Greece signed a gas pipeline deal with Russia (Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017), Germany continued to develop the Nord stream 2 pipeline (Gens, 2019) and generally the national implementation of CFSP sanctions was not uniform (Giumelli et al., 2022). All those acts contradicted and undermined all agreed upon EU positions on Russia. The EU's ability to prevent

member states from pursuing individual foreign policies that contradict collective interests remains an ongoing challenge (Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017). In conclusion, while EU's response towards the 2014 Russian aggression was swift, it was arguably not effective in achieving its main goals as the sanctions' impact on Russian behaviour was limited (Fritz et al., 2017), and internal divisions within the EU posed ongoing challenges.

In February 2022, Russia took a step further and launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This was arguably the biggest geopolitical upset of the decade, happening right at EU's doorstep. The EU's response was much more direct than the initial response to the 2014 aggression. It included a range of measures: including extensive sanctions targeting trade, finance, and individuals, along with macro-financial and other support measures for Ukraine, including assistance to refugees. Notably, the EU has provided direct military assistance to Ukraine using the European Peace Facility (EPF), a significant step forward in the EU's security and defence posture. Additionally, the invasion has accelerated discussions on EU enlargement, with Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova embarking on the path to candidate status (Maurer et al., 2023, pp. 220–221). The war in Ukraine carries transformative potential for the EU and its collective power as the EU has managed to avoid the politics trap. It's unified response has already led to a geopolitical awakening, enlargement discussions, and a renewed focus on economic security, industrial policy, and energy policy (Laffan, 2024). This enhanced unity is underpinned by what Maurer et al. (2023) term a "collective European responsibility to act," a shared norm that has evolved over decades of foreign policy cooperation. However, the long-term impact of the war on the EU's internal cohesion and its ability to achieve strategic autonomy remains uncertain (Costa & Barbé, 2023).

However, this historic undertake of European foreign policy cooperation was again followed by acts of internal contestation. The sanctions were directly criticized by EU leaders such as Orban (Than et al., 2022) or Fico (Wax, 2023). Hungary was also very active in making the decision-making process on sanctions difficult (Brzozowski, 2022). Multiple states are unwilling to join in providing military aid to Ukraine (Reuters, 2024). Finally, and most illustratively, when voting on Ukraine's access to the EU, Orban dramatically walked out of the room and then openly criticized the decision the remaining EU leaders in the room made (von der Burchard, 2023).

Conclusions of the historical overview

This exploration of the CFSP's historical trajectory, institutional framework, and responses to the Russian aggression against Ukraine provides a setting for understanding the contemporary phenomenon of its internal contestation. The historical overview reveals a complex interplay between intergovernmental and supranational elements, highlighting the incremental nature of integration and the persistent influence of external events in shaping the CFSP. Also, it demonstrates that European foreign policy cooperation was always internally contested and that the instances of contestation rise when the EU becomes more proactive in foreign policy. The analysis of the institutional framework, particularly as established by the Lisbon Treaty, unveils the intricate decision-making processes and potential friction points within the CFSP. Finally, the examination of the EU's response to the Russian aggression on Ukraine demonstrates the Union's capacity for decisive action in the face of a crisis, while also exposing the enduring challenges of internal contestation. This multifaceted context sets the stage for a deeper investigation into the origins, purposes, and implications of internal contestation within the CFSP. By systematically analysing member state behaviour, this thesis will illuminate the seemingly contradictory nature of contemporary CFSP cooperation, where the EU demonstrates increased foreign policy engagement while simultaneously facing heightened contestation.

2. THEORETICAL CHAPTER

The purpose of this theoretical chapter is to establish a robust framework for my research. This framework will provide conceptual clarity, utilize an appropriate analytical lens, guide my research direction, and be deeply informed by existing literature. To achieve this, I will review the existing research on the internal contestation of CFSP, the process by which EU member states challenge or debate the Common Foreign and Security Policy. To establish the theoretical framework, I will examine the fields of Europeanisation and politicization, where contestation has been studied. Recognizing the complementary strengths and weaknesses of these approaches, I propose their integration, underpinned by the lens of Sociological Institutionalism. This theoretical approach will provide a robust framework for my research. Next, I will define the key concepts of contestation and Europeanisation. This will facilitate an extensive and critical literature review, where I will seek evidence demonstrating a connection between Europeanisation as a process and contestation as an outcome. Finally, I will systematize this evidence into seven propositions, which will form the basis for interview questions in the empirical research of the thesis.

2.1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

All aspects of EU integration have been repeatedly and extensively studied in the established framework of Europeanisation, a theory that studies change caused by European integration (T. A. Börzel & Risse, 2012; T. Börzel & Risse, 2000; Ladrech, 2002; Saurugger, 2013, p. 123). EU foreign policy making is no exception. Here Europeanisation usually refers to a process of foreign policy convergence through adaptation (or "downloading"), national projection (or "uploading") and cross-loading (Tonra, 2015) or identity reconstruction (Wong & Hill, 2011). Although, "Europeanisation does not entail the homogenization of member-state foreign policies nor a convergence towards a single EU policy point" (Tonra, 2015, p. 6), researchers suggest either that it will gradually result in continuous harmonization of EUFP (Bremberg et al., 2022; Špehar, 2024, p. 117; Wong & Hill, 2011, pp. 7–9, 232) or "that the structured and intense cooperation that underpins the CFSP (including the CSDP) serves to develop and instantiate specified norms of agreed behaviour" (Tonra, 2015, p. 7). An in-depth examination of Europeanisation will be laid out in the Conceptualization, but for now it is enough to conclude that the general expectation of Europeanisation points towards acts of internal contestation becoming less likely as states engage in cooperation in the European level.

Europeanisation is a useful framework to study foreign policy cooperation in the EU. Connecting the national to the European level of foreign policymaking, it offers advantages over approaches such as intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism, as it "accepts that member states adapt to CFSP decision-making structures and norms, while at the same time recognizing that these same member states are themselves actively involved in creating/shaping these structures and norms" (Wong & Hill, 2011, p. 14). It is a "comparatively stable middle-range theory that offers a useful analytical framework for both the study of changes wrought in national foreign policy as a result of EU membership and for the creation and pursuit of a common EU foreign policy" (Tonra, 2015, p. 2). Finally, studying CFSP through these lenses is important since there is general agreement that the "three distinct dimensions of the Europeanisation process are evident in the relationship between a member state's foreign policy and the EU" (Wong & Hill, 2011, p. 6).

There are, of course, limitations to the approach. Theoretically, the research of Europeanisation has been criticized for concept-stretching, confusingly using Europeanisation as both an independent (as a process) and dependent variable (as an outcome), not producing much clear and relevant empirical evidence, offering little explanatory capacity (Tonra, 2015), not being able to isolate "the effects of European regional integration from other possible causes of change such as globalization" (Saurugger, 2013, p. 137; Wong & Hill, 2011), in need of further theory guided research on member states' strategies of pursing their interest (de Flers & Müller, 2012), and, generally, being too fixated on integration (Müller et al., 2021). To counter this dominant fixation on integration, Müller et al. (2021) developed a framework of de-Europeanisation focus on the process of disintegration of EUFP. However, as will be more thoroughly examined in the Conceptualisation section, the field only focuses on extreme cases in which individual states continuously make radical moves which deconstruct what has been achieved during EU integration and ascribe everything else to "normal contestation." I claim that there is a difference between contestation and de-Europeanisation, namely the former is only one instance of subverting CFSP and it can occur without rolling back the level of Europeanisation. The lack of this distinction leaves most of the contestation happening in a grey area, which is neither in focus of Europeanisation nor de-Europeanisation frameworks.

While member states do sometimes succeed in uploading their national preferences to the EU level, often they do not due to certain limitations such as limited domestic uploading capacity and the

EU institutional environment with divergent member states' interests (this is especially true for smaller member states, see: Pastore, 2013). Furthermore, since Europeanisation is a circular process often conceived as constituted in three sub-processes - construction, diffusion and institutionalization - between the interdependent national and European level (Saurugger, 2013, p. 125) it is conceivable that e.g., lack of inclusivity in the construction process could cause contestation (or intentional non-compliance as in Saurugger, 2013, p. 129) later. Unfortunately, while the literature has studied outcomes of Europeanisation on the domestic level and the factors conditioning them (Saurugger, 2013), it has not sufficiently researched what happens when a state is not successful in "uploading" its foreign policy preference. Although Europeanisation offers a useful lens for studying European foreign policy development, its limitations necessitate the use of additional approaches to account for the range of strategies actors utilize within international institutions.

Parallel to the Europeanisation framework, research on EU foreign policy contestation has developed as a subfield within broader studies of politicization, including European governance (de Wilde et al., 2016; De Wilde & Zürn, 2012) or world politics (Zürn, 2014). Building upon these broader studies, research on EU foreign policy contestation and politicization has generated numerous illustrative case studies, clarified basic concepts, and developed useful frameworks for studying the process of politicization and contestation of EU external relations (e.g., 'horizontal politicization' in Hackenesch et al., 2021); it still mostly focuses on acts of contestation in which actors actively work on breaking consensus in CFSP thereby neglecting to account for passive forms of contestation that can be just as much harmful (Maurer & Wright, 2021a). Additionally, although there are useful theoretical models for explaining contestation of international institutions on the global level (Zürn, 2018), politicization research has still not developed such a framework in the CFSP context (characterized by its specific rules and norms).

This becomes especially important since the research filed acknowledges that contestation is strategic (Contessi, 2010) and that politicization differs depending on the level of integration and authority transfer across specific domains of EU external policy (Costa, 2019; De Wilde & Zürn, 2012). Therefore, the unique traits of the CFSP as a system in which member states remain the primary actors and bear the primary responsibility for implementing their agreed policies elicits attention also for cases in which member states passively or tacitly contest CFSP (Maurer &

Wright, 2021a) and why they chose this course of action. Additionally, as the national preferences of member states depend on national systems and global context, it is necessary to extend the field to encompass those two levels to fully grasp the consequences and understand the causes of contestation and politicization (Zürn, 2019).

To sum up, although Europeanisation provides a framework for studying EU foreign policymaking, gaps exist in its ability to analyze systemic trends, change, and member state strategies. In contrast, politicization research offers tools for examining instances and trends in EUFP politicization and contestation, stemming from member state behavior. However, a comprehensive framework is needed to integrate these insights across political arenas, policy areas, and integration levels, a critical aspect for understanding the CFSP.

The current literature suggests that integrating Europeanisation and politicization frameworks could prove highly beneficial. By combining their strengths, we can address the limitations of each and gain a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary trends in CFSP. Despite this potential, the two fields have rarely been connected. Chryssogelos (2019) provides one notable example, conceptualizing Europeanisation of national foreign policy as de-politicization. However, this work has limitations, including a lack of operationalization of core concepts, a narrow focus on Greek foreign policy post-Eurozone crisis, and a primary emphasis on domestic-level politicization. While Chryssogelos' work opens an intriguing research avenue, significant further research is necessary to fully explore the interplay between Europeanisation and the broader contestation of CFSP.

While integrating Europeanisation and politicization frameworks offers significant advantages for analysing CFSP contestation, to fully account for the unique institutional context of the CFSP and its influence on member state behaviour, a complementary theoretical framework is essential. Drawing on the established 'ideas, interests, and institutions' framework (Hall, 1997), we need to identify and employ a theoretical approach that specifically examines how the CFSP's institutional setting shapes member states' ideas and interests, ultimately influencing their contestation strategies (Saurugger, 2017). Naturally, institutionalism with its foundational principle stating that institutions structure political life and policymaking (March et al., 1989; Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). Among its various branches, Sociological Institutionalism (SI) stands out due to its

emphasis on norms, values, and informal practices, which are highly relevant to the CFSP context (Saurugger, 2017).

Sociological Institutionalism (SI) critiques rationalist approaches for their narrow focus on cost-benefit calculations in explaining actor behavior. By neglecting the influence of the social environment on actors' perceptions and values, rationalism fails to account for the full range of motivations. SI proposes a bounded rationality model, acknowledging the cognitive limitations that lead actors to rely on institutionalized standard operating procedures and cognitive frames. These institutional norms, rituals, models, and conventions provide guidance by defining appropriate behavior, thereby structuring and coordinating action. Driven by a 'logic of appropriateness,' actors seek legitimacy from their peers, influencing their choices beyond purely rationalist considerations (Saurugger, 2017). The limitations of rationalist interpretations in the CFSP context are evident, as they struggle to explain certain empirical developments (Tonra, 2003, pp. 748–749). This raises questions about member state behavior: why don't they consistently block sensitive proposals, why engage in contestation, why do some states rarely contest, and why are subtle forms of contestation employed?

While acknowledging the influence of institutions on actors, my research recognizes that actors, with their interests and ideas, also shape the institutions within which they operate. Ignoring this dynamic would hinder our understanding of why decades of foreign policy socialization haven't fully harmonized member state foreign policies. It would also limit our grasp of the persistence and perceived value of contestation events. To address this, I draw upon actor-centered constructivism. This approach examines how actors' identities, beliefs, and perceptions influence their foreign policy choices and strategies in pursuit of their goals (Saurugger, 2017).

Actor-centered institutionalism offers both theoretical and practical advantages for mitigating the limitations of traditional sociological institutionalism (SI). Theoretically, ACI's emphasis on actor agency, interests, and power dynamics provides a more nuanced and dynamic framework. This allows for a richer analysis of institutional change, the interplay between norms and agency, and the role of conflict and contestation within institutional settings. Practically, the continued prominence of member states in the CFSP (Maurer & Wright, 2021a) makes ACI particularly well-suited for this research context. By examining how actors' identities, beliefs, and perceptions influence their strategic utilization of established norms and practices, ACI can shed light on the

motivations and dynamics of contestation within the CFSP. This approach addresses the open question of how common belief structures guide member state behaviour and how they leverage institutional norms to achieve their goals.

To conclude, my theoretical framework integrates three complementary perspectives – Europeanisation, politicization, and actor-centered institutionalism as a subset of SI – to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of contestation within CFSP. Europeanisation offers a foundation for analysing the impact of EU integration on national foreign policies and the broader dynamics of cooperation and convergence. Politicization provides tools to examine specific instances and trends of contestation, highlighting the role of public debate, scrutiny, and strategic behaviour of member states. Finally, to fully capture the influence of the CFSP's unique institutional context, I draw upon actor-centered institutionalism which retains the core principle that institutions shape actors' behaviour. However, its value lies in its ability to address limitations of traditional SI. It acknowledges the influence of norms, values, and informal practices on member state behaviour, going beyond rationalist cost-benefit calculations. By incorporating actors' agency, interests, and power dynamics, actor-centered institutionalism allows for a richer analysis of how actors strategically navigate and utilize institutional rules and norms to pursue their goals. This is particularly relevant for the CFSP, where member states remain primary actors and where understanding their motivations and strategies is crucial for explaining contestation events.

In summary, my theoretical framework advances the study of CFSP contestation by integrating multiple perspectives to overcome the limitations of individual frameworks and provide a more comprehensive understanding. This integrated approach allows for a multi-level analysis, examining the interplay between national systems, the EU institutional environment, and the global context in shaping member state behaviour. Additionally, by employing SI's focus on norms, values, and informal practices, my framework enables the analysis of subtle forms of contestation that are often overlooked by traditional approaches. Furthermore, it provides a framework to explain why member states choose specific contestation strategies, moving beyond purely rationalist assumptions and incorporating factors such as actors' identities, beliefs, perceptions, and their strategic utilization of institutional norms and practices.

2.2. CONCEPTUALIZATION

To investigate the phenomenon of internal contestation of CFSP, it is crucial to establish a robust conceptual framework. A clear conceptualization is essential for several reasons, including ensuring research rigor, enabling comparative analysis, and guiding empirical investigation. This chapter considers the concept of contestation, distinguishing it from ordinary disagreement and de-Europeanisation. By analysing existing literature, I define contestation of CFSP as an instance in which an actor challenges, resists or attempts to displace CFSP (with CFSP encompassing both the system itself and its policy outputs). To capture the nuances of contestation, I propose a framework that considers its active, passive, and tacit forms, as well as its discursive and behavioural manifestations. Furthermore, this chapter explores the concept of Europeanisation, understanding it as a process of change within member states caused by European integration. I argue that Europeanisation is not limited to policy convergence or the adoption of liberal values. Instead, it encompasses changes in polity and politics, occurring along the dimensions of uploading, downloading, and cross-loading. Finally, I develop clear indicators to measure Europeanisation within CFSP, enabling me to analyse its complex relationship with contestation in the subsequent parts of this thesis.

2.2.1. What is (not) contestation of CFSP

To begin the investigation into the contestation of CFSP, we first need to understand what we mean by the term contestation: how to define it and how it differs from other concepts such as “ordinary” disagreement or full-fledged de-Europeanisation. By answering these questions, I will define contestation of CFSP as an instance in which an actor undermines, resists to comply with or tries to displace CFSP, where CFSP is defined both as the system (marked by cooperation of member states with the aim of speaking with one voice) and the policies it has produced. Next, I will attribute clear indicators to the defined concept which will make it fit to use as a dependent variable in my research. This, in short, is the purpose of the following part of my theoretical chapter.

Contestation is not the same as disagreement

The noun “contestation” originally derives from the Latin phrase *lītem contestārī* which can be translated to English as "to join issue in a legal suit," which “in layperson's terms means to reach

the point in a lawsuit when it's clear to the parties involved what the exact nature of the dispute is" (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2023c). Therefore, the original meaning of contestation is that of a "disputation (…) between parties at law" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023a), not only in English – but also in German[3] and French[4]. Since those are the three most common languages in Europe, it is reasonable to assume most Europeans share the understanding of contestation as a concept in those terms. This is also consistent with my intuitive understanding of contestation, as in my native Croatian, the term *osporavanje* relates to legal terminology of not recognizing someone's right to something [e.g., dispute the right to land ownership] (HJP, 2023).

The immediate implication that this meaning of contestation entails is a clear differentiation from mere disagreement. In everyday life, disagreement is ordinary. It regularly happens between family and friends. It simply means having differing opinions (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023b), to be "at variance" (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2023b) or failing to agree (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2023a) with someone. Taking someone to court, on the other hand, is out of the ordinary. It even entails "controversy" (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2023c; Oxford English Dictionary, 2023a). Why? Firstly, I think, because it happens far less often[5]. Additionally, the setting is different – as it doesn't happen in a private home or public space, but in a specific judicial institution. This also means that contestation is not private, it is very public. It makes a disagreement between few actors into a potentially societal and political issue as court cases often do.

The process, again, is different as it is formalized, opposed to disagreements which are often quite stochastic. Contestation is arguably less emotional and less impulsive as well. In a heated argument, one side can even physically assault the other, which will ultimately put them in a strategically worse position as assault is against the law and widely condemned. Taking someone to court is far more strategic and less (physically) violent. The causes are also different, since one does not press charges because one does not agree with someone's opinion, but rather because one feels that his interests have been violated by, e.g., others' actions. This is why contestation must

[3] See *Anfechtung* in (Scholze-Stubenrecht & Sykes, 1990, p. 67)
[4] See *contestation* in (Larousse, 2023)
[5] This is true even in my home region of Zagorje, where one of the most prominent regional stereotypes is that people are suing each other all of the time (*Croatian Stereotypes – Regional*, 2017)

address something more tangible than just peer opinion, it must refer to established policies, institutions or actions.

Maybe most importantly, the goal of contestation is not necessarily to convince the other party to agree with you, but to convince *others* (the judge, the jury, society) to act for your benefit in a matter. It is imaginable that you yourself do not agree with the position you are advocating in court but are still suing someone because it is in your (often material) interest, meaning that sometimes actors are less driven by their intrinsic opinion and more by opportunistic thinking. Finally, the aftermath is also fundamentally different, as an ordinary disagreement can be forgiven and forgotten quite soon – it often doesn't have any consequences. A court case leaves a much stronger mark on any relationship as it entails tangible consequences for both sides.

Even if we claim that contestation is disagreement which has left the level of pure clash of opinion and now has much higher stakes, meaning that disagreement can and sometimes turns into contestation, this only corroborates that contestation and disagreement are two different things. However, I even think that the tie between disagreement and contestation is weaker than first meets the eye: just as there can be disagreement without contestation, there can be contestation without disagreement. In any case, the causal relationship should not be quickly presumed.

I hope that the analogy of suing someone showed, the two concepts are very different. Disagreement is frequent, common between friends, usually private, unpolitical, emotional, impulsive, often unstructured, refers to opinions, generally unstrategic and mostly inconsequential and quickly forgotten. In one word, disagreement is ordinary. Contestation is then almost its opposite as it is comparatively rare, happens between actors who often do not have a personal relationship, mostly public (or in the public sphere), potentially political, focused on interests, more rational, its process is usually structured, targeted towards established actions or institutions, strategic, very consequential and almost always recorded into history. Again, in one sentence, contestation is unordinary. This simple conceptualization goes along with the use of contestation along academic disciplines as weighing arguments in a legal process or a struggle of social actors over power or active public engagement in philosophical debates (Wiener, 2014, p. 8), all very different from ordinary disagreement.

Contestation and disagreement will always be connected, but I think that they are fundamentally distinct phenomena. By threating them as if they are the same, researchers are missing out on

capturing the many nuances of social behaviour they are studying. This is why, the first important point of my conceptualization of contestation is to clearly distinguish it from mere disagreement.

Contestation is still under-conceptualized

Although the genealogical and analogical analysis above is still far from being able to produce a sound definition of contestation, I still consider it valuable. Firstly, it illustrates the broader meaning which I as a researcher tie to contestation and with which I approach this study. Next, if not defining what contestation is, it explicitly states what it is not (namely, disagreement). By looking at work that has been done so far by other researchers, I find a great amount of variance in how they conceptualize contestation and that a good deal of research that has been done to date has not conceptualized contestation even to a (arguably naïve) degree to which I have done in the section above.

Academically, a clear conceptualization of contestation is surprisingly rare to the extent that it is routinely interchangeably used with politicization (Biedenkopf et al., 2021, pp. 329–332; Hackenesch et al., 2021, pp. 5–7), a clearly very different process. I think that the main reason for this under-conceptualization lies in the fact that the meaning of the term contestation is taken as self-explanatory – authors just assume that their understanding is shared at large. I think this is a mistake and leads to wrong conclusions, hence I decided to explicitly theorize on my understanding of contestation as a concept. In the next few paragraphs, I will try to sort out how other researchers have used contestation in relevant studies my work will build upon.

Although the focus of this thesis is on (member) state behaviour, I want to devote a few sentences to say that even in research that focused on contestation of societal actors such as NGOs or citizens, contestation was almost always differentiated from ordinary disagreement. Citizens often disagree with state policy, but only after they, e.g., start protesting in an organized manner do we talk about contestation. In this context, Hooghe and Marks (2009, p. 7) consider the rise in protests to analyze levels of citizens' contestation of European integration, Liedlbauer (2021) analyzes mass protests, petitions, data leaks, parliamentary briefings and postcard campaigns as "acts of contestation" by NGOs, while other authors focus on NGO coalition forming, petitioning, demonstrations (Bouza & Oleart, 2018) and official statements by organized CSOs (Saltnes & Thiel, 2021).

In researching contestation of EUFP by national parliaments, authors consider contestation in form of MP statements criticizing the government for their role in producing and supporting a EU foreign policy they disagree with (Lauwers et al., 2021; Thevenin, 2021). Therefore, contestation is not just any disagreement, but a critique of an established EU foreign policy. When looking at contestation of EU external action inside the EP, Raunio and Wagner (2021) analysed MEP voting. However, not just any voting is considered contestation – rather only voting that breaks party group and coalition ranks. Additionally, I presume, contestation would also be any vote which would run against an established CFSP position (as are statements considered in national parliaments). Although these examples give me some confidence that my notion of EUFP contestation is implicitly already in wider use, it is important to keep in mind that internal contestation of the EU is different from "national-level contestation or from simple policy disagreements to the extent that it does not merely concern role conceptions or policy positions, but can go as far as to question established norms, processes and even the Union's very existence" (Lovato, 2021, p. 8). For that reason, I would like to turn my attention to how contestation has been conceptualized in research focusing on state behaviour in international and, more importantly, European relations.

Contestation by (member) states: more than disagreement, less than de-Europeanisation

In his book, *A Theory of Global Governance*, Michael Zürn (2018) explains how the current structure of world politics endogenously produces contestation by societal actors and states. Although he does not provide an explicit definition, he treats contestation by states as a special behaviour by which they "demand change in or dismantling of international authorities" (Zürn, 2018, p. 12). Therefore, his notion of contestation is different from ordinary disagreement, as are the cases which he presents in the book such as India and Brazil's decade long blocking of the Doha round of WTO trade negotiations or the USA's establishment of UNAIDS as a parallel institution when it lost coercive influence in the WHO (Zürn, 2018, pp. 190–192). Disagreement between states was in these cases present long before, however only after the rise in power of emerging states did their behaviour (and the response of established powers) turn into contestation (or "counter-institutionalization").

In *A Theory Of Contestation*, Antje Wiener (2014) provides an overview of how contestation has first been used in International Relations & Law studies: as a refusal of actors to comply with taken-for-granted norms or regulations, quite distinct from plain disagreement between states.

Later, the concept was extended to include “anything from friendly deliberation to strategic contention” (2014, p. 9) which, Wiener argues, caused it to lose part of its analytical clarity; an argument with which I agree. Wiener uses contestation to denote a social practice of objecting to norms (principles, rules, or values) by rejecting them or refusing to implement them, as a mode of critique through critical engagement in a discourse about them, “a way to voice difference of experience, expectation and opinion” (2014, p. 11), a behavior which kicks in when “borders are crossed” (2014, p. vii). Clearly, contestation is here not just ordinary disagreement (between states).

Now, let us turn to EUFP-making inside CFSP. Since almost 90% of all CFSP decisions are taken on the working group level (Bremberg et al., 2022, p. 58), it is important to understand what contestation means to researchers of this (lower) level of EUFP-making. Juncos and Pomorska (2021) consider contestation only of behaviour questioning the basic (procedural) norms of EUFP-making: co-ordination reflex, consensus-building and *domaines reserve*. Their work also revealed how working group members themself define contestation as instances "when (1) national diplomats challenged the consensus without any clear justification[6]; (2) it was always the same representatives that became isolated within the group; (3) the national representative went against previously agreed positions within the committee" (Juncos & Pomorska, 2021, p. 373). This means that neither researchers or state-representatives consider contestation being just any disagreement in CFSP, but behavior which challenges the basic norms upon which CFSP was built upon. This is in line with the assumptions in the literature on norm contestation which traces contestation already in the norm emergence stage in which actors attempt to win support for their norm compared to alternative norms (Deitelhoff & Zimmermann, 2020). In CFSP, this then applies to contesting its fundamental norms and would constitute polity contestation of the CFSP (Biedenkopf et al., 2021, p. 328).

However, contestation does not happen only (or I would claim mostly) in the policy formulation stage. This brings me to an article by Biedenkopf, Cost and Góra (2021) exploring the nuances of contestation and politicization of CFSP. To define contestation of CFSP, the authors adopt Contessi’s (2010, pp. 325–326) definition of norm contestation as an “instance of strategic social construction that aims at undermining or displacing an accepted or emerging intersubjective

[6] Or just for domestic political reasons (Juncos & Pomorska, 2021, p. 374).

meaning through the formulation by actors of competing discursive interventions that challenge the meaning of norms." This reveals three important characteristics of contestation: it is strategic, it aims to undermine or displace something established, and (as Biedenkopf et al. emphasize) it differentiates contestation from politicization. Politicization for them is the process of expansion of the scope of conflict inside a political community. In simpler words, "contestation is something actors do; politicisation is an outcome of actors' behaviours" (Biedenkopf et al., 2021, p. 329). Furthermore, an additional revelation their work brings is the insight that contestation can take different forms along the policy cycle: agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption and implementation (Biedenkopf et al., 2021, pp. 333–334). This means that timing in the policy cycle matters for the form in which contestation occurs.

While Biedenkopf, Cost and Góra (2021), as most other authors, primarily focus on active forms of contestation, Maurer and Wright (2021a) take a systemic perspective and shift their attention to other behaviors (or their lack of) such as member states' lack of ownership or leadership initiative, disengagement from policy implementation, unwillingness to compromise or not defending the system in face of contestation. Those behaviors, dubbed passive and tacit contestation, have been largely ignored by EUFP researchers, but still significantly damage the core norms underpinning CFSP and the perception of the added value of CFSP as a system. Without considering passive and tacit contestation, it is impossible to capture all the nuances that make the CFSP as a system as a transgovernmental foreign and security cooperation weaker.

Maurer and Wright's (Maurer & Wright, 2021a) step further from mere active contestation can be strengthened by adding insights from Stimmer and Wisken (2019) who distinguish between contestation through words and actions, that is, discursive (involves debates about the meaning and/or importance of norms) and behavioral contestation (different ways in which actors shape the implementation of norms). When a norm is widely and deeply accepted, actors are inclined to behaviorally (rather than discursively) contest, since debating those norms entails reputational costs and is unlikely to yield results. Next, when a norm is ambiguous, actors are likely to contest discursively as well as behaviorally since they take advantage of the wiggle-room for different ways of implementing the norm. These insights enables us to understand why and when states sometimes turn to discussion or action: for instance, in 2014 Russia didn't debate the norm of national sovereignty (since that would be easily dismissed), it occupied Crimea and only then

started to use arguments for relativizing the importance of upholding the norm. Behavioral contestation (the authors argue) strengthened Russia's position and allowed it to argue against the norm from a position of advantage. Recognizing the distinction between discursive and behavioral contestation enable us to understand the strategies states choose to contest different kinds of norms.

Taking a step back, I have to admit that some CFSP research done directly refers to "simple policy contestation – which must be accepted as part and parcel of EU foreign policy evolution" (Müller et al., 2021, p. 522) or contestation as member states showcasing disagreement (Maurer & Wright, 2021a) or equating contestation clearly with disagreement (Petri et al., 2020). However, my reading of this literature still maintains that the authors implicitly follow the distinction of contestation from mere disagreement as a special behavior targeting the policy output and polity of CFSP. For instance, after stating that contestation is the same an disagreement, Petri, Thevenin and Liedlbauer (2020) limit their scope only to disagreement "towards European integration and/or concrete EU policies in the realm of foreign policy" (Petri et al., 2020, p. 324) meaning that it is a very "special kind" of disagreement. This, in the end, brings their focus very close to my conceptualization.

Müller, Pomorska and Tonra (2021) do not focus their study to contestation, but rather towards de-Europeanisation as situations "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" (Müller et al., 2021, p. 521). They differentiate de-Europeanisation from "policy disagreements, reversals, weaknesses, failures, or limitations" which they label "simple policy contestation" (Müller et al., 2021, p. 522). In this case, it could be assumed that what the authors call de-Europeanisation is what I call contestation (and what they call "simple policy contestation" is what I call disagreement). However, there are some differences – which are the reason why I don't use de-Europeanisation to refer to the phenomena I am studying.

First, de-Europeanisation, the authors argue, needs to entail a certain amount of scale and consistency (Müller et al., 2021, p. 523). If we are seeing only "a few key policy challenges" (Müller et al., 2021, p. 523) then it is probably simple disagreement and not of our interest. They talk about de-Europeanisation only when contestation is "is visible across a larger range of policy positions" (Müller et al., 2021, p. 523). My argument is that contestation is contestation even if it

happens only once since even those isolated instances can weaken CFSP. Arguably, when a state which is generally always on the side of the EU suddenly contests an CFSP policy, that is more impactful then when a rouge state again takes a position against another CFSP policy. Neglecting contestation when it is not abundantly practiced by one state leads you to ignore most of the instances of contestation, focusing only on (arguably) outlier cases such as Orban's Hungary and generally heaving a weaker understanding why contestation happens. Second, using de-Europeanisation as a concept wouldn't semantically align with my wider argument – that Europeanisation and contestation are connected and, in a way, run parallel to each other.

Finally, while I understand that focusing on the concept of de-Europeanisation is countering the common fixation on integration among Europeanisation researchers (Müller et al., 2021), I think that de-Europeanisation as a concept is taking things too far in the other direction. It emphases disintegration ignoring all the numerous acts of contestation which do not lead to disintegration or implicitly assuming that continuous and persistent contestation by a state is headed towards disintegration. In opposition, Zürn (2018) shows how states can stubbornly contest international institutions while at the same time not wanting to exit them or overhauling the global governance system as a whole (Zürn, 2018, p. 171). The same was noted in existing research of EU foreign policy-making, where new trends of member state behaviour result in "contestation and unilateral actions while remaining embedded in a European multilateral order" (Aggestam & Bicchi, 2019, p. 2). This means that, while contestation can lead to de-Europeanisation as ultimately leaving the EU (meaning it's a different concept), my focus remains on contestation without de-Europeanisation.

In this thesis I claim that in CFSP, disagreement and contestation and de-Europeanisation represent three different phenomena. While disagreement is a frequent occurrence between member states when formulating EU foreign policy, contestation is a special behaviour by which member states undermine, resist to comply with or attempt to displace CFSP and de-Europeanisation is an even rarer, extreme mode of contestation in which member states try to disintegrate from CFSP. My primary focus in this thesis will lie in contestation and will encompass those uncommon acts of de-Europeanisation in order to capture and understand the horizon of different behaviours by member states in EUFP.

Contestation of CFSP: a definition

In this section I will, following my theorizing about the meaning of the concept of contestation and the review of how the concept has been used in relevant literature, offer the definition of *contestation of CFSP* which I will use in my thesis. This definition, as is evident from the literature review above, is only one of the possible definitions of the concept. However, I think it provides many advantages for executing research of contestation of CFSP compared to alternative definitions and is, at least, the most useful for this thesis. Some of the advantages I have already mentioned above, but I will also provide a concise summary of them in the end of this conceptual chapter.

But first, how do I define contestation in the context of CFSP? Contestation, in the context of CFSP, is an instance in which an actor challenges, resists or attempts to displace CFSP, where CFSP is defined both as the system (marked by cooperation of member states with the aim of speaking with one voice) and the output (e.g., Conclusions or sanctions) that it has produced. Therefore, contestation is not just any disagreement between member states during CFSP policy negotiations (this is basically still policy formulation or the "uploading phase"). To be considered a contest of CFSP, actors must aim at subverting, or at least resisting to comply with, an already accepted CFSP policy or the whole system of CFSP. Thus, two demarcation criteria have been determined - the content criterion and the temporal criterion - to effectively distinguish between polity-contestation (the CFSP system) and policy-contestation (a CFSP policy after it has been accepted by all). Hence, every act of questioning the right of CFSP to exist or its core norms (cooperation in foreign policy) is regarded contestation. On the other hand, any policy disagreement on a specific issue becomes contestation only if it comes after the policy/conclusion arose from the system of CFSP (by unanimity).

We can also identify acts of contestation along the dimensions of Europeanisation. In the downloading dimension we can talk about contestation in all forms of conflict (since the policy was agreed upon, this is considered policy contestation), while we can only talk about contestation in the uploading dimension if CFSP's existence or fundamental norms is contested (polity contestation). In the cross-loading dimension an example of contestation would be member states learning contestation strategies from each-other or member states cooperation on promoting policies conflicting EUFP outside the system of CFSP (e.g. cooperation of Poland and Hungary in the UN). Finally, in the identity change dimension (Wong & Hill, 2011), contestation would relate

to the change of member states priorities further away from EU values (e.g. Hungary and Gender Issues) which is important because there is a clear value dimension of Europeanisation (Müller et al., 2021).

Since contestation of CFSP is an instance of actors strategically (meaning it is their choice) challenging, resisting or displacing CFSP (polity and policy) which can be manifested in multiple forms (Biedenkopf et al., 2021), the question arises what are those forms? Drawing from insights by Maurer and Wright (2021a) and Stimmer and Wisken (2019), I claim that contestation of CFSP can manifest itself in two forms - discursive (that focuses on arguments/words) and behavioral (that focuses on actions) - and can in type be active (manifested in public and open contestation of the policy), passive (when member states disengage from and fail to take ownership of CFSP initiatives and their implementation) or tacit (when member states fail to act when faced with the need to safeguard the system). From there, it is possible to generate a simple cross-table in which possible manifestations of contestation (across types and forms) can be imagined. This table will serve as a preliminary list of indicators of contestation and an innovative framework which will allow me to map out trends, but also look into strategic use of contestation by member states (e.g., the sequencing of behavioural and discursive contestation).

Table 1: Possible manifestations of contestation

Type of contestation	**Form of contestation**	
	Discursive	**Behavioral**
Active	• Public statements, declarations, open letters, press releases, non-papers denouncing accepted CFSP policy or CFSP as a system of foreign policy cooperation. • Arguing policy domain from CFSP to Community or other forums such as NATO or UN (thereby decreasing the relevancy of CFSP).	• Unilateral foreign policy actions which run against accepted CFSP. • Challenging procedures or shifting policy domain from CFSP to Community. • Prolonging or blocking of the decision-making process on regulation adoption (following a EUCO conclusion). • Active implementation sabotage of CFSP policy such as sanctions. • Creating new institutions with overlapping tasks. • Leaving CFSP / De-Europeanisation.

Passive	• Dismissing or marginalizing the need for CFSP cooperation. • Not actively promoting CFSP in public or framing the policy in negative terms (e.g., as pure power-play of large member states).	• Lack of willingness to compromise thereby blocking any form of CFSP cooperation or output on a topic. • Passive non-implementation of CFSP policy (e.g., not enough funding). • Not participating in the CFSP decision-making process.
Tacit	• Silence (in face of other's contestation).	• Avoiding initiatives in areas in which divergence in opinions and interests is expected. • Not pushing for cooperation, compromise, and breaking deadlock when one side is blocking CFSP. • Not acting/activating (informal) sanctions mechanisms against those who sabotage CFSP.

This conceptualization allows us to better study CFSP

I believe that my conceptualization of contestation in EU foreign policy provides a valuable contribution to the study of EUFP for several reasons. I will dedicate this section to elaborate on them. First, my conceptualisation offers clear criteria and indicators for recognizing acts of contestation in both discourse and actions. This allows for differentiating contestation from other phenomena and map out trends (such as prevalence of contestation generally or some forms of contestation over time). This is something that the existing literature on EUFP contestation has not succeeded in, therefore the here presented framework can help researchers and policymakers to better understand the complexities of the process of EU foreign policymaking.

Next, it moves beyond the traditional focus on decision-making as the primary indicator of member states' support for and the efficacy of the CFSP. It recognizes that mere formulaic agreements can paper over actual policy divergences and create a mirage of cooperation which offers little value beyond creating the appearance of consensus and can even be more harmful for an effective EU foreign and security policy than failed agreements (Maurer & Wright, 2021a, p. 398). My conceptualization therefore also encompasses the implementation phase which follows CFSP decision-making and individual member state foreign policy which runs in parallel with EFUP-making, as both can be detrimental for the ultimate success of CFSP.

Furthermore, my conceptualization recognizes that passive and tacit forms of contestation can be just as negative and corrosive to the success of CFSP as active forms (Maurer & Wright, 2021a).

This is an important insight because it highlights the need for states to own and guard the system, and for performative acts to receive a response to make the system stronger. By including these forms of contestation in my conceptualization, I hope to encourage a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of contestation in EU foreign policy.

Finally, another key advantage of my conceptualization is that it reveals up until now hidden modes of contestation which have been invisible for researchers until now. Apart from unlocking a wide array of new data points which can be studies, it also provides a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play in EU foreign policy making both at the systemic and member state level.

It is not clear what causes contestation

Now that I have laid out my understanding of contestation in general, defined what contestation means in EUFP, developed clear criteria and indicators for it, and elaborated on the advantages of my approach, I will devote a few sentences on what triggers contestation. Understanding the origins of contestation is important for fully grasping the phenomenon and is therefore one of the big puzzles of EUFP studies. Even if the proclaimed focus of those studies is stated to be politicization, I think it is fair to conclude that what arouses the interest of researchers is in fact contestation as acts of organized defiance towards EUFP, and not politicization per se.

When searching for sources of contestation, researchers naturally (and correctly) turn to domestic politics. The rise of populist parties and their coming to power is especially frequent as the subject of investigations on the origins of EUFP contestation since their stance towards EU integration is often negative. However, populists in power often don't considerably influence EU foreign policy making (Cadier & Lequesne, 2020), since often they only focus on a hand of issues and their public statements don't translate into foreign policy actions (Dyduch & Müller, 2021; Monteleone, 2021; Raik & Rikmann, 2021). Therefore, while populists (such as Orban) are sometimes very visible critics of EUFP, the explanatory potential of populism as the cause for contestation is somewhat limited as EUFP is not only contested by states with populist governments.

This is why researchers turned towards conditions which facilitated the rise of European populism in the first place. One of the most prominent being the Euro crisis as a cause of re-politicization of EUFP making (Chryssogelos, 2019). However, it is not obvious that contestation of EUFP has

increased in absolute terms after the Eurocrisis and it is a fact that contestation has been present before it. Also, the EU has been hit by many internal crises throughout its history and it is very hard to pinpoint one exact moment which served as the catalyser of EUFP contestation. If not internal, perhaps then external factors are the cause of EUFP contestation. Many researchers therefore study the strategies of other global powers which have a corrosive influence on the unity among member states in foreign policy making (Chirathivat & Langhammer, 2020; Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017), especially following internal EU crisis (Raimundo et al., 2021). This perspective highlights the interplay of various processes which ultimately bring about contestation. While the above-mentioned sources surely have had a significant influence on contestation, this thesis will claim that one cause-process has systematically been neglected – namely, Europeanisation which is the second major concept in my study, and which will be the focus of the following section of my thesis.

2.2.2. What is Europeanisation in CFSP

In this section, I will conceptualize Europeanisation as a process of change caused by European integration and adapt it to the context of European foreign policy making, that is: CFSP. First, I will show that as a theory it is distinct from European integration theories and that as a concept it is different from European integration. Second, I will put Europeanisation in relation with European integration, as being caused by it. Third, I will analyse the existing definitions of Europeanisation, derive the basic elements which most of them share and offer the definition of Europeanisation which I will use in my thesis. Ultimately, I will offer clear indicators on how to measure the levels of Europeanisation in European foreign policy making which I will use in my research.

Europeanisation theory is not the same as Theories of European integration

Researchers have been following European integration with a very close eye from its very beginning. In the 1950s and 60s, the focus of scholarly attention was centred around the questions of *why* and *how* integration happens (and continues). The answers, and perspectives, to these questions is what builds Theories of European integration. First of those theories was *neo-functionalism* which claims that integration in one sector (e.g., economic cooperation) creates a functional spillover effect, leading to further integration in other sectors (e.g., political cooperation), a feedback loop which, through supranational and subnational actors, exerts pressure for an ever deeper integration process (Haas, 1958). *Intergovernmentalism*, however, shifts focus on national states are drivers of integration because it is sometimes in their interest to pool sovereignty. European integration, which is best understood as the process of intergovernmental bargaining, does not weakened, but rather empowers national states (Milward, 1992). A more nuanced explanation of how states form their preferences (stressing the importance of domestic factors such as political parties and interest groups) and later negotiate with each other on those preferences (where bargaining power is determined by factors such as size, resources, and issue salience) is offered by *liberal intergovernmentalism* (Moravcsik, 1998). *Institutionalism*, on the other hand, points towards institutions as playing a crucial role in European integration by influencing the preferences and behaviour of actors inside the European political system via norms, rules and path dependency (Saurugger, 2013, pp. 79–102).

While those theories are very useful frameworks of explaining the *process and development* of European integration, they have devoted less attention to the *consequences* of integration on member states. This is exactly the focus of Europeanisation theory. Admittedly, the two theoretical frameworks do deal with the relationship between European countries and the EU, therefore making them difficult to distinguish (Howell, 2004, pp. 15–20). Their focus and perspective are different: while theories of European integration concentrate on the creation and development of the EU, Europeanisation theory examines the impact of the EU on its member states. To understand European integration, it is necessary to be informed by key insights of both frameworks as "European integration comprises the environment on which Europeanisation impacts or from which it emanates" (Howell, 2004, p. 21). However, depending on the puzzle one is solving, one framework is more appropriate and useful over the other. As my project seeks to explain the impact integration has on the behaviour of member states in foreign-policy cooperation, I think that Europeanisation theory is the better choice as my main theoretical framework. Of course, in my research, I will not neglect to utilize the key insights of European integration theory on the integration-process, the historical context in which it occurs and diverse perspectives on its drivers.

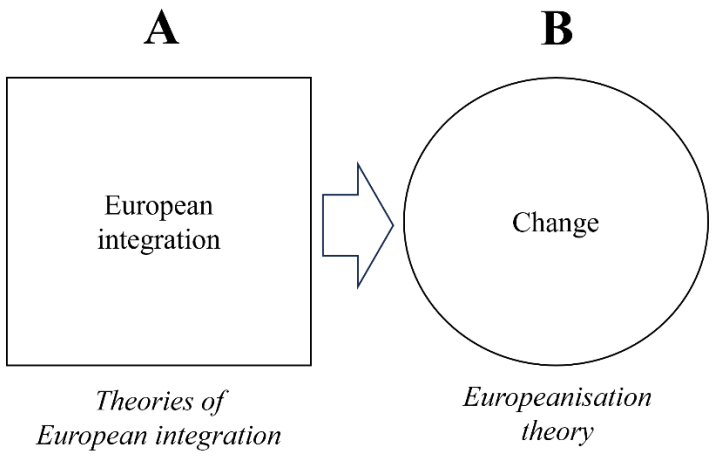

Figure 1: Relationship between Theories of European integration and Europeanisation

Europeanisation is not the same as European integration

Now that we have established that Europeanisation as a theoretical framework is distinct from theories of European integration, we can also establish how Europeanisation as a political

phenomenon differs from European integration (or just "integration" from now on forward). To do this, I will start off by explaining what integration is. Broady speaking, integration is the act of bringing together different things, parts, elements, individuals or groups in such a way they work together (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2023d; Oxford English Dictionary, 2023c). While this definition comes natural to most, Rosamond (2000, pp. 9–14) shows, theorists of European integration have always had difficulties finding a common notion of integration. For starters, they cannot agree weather integration is a process or an outcome, is it a political or economic phenomenon (or both), let alone which events integration entails. In the next paragraphs, I will provide a brief overview of the many uses of the term integration in the literature, mostly as provided by Rosamond (2000).

Karl Deutsch (1968) had an understanding of integration as the forming of *security communities* among states in a region. This, primarily political, notion of integration is dependent on the condition that war as a way of settling disputes among those (integrated) states is considered highly unlikely. While developing common institutions and norms is crucial for forming such communities, integration does not require the weakening of sovereignty or abolition of formal statehood. Haas (1970), on the other hand, viewed integration as a shift of loyalty, expectations and activities of national political actors towards a new centre which represents a new political community, placed over (and which has supremacy over) the preexisting ones. In this perspective, integration entails the delegation of (a part of) sovereignty from the national state to supranational institutions. Hodges (1972) and Harrison (1974) follow suit and define integration as formation of new political systems out of previously separate ones (Hodges, 1972, p. 13) where the new centre's decisions' bind the old ones (Harrison, 1974, p. 14), definitely surpassing the national level in power.

Scharpf (1998) contributed to the understanding of integration by distinguishing between two distinct processes: positive and negative integration. Negative integration refers to the elimination of barriers to cross-border economic activity within Europe, while positive integration encompasses the development and enforcement of common, supranational public policies. These processes are governed by separate social logics, highlighting the complexity of European integration dynamics. The functionalist, William Wallace (1992), followed suit and did not focus on (supranational) institution building and authority transfers, but rather defines integration as "the

creation and maintenance of intense and diversified patterns of interaction among previously autonomous units" (Wallace, 1992, p. 9).

Emphasizing the economic aspect of integration, Fligstein & Stone Sweet (2002) define integration as a "dynamic, self-sustaining, causal system" (Fligstein & Stone Sweet, 2002, p. 1209). Wessels (1997) describes integration as the process where countries slowly combine their decision-making powers in different areas to solve problems together. This leads to a closer merging of resources from various government levels, making it difficult for ordinary people and even experts to determine who is responsible for specific policies because responsibilities are spread out. Wessels words still ring true since the debate on the true nature of and the connection between the economic and the political elements of integration are still not settled (Rosamond, 2000, pp. 9–14).

While I have no illusion to settle these questions in this thesis, I still think that it is possible to derive a broad definition of integration from the existing literature which can be useful for my research. Integration is both a process and an outcome, but I will mostly use it as a process as I am interested in how it affects the EU member states over time. This process is marked by one core element – namely, that it brings member states together. It can, but does not necessarily, entail the formation of new institutions. However, it surely features an increase in interaction and reference of member states to each other. This will enable us to see nuances between stages/levels of integration which happen between supranational institution building or transfer of authority to existing supranational institutions. For instance, the post-Maastricht period of European integration is marked by a lack of supranationalism, but is arguably more integrated than ever (Bickerton et al., 2015).

From there on we can start to make out the distinction between European integration and Europeanisation. Let us use a simple example to start off. States establishing the EU is a clear-cut example of integration. When then states start pursuing foreign policy goals through the EU, that is Europeanisation as it is a direct consequence of states integrating (and establishing the EU) before. As I said, integration doesn't need to entail institution building, as is the case with the abovementioned case of "integration without supernationalism" (Bickerton et al., 2015). Here we are still observing integration. When this (and any) form of integration changes member states' behaviour, we are talking about Europeanisation, as *Figure 2* below illustrates.

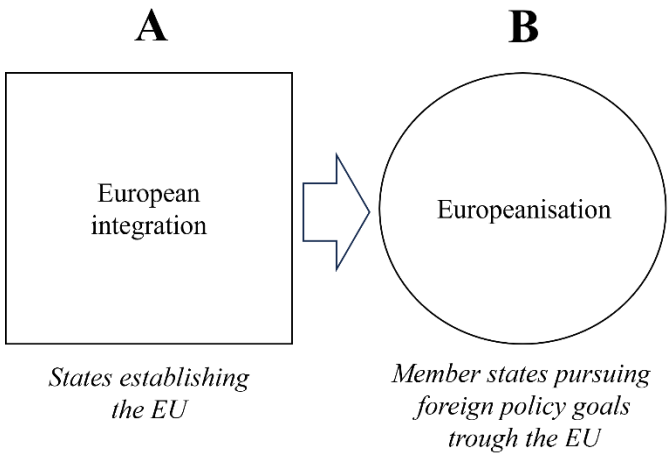

Figure 2: Relationship between European integration and Europeanisation

Following the above, it becomes clear that Europeanisation is not just any change happening on the European continent, it is change caused by European integration. This is also corroborated by the fact that one of the key methods of isolating the effect of Europeanisation is "the use of counterfactual analysis, in other words consciously posing the hypothetical question 'what if the EU did not exist?', which is almost inherent in any Europeanisation study, would be very relevant here" (Wong & Hill, 2011, p. 13). One can therefore conclude that the "Euro" in Europeanisation denotes the source, and not the content or outcome, of the process. Taken this way, one avoids the common theoretical problem with Europeanisation – being too fixated on integration as an outcome (Müller et al., 2021).

Logically then, to even start thinking about which phenomena are examples of Europeanisation, we must first start defining what, for the purposes of this thesis, European integration actually is. European integration, as a process, is the increase in interaction and cooperation between European states. Europeanisation can then be defined as "the adaptation of member states to the new [European] political system" (Špehar, 2024, p. 118). It can manifest itself in formal ways (such as creating new institutions), but also less formals ones (such as the *coordination reflex*). The later are by no means to be disregarded, since they, as Smith (2004) shows, have often been decisive in starting the process of integration.

Smith gives a detailed account how the history of European foreign policy integration was a transformation "from an informal, intergovernmental „gentlemen's agreement" with unwritten rules into a system of formal and informal legal obligations, plus organizations with budgets, staffs, and permanent headquarters" (M. E. Smith, 2004, pp. 11–12). European integration, hence, starts with an (informal) increase in interaction and cooperation which is then formalized and institutionalized. As integration continues, more and more authority is transferred and delegated from national capitals to Brussels in a process called 'Brusselisation' (Allen, 1998), also a form of integration. *Table 2* shows an overview of most common manifestations of integration.

Table 2: Manifestations of European integration

Domain	EU in general	EU foreign policy
Manifestations of integration	• The establishment of common institutions (e.g., European Commission, European Parliament) • The adoption of shared policies (e.g., Common Agricultural Policy, Single Market) • The harmonization of laws and regulations (e.g., environmental standards, consumer protection) • The transfer of national sovereignty to supranational institutions • The development of a European identity among citizens • Increased cooperation and coordination between member states on various policy areas • The growth of intergovernmental organizations (e.g., Council of the European Union) • The expansion of common policies and programs (e.g., European Social Fund, Erasmus+) • The increasing interconnectedness of European economies (e.g., Eurozone, European Investment Bank) • The negotiation and signing of treaties (e.g., Treaty of Rome, Maastricht Treaty) • The formation of alliances and coalitions among member states • The implementation of joint projects and initiatives (e.g., European Space Agency, Galileo satellite navigation system)	• The establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) • The creation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) • Softening of national red lines in CFSP negotiations / fewer blocking of CFSP initiatives • Joint diplomatic representations and initiatives on the global stage • The negotiation of international agreements on behalf of the EU (e.g., trade deals, climate change accords) • The representation of the EU in multilateral forums (e.g., United Nations, World Trade Organization) • The use of financial instruments to support external policies (e.g., European Neighbourhood Instrument, Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance) • The development of joint military capabilities (e.g., European Defence Agency, Permanent Structured Cooperation) • The coordination of humanitarian and crisis management operations (e.g., EU Civil Protection Mechanism) • The promotion of European norms and values through external action (e.g., democracy promotion, rule of law)

Europeanisation is change caused by European integration

As explained above, only changes to member states' behaviour which can be linked to forms of European integration listed can be considered examples of Europeanisation. When this change leads to a noticeable increase in cooperation, the phenomenon is then considered an example of integration. For instance, when the member states create CFSP that is integration. When they then start conducting their foreign & security policy through it, that is Europeanisation. When then this increased conduct of foreign and security policy trough the CFSP leads to increase in cooperation or the creation of PESCO, this again is integration.

The relationship between integration and Europeanisation is often cyclical, as *Figure 3* illustrates. While the blurred line between the two concepts can be frustrating, I think that it is only possible to understand the nature of the evolution European foreign policy-making if one keeps in mind the close connection between integration and Europeanisation in real life *and* at the same time considers them two theoretically distinct concepts as to make them academically useful. Only in this way is it possible to refer to specific historical cases for analysis, while not using the concepts interchangeably and vaguely.

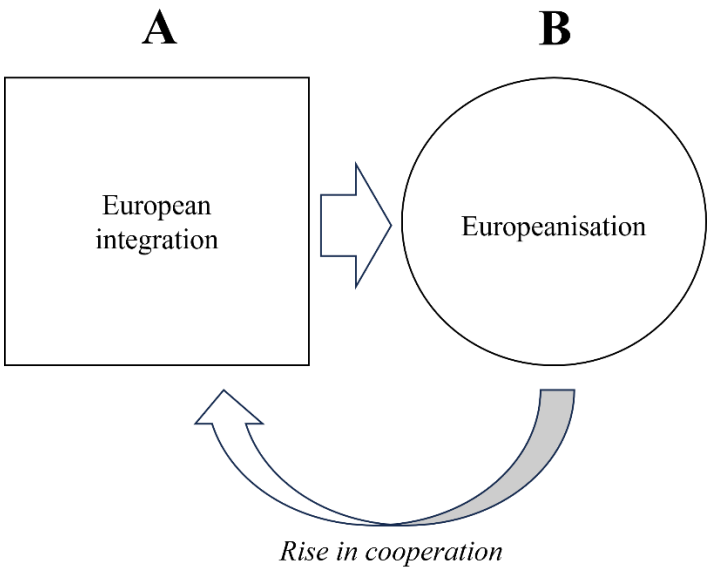

Figure 3: Cyclical Relationship Between Integration and Europeanisation

Now, after we have spelled out what where Europeanisation fits in both theoretical, conceptual, and processual terms, can finally come to defining and conceptualising it directly. This will not be easy, as Europeanisation is an fundamentally contested concept (Buller & Gamble, 2002) which has had many faces for a long time, leading some to question the very usefulness of the term (Olsen, 2002). However, let us start with the commonalities. All definitions clearly state that Europeanisation refers to change in national states (Buller & Gamble, 2002, p. 18; Gross, 2009; Tonra, 2015, p. 2) which was caused or influenced by European integration or the EU in form of "domestic implications" (Lynggaard, 2011, p. 18) such as political, economic and social change (Saurugger, 2013, p. 123), reorientation of the direction and shape of policy, politics and polity (Chatzopoulou, 2015, p. 105), incorporation of Europe in the logic of "domestic discourse, identities, political structures and public policies" (Radaelli, 2002, p. 4), European political and economic dynamics becoming part of the organizational logic of national logic of national politics and policy-making (Ladrech, 1994, p. 70), change in power relations between capital and labour (Seikel, 2023), , and more generally, domestic politics becoming increasingly subjected and referenced to European policy-making (Buller & Gamble, 2002).

In foreign policy, Europeanisation refers to changes in national foreign policy as a result of EU membership and for the creation and pursuit of a common EU foreign policy (Tonra, 2015, p. 2) through 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" (Tonra, 2000, p. 229) with the states taking common EU positions as a major reference point, not generally defecting from common positions, attempting to pursue its priorities through EU collective action, and subscribing positively to the values and principles expressed by the EU (Wong and Hill, 2011: 211). This results in an increased extent in which individual national (foreign) policies are in harmony with the EU (Hadfield et al., 2017, p. 20), an increased extent to which national (foreign) policy is conducted within the EU (Larsen, 2009) and the usage of EU norms and instruments (Hadfield et al., 2017, p. 40) in conducting foreign policy.

Let us now move to some common points of departure between definitions. First, there are doubts if the process only refers to member states or also candidate states (Chatzopoulou, 2015, p. 105) and other countries outside Europe (Buller & Gamble, 2002, pp. 10–11). However, this is will not

influence my research as it is limited to internal contestation of CFSP from the beginning, so candidate states and third countries will not be considered even if change in them constitutes Europeanisation. Therefore, this dispute will not have influence on my research. Next, while most view Europeanisation as a process, some consider it a situation (Buller & Gamble, 2002, p. 17). However, this dispute is negligible in comparison to the dispute between conceptions of Europeanisation as an independent and a dependent variable (Tonra, 2015, p. 6). While I have states that Europeanisation is caused by European integration and therefore is the dependant variable between the two, the ultimate effect I am studying is contestation, which I claim is influenced by Europeanisation, Europeanisation will be mostly treated as one of the independent variables in my research. However, as I have stated, Europeanisation can lead to more integration, hence my theoretical understanding of Europeanisation is closest to Radaelli's (2000) conception of Europeanisation as a circular, rather than a linear process.

Europeanisation works along three interconnected dimensions

To understand how Europeanisation influences further integration, one needs to understand the dimensions along which Europeanisation works, as well as their interplay. This exactly is the purpose of this section which will introduce the uploading, downloading, and cross-loading dimensions of member states' behaviour.

Europeanisation is today mostly understood as a change in domestic policy inside members states caused by the EU level. This was, however, not the case until the late 1990s. Until then, the majority of focus in European studies went towards understanding how national politics influence the creation of European institutions and policies (Cowles et al., 2001, p. 3). This process was originally called Europeanisation (Saurugger, 2013, p. 124). Nowadays, this is what we understand as the bottom-up or *uploading* dimension of Europeanisation which explains "how, when and to what end national foreign-policy preferences are brought to the European table and pursued using the EU as a means of amplifying national foreign policy" (Tonra, 2015, p. 185). An example of uploading is when a member state succeeds to impose one of its foreign policy preferences on the agenda or even as the dominant position of the EU. While uploading is often somewhat neglected in current research (at least compared to the other two dimensions), it is important to keep in mind that the original meaning of Europeanisation lies exactly in this dimension.

The most prominent of dimensions is certainly the top-down or downloading dimension, also known as policy adaption or convergence (Wong & Hill, 2011). It denotes a process by which national politics is reoriented in direction and shape (Ladrech, 1994, p. 69) so that "collectively agreed EU policy positions embed themselves within national foreign policies and institutions over time and become part of the warp and weave of that policy" (Tonra, 2015, p. 185) when member states adapt to "the needs and requirements of EU membership" (Wong & Hill, 2011, p. 7). For example, downloading would refer to a situation in which a member state aligning its foreign policy position to match EU foreign policy stance on an issue. There are countless studies which focus on the downloading dimension of Europeanisation of foreign policy.

This brings us to the last dimension of Europeanisation, namely the horizontal dimension of cross-loading, a process in which "member states learn from one another in terms of information, analysis and even policy making structures" (Tonra, 2015, p. 185). The process is not mediated via EU institutions or actors, but rather emphasizes the growing interaction between member states beyond and around the EU as member states relate towards not just EU positions but also each other's (Aggestam & Bicchi, 2019, p. 519). As cross-loading is perhaps the last developed dimension of Europeanisation (Tonra, 2015, p. 185), some scholars have differing notions of it. For instance, Wong and Hill (2011, p. 7) view cross-loading as "identity reconstruction", a harmonization process caused by interaction of members states trough uploading and downloading which leads to "convergence in terms of policy goals, preferences and even identity between the national and the supranational levels" (Wong & Hill, 2011, p. 4). Others put less emphasis on the outcome of cross-loading, but rather it's mechanisms: namely the "growing predominance of informal and horizontal forms of interaction between states" (Rivera Escartin, 2020, p. 1198) and coalition-building of "like-minded member states that seek to promote their positions within the EU" (Rivera Escartin, 2020, pp. 1198–1199). In any case, a classic example of cross-loading is the formation of ad hoc likeminded coalitions of member states who work together to upload a position to the EU level.

It is, however, crucial not to forget that uploading, downloading and cross-loading are not isolated phenomena and that only by understanding their interplay one can grasp the nuances and complexity of European foreign policy-making (de Flers & Müller, 2012) as the conditions in which a policy is uploaded to the European can influence the degree by which it is downloaded to

the national level (and vice versa); direct interaction among member states then change the way uploading is attempted in the next iteration. This exactly is perhaps the greatest strength of Europeanisation theory: it's ability to generate insights on how different processes and dynamics influence each other in EU (foreign) policy making (de Flers & Müller, 2012) while at the same time allowing us to make inferences by isolating parts of the process (only one dimension) to be able to study it analytically. Only through this lens can we comprehend the current trend of increased cooperation among member states, as opposed to further centralization at the EU level (Genschel, 2022) which might be expected from fixating only on uploading. Europeanisation theory, through its interconnected dimensions of construction, diffusion and institutionalization (Radaelli, 2002, p. 4) can reveal not only "what the impacts of EU membership are on a single member state, but how being a member of a collective and feeling responsible to this collective shapes EU foreign policy-making" (Maurer et al., 2023, p. 225).

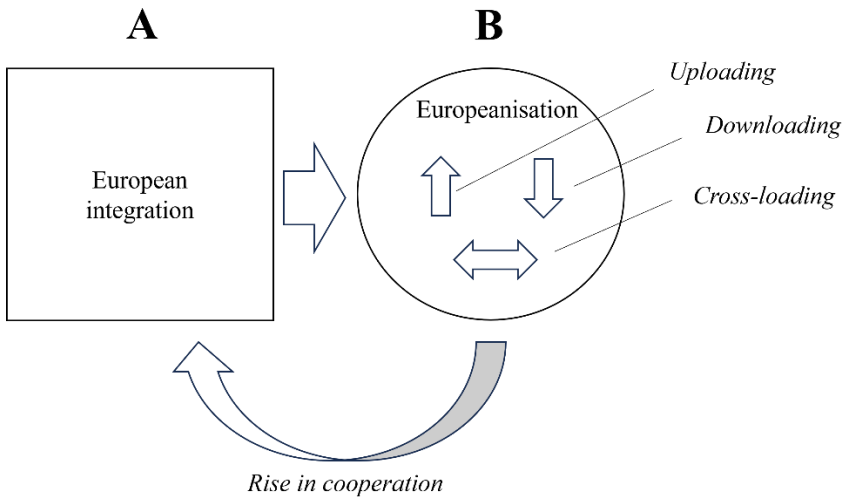

Figure 4: European Integration and the Dimensions of Europeanisation

The history of European integration reveals the value of understanding the three-dimensional nature of the Europeanisation process which fostered further integration. Michael Smith (2004) gives a detailed description of the two-way relationship between the institutionalization of existing informal cooperation and subsequent changes in (member) state behaviour which then furthers more cooperation. The recurring pattern of uploading, downloading, and cross-loading which leads to further uploading in terms of institutionalization is visible from the early day of EU foreign

policy cooperation in the 1970ies. Hence, we speak of the prominence of the uploading and downloading dimensions during this time. Following the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty, however, a new era of European integration emerged. This era is marked by rise in integration and EU activity without supranationalism (Bickerton et al., 2015). Now the cross loading dimension took centre stage as smaller groups of member states started working together informally trough as hoc coalitions of likeminded states (Aggestam & Bicchi, 2019). The Europeanisation approach is useful because it accepts that member states are both adapting to the EU trough downloading, but also at the same time actively creating and shaping the structures of the EU trough uploading and cross-loading (Wong & Hill, 2011).

Europeanisation can be illiberal and doesn't need to lead to further integration

Now I want to introduce another point of departure between researchers on the concept of Europeanisation, namely the content and outcome criteria of the process. Regarding the former, the debate revolves around if the content of change brought about by integration must be liberal for the label Europeanisation to stand. Some are adamant that only policies which have a liberal content can be considered Europeanisation "as it would represent a rejection of foundational European values" (Müller et al., 2021, p. 523) and without it the 'Europe' part in Europeanisation would be mute. On the latter, must the outcome of Europeanisation always be – more European harmonization (and integration)? A common argument is that Europeanisation is only a process which leads to foreign policy convergence (Giumelli et al., 2022; Wong & Hill, 2011) as every other outcome could more precisely be named, for instance, de-Europeanisation. I disagree with both positions and will use the following paragraphs to elaborate why I think that stripping Europeanisation from the fixation on liberal content and integration is enhancing its explanatory power.

Limiting Europeanisation only to policies with liberal content is not only theoretically flawed, but also counter-productive since it then becomes unable to analyse and explain some of the most interesting and prominent cases in contemporary EU foreign policy making. Those are cases of illiberal actors, such as populists in power in member states, using the institutions and mechanisms of EUFP to, e.g., upload their preferences to the European level (Rivera Escartin, 2020). I am here stressing the element of conceptual usefulness on purpose, because in mist of the many faces of Europeanisation out there, it may be less important to know what Europeanisation exactly is, "but

whether and how the term can be useful for understanding the dynamics of the evolving European polity" (Olsen, 2002, p. 922). I certainly think it is useful, and recognizing that it's dynamics does not need to produce only liberal policies, makes it an even more useful framework for analysing the relationship between domestic and EU foreign policies when PRRPs are in government (Rivera Escartin, 2020).

This argumentation becomes even more important as we move on towards limiting Europeanisation as to only the process which produces harmonization and/or integration. Theoretically, I have already elaborated that my notion of Europeanisation clearly stresses that the "Euro" in the term denotes the origin, and not the outcome of the phenomenon. The outcome should also theoretically be open, since – as I have just argued – even policies that do not have liberal content can be produced in the process of Europeanisation and a vast array of other factors such as historical context can steer the outcome away from further integration. Broadly (and intentionally provocatively) speaking, if Europeanisation is a change (in member state behaviour) caused by EU integration, it can also take the form of increase of member state contestation. Furthermore, if Europeanisation entails a change in the ways member state upload their preferences on the EU level, then member states employing contestation for uploading is also a form of Europeanisation.

Other researchers have also stressed that "adaptation pressures and simultaneous policy projection are both filtered through national preferences and strategic cultures" (Gross, 2009, p. 19) which "means that it is equally likely that national foreign policy cultures, although changing as a result of CFSP, remain significantly distinct from one another" (Gross, 2009, p. 19) and that therefore "Europeanisation does not entail the homogenization of member-state foreign policies nor a convergence towards a single EU policy point" (Tonra, 2015, p. 6). Finally, it is also methodologically problematic to use integration-based-Europeanisation as an independent variable in research as it would have a predetermined outcome. There would not be need for any dependent variable to measure. Or reason for any research to be done at all. Therefore, Europeanisation would in that way become almost completely useless.

Europeanisation is not only a change in policy

The question is therefore how then to conceive Europeanisation when we do not know its content and outcome. It is easy to become confused about the concept and turn towards dismissing it as

just too vague to be used in research. In the last few paragraphs of this section, I will extend my argumentation to offer a more nuanced view of Europeanisation and develop clear indicators for measuring it which I will use in my thesis. This will, as was the aim of this section, make the concept both theoretically, methodologically and analytically fit for carrying out my research.

First, I think that it is important to understand that Europeanisation is not just a thing that happens. It is a process of change which is carried out by social actors in the system of European foreign policymaking. Those actors in turn have their interests, ideas, motivations, and institutions inside which they function. Therefore, Europeanisation, that is the change which it represents, must be conceived as much deeper than it usually is. In other words, Europeanisation is not only a process of change in policy, but also in polity and politics. Bickerton (2011) claims that we are witnessing a profound shift in the European state's character (from nation state to member state). Between the state and European level, a lot of policymaking was transferred away from the state level. Within states, one can notice a mirroring of the changing inter-state relations in Europe as the balance within European states has shifted from democracy towards bureaucracy with an increasing separation of state leaders from domestic societal pressures and constrains. This has led authors such as Mair (Mair, 2013, pp. 100–104) and Chryssogelos (2019) to equate Europeanisation with de-politicization, which "carries within it the seeds of its own re-politicisation" (Chryssogelos, 2019, p. 4).

While the ways in which Europeanisation leads to contestation is the focus of the following section, let us only briefly contemplate how the main concepts mentioned so far – integration, Europeanisation and its dimensions, and contestation - are connected. If Europeanisation is change in member states caused by European integration, then de-Europeanisation is change in member states which rolls back integration. Contestation is an instance of behaviour which blocks further integration but does not necessarily roll back achieved integration. Contestation can take the form of certain acts of uploading (as member states can attempt to upload positions which subvert CFSP), downloading (as member states can refuse to implement CFSP policies) and cross-loading (as states can form informal coalitions to pursue their foreign policy goals parallel to CFSP). This is just a simple illustration of how member state behaviour following integration and along the dimensions of Europeanisation can take from of contestation. To understand why and how this happens is exactly the aim of this thesis.

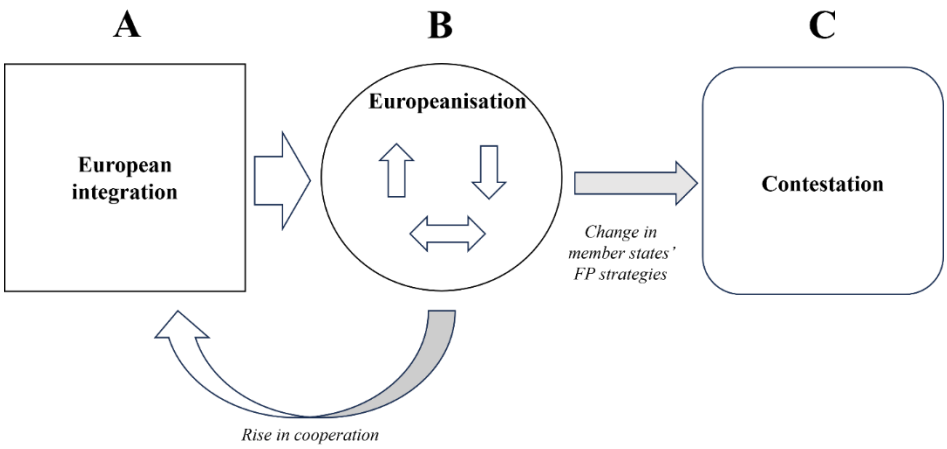

Figure 5: From European integration to contestation

Indicators of Europeanisation of CFSP

Finally, the only open question remaining is how to measure Europeanisation. Researchers have at various points developed indicators to evaluate the existence or degree of Europeanisation of foreign policy (Gross, 2009; Hadfield et al., 2017; Wong & Hill, 2011). However, it is not possible to simply copy all or a selection of them since they lie on very different conceptual grounds between each other and my own conceptualization. For instance, Wong and Hill's (2011) indicators are heavily influenced by their notion of Europeanisation as change which leads to harmonization. Therefore, I will not be able to use most of them for my analysis since they do not measure (everything) what I regard as Europeanisation. Nonetheless, I have still taken a lot of reference to their (and others') development of indicators in order to better develop my own.

Apart from taking inspiration from existing research, I have developed my indicators with care that they reflect the key arguments in my conceptualization of Europeanisation. First, the indicators need to entail that Europeanisation is a case of change. Next, this change needs to be caused by European integration. It can be in form of both policy, polity and/or politics. The indicators need to reflect the dimensions of Europeanisation and acknowledge their interplay. The content of that change is not necessarily liberal, nor does it unavoidably lead to further cooperation between member states or European integration. Finally, they must be contextualized to CFSP as it is the area of my research. Using the indicators, I will be able to recognize Europeanisation in events

and phenomena in European foreign policy making and therefore make correct inferences on the relationship between Europeanisation and contestation.

Table 3: Indicators of Europeanisation of CFSP

Dimension of Europeanisation	Indicators of Europeanisation
Uploading	• change in the amount and way member states are conducting foreign policy trough the CFSP • change in member states' demands towards and visions of CFSP as a system
Downloading	• change in the amount and way member states are absorbing and implementing CFSP policies • change in member states' individual foreign policies (outside CFSP)
Cross-loading	• change in the amount and way member states are cooperating with each other in matters of foreign policy (inside and outside CFSP)

To conclude, the aim of this section was to conceptualize Europeanisation both as a theory and a concept, and to make it fit to use in my research. Europeanisation theory was therefore differentiated from theories of European integration and then conceptually differentiated European integration. Europeanisation was then defined as change caused by European integration, occurring at the national or European level, along the dimensions of uploading, downloading, and cross-loading which can, but doesn't have to, lead to further integration. The benefits of the chosen definitions among competing ones were elaborated on and all its elements were explained. Finally, clear indicators for identifying it were offered which made Europeanisation as a concept suitable for use in the next parts of the thesis.

2.3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Having developed the concepts of contestation and Europeanisation of CFSP, this section will critically explore the existing body of literature and research to find evidence pertaining to the potential causality between the Europeanisation of CFSP and its contestation. This analysis will be inherently complex. Both concepts are multifaceted, and a multitude of variables are involved to their interaction. This means that the relationship between the two concepts is not linear or straightforward, but rather it is characterized by a dynamic interplay of various factors and mechanisms. That is why it is important to manage (the readers' and my own) expectations that this evaluation can produce. It should be viewed as a starting point for empirical research, rather than a definitive conclusion. The outcome will not be in form of strict hypotheses, but rather propositions based on insights that have been revealed so far within the field of EUFP-studies, but also in broader fields within which EUFP studies are placed: European integration studies and IR studies.

When conducting an exploratory examination such as this, incorporating insights from broader fields of studies adds to the comprehensiveness of the understanding of a phenomenon and could reveal innovative avenues to explore. Nevertheless, the primary focus will remain on research conducted within EUFP studies. The purpose of the analysis is not to misrepresent findings of the existing body of literature by cherry picking isolated data points and presenting them as the mainstream perspective. Quite the contrary, the starting point of the investigation clearly states and presumes that the established literature generally doesn't consider that Europeanisation and integration influence contestation. The aim of this exercise is to summarise instances where a connection was observed and utilise these findings as the foundation for my research. By doing so, not only will it establish a focused direction from the outset, but it will also lend legitimacy to my research, as it underscores that there is at least some evidence suggesting the existence of such a connection.

The analysis will reveal evidence that the rise in authority, output & visibility of EUFP, underlined by a new institutional structure which has delegated some power away from member states but still does not hold them accountable, has had an influence on the likelihood of acts of CFSP contestation occurring. These findings are intriguing because they, on a case-to-case basis, suggest that the integration and Europeanisation of CFSP can run in parallel to and reinforce its

contestation. While it is not possible to hypothesize on a sound causal mechanism based on these findings, they provide a valuable foundation for conducting the empirical research of the study: more concretely, they served as the basis for developing the interview questions for actors who are involved in producing CFSP.

European foreign policy integration created its own contestation

I want to start my investigation into the link between Europeanisation and contestation with stating that without the coordination and subsequent integration of European foreign policy, there would be no contestation of the same European foreign policy. This is certainly not a revolutionary argument, but still a crucial one for starting to understand the nature of the phenomena I am studying. Building upon the core social constructivist assumption that subjective meaning of events and actions is "formed through interaction with others" (Creswell & Creswell, 2022, p. 51), I argue that certain member states actions would not perceived as EUFP contestation if there was no integrated EUFP which this action is considered to subvert. This is in line with theoretical assumptions that contestation is social, interactive and norm-directed: it requires a context, more participating agents and a norm toward which it can be directed (Wiener, 2014, p. 12). Integration created all those conditions for contestation to come into existence. The same is true if one would pose the hypothetical question 'what if the EU did not exist?', an elegant method for isolating the effects Europeanisation from e.g. globalization (Wong & Hill, 2011, p. 13). The answer would again be: without the EU and its foreign policy, no action a member state can take could possibly contest it as contestation in itself is a social (Wiener, 2014) and socially constructed activity.

Examples of this are numerous, such as French and UK's continuation of weapons export to China after 1989 (Bräuner et al., 2015) or Swedish unilateral recognition of Palestine (Aggestam & Bicchi, 2019) or Hungary's behaviour after Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea (Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017). Those cases would not carry the meaning of contestation if there was no EU arms embargo on China or no European policy of non-recognition of Palestine or no EU sanctions on Russia. Only because of this integration and its output does the meaning and label of contestation fall upon the listed cases of individual member states foreign policies which would otherwise perhaps be considered unremarkable, every-day foreign policy behaviour. In 1945, there was no action a state could take that would produce contestation of EUFP, whereas in 2024 most of the actions a member state takes can potentially be labelled contestation of EUFP. Therefore, to

paraphrase Paul Virilio's famous epigram saying that when one invents the ship, one also invents the shipwreck (Virilio, 1999, p. 89): conceptually, when you start the integration of EU foreign policy, you also invent the contestation of EU foreign policy.

I find it important that integration led to contestation because it emphasizes that labelling an action as contestation assigns a special meaning to social phenomena. Now is perhaps a good moment to reiterate that contestation is not the same as disagreement and that while there was always some disagreement between European states, only after European integration can we talk about contestation. It could very well be possible that once there was far more disagreement between European states in foreign policy matters, but now there is more contestation. As already mentioned, this study is not normative, and as such, contestation as a phenomenon isn't judged negatively *a priori*. European integration, the institutions it has created and the member states supporting it don't necessarily do so either. On the contrary, a case can be made that contestation, or a certain amount of it, is welcomed by all sides as the ability for a norm or policy to be safely contested is important for the functioning of any type governance among sovereign states since it both indicates and raises its perception of legitimacy which is crucial for the system's survival (Wiener, 2014). This means that, in a way, the EU wants to allow contestation of its CFSP for its member states to regard it as legitimate and for the CFSP as a type of governance to work. Integration therefore not only created its own contestation, but the ability for its contestation is crucial for its legitimacy and survival.

What I have now laid out is a first, very broad clue on the existence of a link between Europeanisation and EUFP contestation. However, even from this (still) vague and general proposition, we can theorize that the increased scope of CFSP will bring about more contestation of CFPS because there is a simultaneous increase of possible actions states can take that runs against CFSP. Additionally, to maintain the legitimacy of institution, the possibility and existence of a certain amount of contestation is necessary and perhaps welcomed by those who want to see CFSP progress further. As we proceed to the subsequent sections, these propositions will be repeatedly explored at more specific levels of theoretical abstraction.

CFSP is expanding rapidly

If we accept that an increase in CFSP's scope and output raises the likelihood of its contestation, it becomes necessary to examine the scale and speed of CFSP's expansion. In his seminal

examination of EU foreign policy cooperation and institutionalization, Michael E. Smith (M. E. Smith, 2004, p. 51) shows that in the first three decades since the creation of the ECP - the first instance of EUFP integration - Europe's FP output has increased tenfold. In this century a constant rise in all types of EUFP output was documented: from CFSP decisions (See Figure 6) to sanctions (Giumelli et al., 2021). As mentioned, more CFSP output means there is a bigger chance that an individual member state policy runs against it. This addresses a core puzzle for many researchers (e.g. Bremberg et al., 2022) wondering how it is at the same time possible for the EU to be more and more filled with contestation and increasingly produce foreign policy outputs. A potential explanation could be that the constant increase of CFSP output increases the odds of a state contesting it. It has already been noted that, with each new decision in EUFP, debates emerge over how best to implement them. This reveals the real differences between states (Wong & Hill, 2011, p. 231) as there are more different interests among which consensus should be reached more frequently (Kranz, 2016, p. 6). As we see an increase in foreign policy output, it is understandable then that we can also see an increase in contestation.

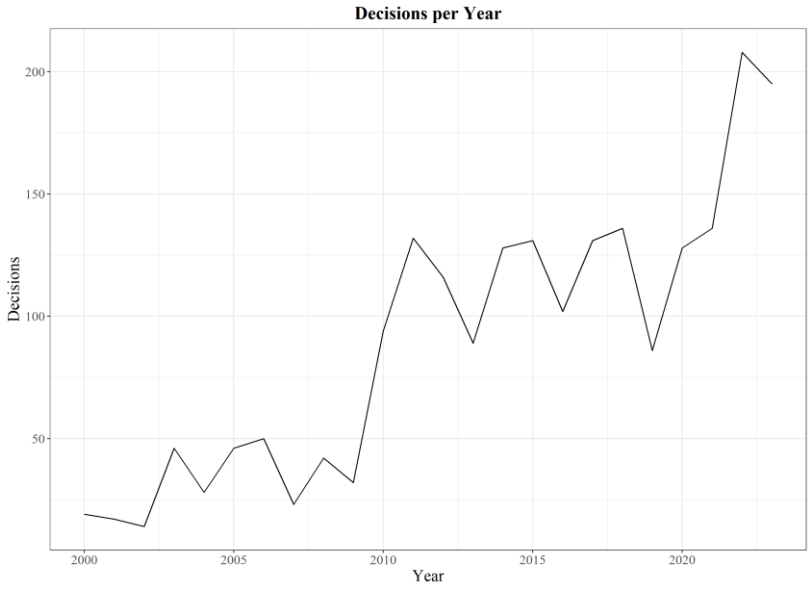

Figure 6: CFSP Decisions per year (2000 - 2023) Source: EUR-Lex (Accessed 29.08.23.)

In addition to the quantitative expansion of CFSP in terms of policy outputs, there is also a discernible qualitative enlargement in the types of policies it generates. This is evidenced by an increased focus on defence and security measures, a rise in the imposition of sanctions, among

other initiatives. These developments suggest not only a broadening but also a deepening of CFSP's role, underscoring its evolving complexity and multifaceted nature. It is therefore imperative to examine both these dimensions - the rate of output and the diversity of policy types - to fully comprehend the dynamics of CFSP's expansion as the increase of "so many different types of external action across so many varieties of competence, managed by a variety of decision-making modes and individual EU institutions leaves both their formulation and implementation open to incoherence at home and 'bilateral agreements that do not follow the EU line' abroad" (Hadfield et al., 2017, p. 14). To demonstrate how the qualitative expansion of CFSP influences contestation, we can look into the increase of EU sanctions as a foreign policy output following political integration (Giumelli, 2019, p. 116; Kreutz, 2005). Not only has the number autonomous EU sanctions increased (Giumelli et al., 2021, pp. 9–10), they have become increasingly comprehensive as demonstrated by recent sanctions on Russia (K. Meissner & Graziani, 2023).

Although the increased use of sanctions reflects a growing ability to forge consensus between member states and raise in EU's ambitions is world affairs (Cardwell & Moret, 2023), implementing sanctions inflicts tangible costs on member states, which fall harder on some than others (Giumelli, 2017). In theory, states that face higher costs of compliance with sanctions are more likely to contest them since national-level considerations still claim priority in determining cooperation on EU sanctions (Kranz, 2016). Furthermore, the logic of collective sanctions that isolate the target country, offer political and economic incentives to individual member states to deviate from them since it can take advantage from the target's dependence (Portela, 2015). Therefore, the increase in sanctions both raises the costs for member states and tempts them to either circumvent their proper implementation or to bust them altogether. Cases of those types of sanctions contestation have been documented (Giumelli et al., 2022; Portela, 2015).

Moreover, the relatively complex process of deciding and implementing sanctions which spans across institutions and arenas (formerly pillars) must also be considered. The option of sanctions is, after Lisbon, most frequently first raised in European Council conclusions agreed upon unanimously by heads of state (Szép, 2020). Formally, sanctions are firstly decided in the Council's Foreign Affair's (FAC) configuration in the form of CFSP decisions, after which the Council in e.g. the Economic Affairs (ECOFIN) configuration produces a regulation which implements the decision. Note that the first step is within the CFSP framework where unanimity

is needed, while the second step is part of the usual legislative procedure where only qualified majority is needed. Additionally, depending on the type of sanctions, national legislation is needed for the policy to take effect (Giumelli, 2019, pp. 120–122).

The multistep decision-making process allows for states, after they have already decided on the sanctions in a CFSP decision, to contest them in the second step while negotiating the regulation by prolonging the decision, curbing the scope of the sanctions, or outright contesting them (Buchet de Neuilly, 2003, p. 95). Even when there is no intention for contestation, such institutional setting requires a very coordinated bureaucracy within national administrations since delegates participating in FAC CFSP Council meetings and ECOFIN meetings come from different sectors and hold different priorities (Buchet de Neuilly, 2003). A similar difference between arenas is also visible after Lisbon Treaty: in the case of the 2014 sanctions on Russia, the European Council was mostly influenced by norms, whereas the Council was more interested in maintaining their national red lines (Szép, 2020).

The combination of an increase in EU sanctions, a lack of tight national coordination (Portela, 2015, pp. 53–55), more room for misinterpretation, and lack of national capabilities (K. L. Meissner & Urbanski, 2022) can hence potentially bring about unintentional contestation. Similar constraining dynamics of bureaucratic capacity (T. A. Börzel, 2021), administrative shortcomings, interpretation problems, and issue linkage have been observed in the (non)implementation of EU directives in the domain of public policy (Falkner et al., 2004).

Furthermore, the fact that some sanctions such as arms embargos require national implementation is, according to the international institutions literature, another factor which can undermine the success of the policy (Kranz, 2016). This presents another opportunity for states to contest sanctions by not fully implementing them (Kranz, 2016) or, e.g., introducing mechanisms that permit exceptions (Portela, 2015, p. 52). In their comprehensive study on CFSP sanction implementation, Giumelli et al. (2022) show that this fear is not only theoretical, but that CFSP sanctions are implemented quite unevenly in the national context. This means that there are currently potentially many instances of EU sanction implementation (or their lack of) which can be labelled as acts of contestation. They mostly remain undetected because of a lack of formal monitoring, which I will also touch upon later.

This analysis underscores the expansion of CFSP both quantitatively and qualitatively, leading to increased contestation. As Maurer & Wright (2021a, p. 396) highlight, the complexity and cross-cutting nature of CFSP issues challenge many member states' capacities and are not uniformly relevant. This observation encapsulates the crux of the issue: as CFSP's scope and output increase, so does the likelihood of contestation due to diverse interests and tangible costs, such as sanctions. These findings, therefore, serve as additional evidence for the link between Europeanisation and contestation, and will be used as another proposition in this thesis to further explore these intricate dynamics.

EU foreign policy is more politicized than before, creating incentives for contestation

After establishing that following EUFP integration a growing number of member states' actions can be labelled EUFP contestation, what becomes important to understand is what kind of integration is happening in the EU and its foreign policymaking today. Bickerton et al. (2015) explain how after Maastricht, member states clearly see EU integration as beneficial, but stubbornly resist further supranationalism in terms of transferring more power to the Commission or the Court, or introducing majority voting in foreign policymaking. Rather, member states turn to deliberation and consensus seeking as their decision-making guiding norm and, as a last resort, delegate power to newly created bodies such as EEAS. This paradoxical situation of rise in integration and EU activity without supranationalism is called "new intergovernmentalism" (Bickerton et al., 2015).

This new era was brought about by changes in the member states. Namely, after Maastricht the economic preferences of (heads of) states gradually converged with neoliberalism and a realization of the limits of unilateral national strategies (Bickerton et al., 2015, p. 709). In other words, European elites became more alike. This put away the most obstacles to integration and led states to pursue more initiatives through the EU (Bickerton et al., 2015). Simultaneously, the population became increasingly indifferent towards politics and grew more apart with political elites as political parties declined partly because of the effects of Europeanisation (Mair, 2013, pp. 100–104). Hence a crisis of representation and polarization across new cleavages arose (which also brings about the election of populists into European governments; see (Balfour, 2016, p. 52)).

To achieve their policies, elites became more reliant on EU policymaking as an insulated, de-politicized arena (Bickerton et al., 2015). With time, EU policymaking became more visible (as

generally did policy making in international institutions, see: Zurn, 2018, p. 138) and elites' involvement in it more politicized, hence also more risky as domestic political communities scrutinize it more closely, especially in states which suffered heavily from one of EU's recent crises (Chryssogelos, 2019). The increased politicisation of EUFP is also caused by the increase of defence cooperation (Hegemann & Schneckener, 2019). This has ended the era of the "permissive consensus" (Hooghe & Marks, 2009) as elites still need to be elected by their populations and will, while still seeing EU integration as useful, at times slow down integration and the pace of EU policymaking. At the same time, the Lisbon Treaty brought about a shift towards a primacy of the European Council in EUFP matters (Szép, 2020) meaning that more EUFP decisions are taken by heads of states which makes it even more visible and politicized. Evidence suggest that this has indeed led to the increase of the politicisation of EUFP (Balfour, 2016; Chryssogelos, 2019; Costa, 2019).

In the era when the connection of EU and domestic politics is so high, and when the lines between "high" and "low" politics are blurring (Bickerton et al., 2015); EUFP becomes another arena in which elites try to appeal to the domestic distain for EU integration. Perhaps the most visible example of such behaviour is the behaviour by Victor Orbán who often publicly contests EUFP but does not use his veto power to hinder it, leading to believe he does it for signalling to domestic and international audiences (Lamour, 2023; Portela et al., 2021, p. 690). This pattern is not only evident in the activities of the heads of state, but also in Council committees where contestation has increased (Juncos & Pomorska, 2021) meaning that the "game" is played on all levels of the transnational EU foreign policymaking structure. This process is, however, not what some would label "De-Europeanisation" (Müller et al., 2021) since states are not less willing to engage in collective foreign policy-making at the EU-level, but rather a new period of "reflexive Europeanisation" (Chryssogelos, 2019) in which this engagement is highly politicized and elites adapt their behaviour accordingly – increasingly so by contesting EUFP. This process is another clue for my study since it means that, as EUFP is more politicized than ever, there will be more incentives for elites to also contest EUFP for purposes of domestic policymaking. This is especially likely when those actors come from right-wing populist parties (Angelucci & Isernia, 2020) that have had a rise in influence around member states in the last decade.

There could be a learning curve towards contestation of EUFP

While the politicization of EUFP is growing, the expansion of EU membership is slowing down. The size and composition of the EU is a relevant factor to consider since each new country brings in its unique historical perspective, geopolitical interests, and foreign policy tradition which influence the group's ability to reach agreement on foreign policy matters. In the two waves of enlargements at the beginning of this century, in only 3 years 12 new member states joined, almost doubling EU's membership. If I was writing my thesis in 2007, I would possibly reiterate the common argument that the mere expansion of stakeholders would increase both disagreement and contestation (Chelotti, 2016, pp. 47–48). But since then, only Croatia has joined (and the UK has conversely left the EU). Therefore, we can now consider the group to be relatively stable in size and membership for the last two decades. This brings us back to the widely held belief that time spent integrated in EU structures will, via effects of socialization, lead member states' to foster coordination, consensus-building and deliberation (Juncos & Pomorska, 2008; Manners & Whitman, 2000) and therefore make contestation less likely.

To counter this narrative, Elisabetta Birghi (2011) explores how EU membership has influenced Italian foreign policy-making and, surprisingly, shows that the "reliance on the EC/EU, combined with the accustomed ability to use European institutions as both a shelter and an instrument of foreign policy, has paradoxically produced ever stronger incentives to free ride, and an increasingly opportunistic and instrumental attitude vis-à-vis the EU" (Brighi, 2011, pp. 57–58). In other words, EU membership has enabled Italy to be more active in projecting its national foreign policy even when it "meant straying from the European way, or contributing to the divisions within the EU" (Brighi, 2011, p. 58). It is therefore possible that there could be a learning curve towards contestation, meaning that new member states who are very compliant with EUFP at the beginning "may well become more self-assertive with the passage of time" (Wong & Hill, 2011, p. 218) translating into contestation. Given that the member states that joined during the "Big Bang" round of enlargement now have 20 years of experience in EUFP cooperation, it is conceivable that almost half of the member states are just finding their self-assertiveness.

The empowerment of the CEE member states enables them to push back

One of the factors that correlates with self-assertiveness in foreign policy is usually the rise in a country's material power.[7] The increase in relative power among EU member states is most notable in CEE states. While the GDP of the 12 CEE member states (that joined in 2004 and 2007) grew 55,07% between 2007 and 2022, the established member states have seen a 5 times lower GDP growth in the same period – 9,87%.[8] The relative share of total EU GDP of CEE states has almost doubled in those 15 years, growing from 6,97% to 11,84% (World Bank Group, 2024).[9] This implies that there's a shift in the balance and character of power among member states, as CEE member states are now playing a significantly larger role in the European economy.

A similar situation is, as Zürn (2018) documents, happening on a global level with the economic rise of the Global South in the 21st century. Their role in the global economy is rapidly increasing and they now "seek to translate market power into influence in international institutions" (Zürn, 2018, p. 170) by applying a strategy of counter-institutionalization or, in other words, contestation (Zürn, 2018). The reason for such behaviour is rooted in the in the notion that the international institutions created by Western powers are biased in favour of Western interests and ideas, therefore questioning their legitimacy. Strengthening their voice in international institutions is all too important for states since a significant amount of national authority has been delegated to them. The tactics used by emerging powers is then to "demand for a greater voice in existing institutions and the use of deadlocks as well as counter-institutionalization to change them" (Zürn, 2018, p. 13). The aim is not to exit (since the costs of doing so would be too great) or abolish institutions, but rather to critically communicate and demand change of institutions to better reflects their interests (Zürn, 2018, p. 193). They are far more successful in asserting their position in institutions that function on a "one-state one-vote" principle since emerging states can, at any time, create a deadlock in the functioning of the institution. In those cases, confrontations between established and emerging states are more likely (Zürn, 2018, pp. 181–183).

CFSP has arguably seen a considerable expansion in its authority in recent years, evolving rapidly to unexpectedly encompass broader defence, security, and sanctions measures in response to global crises that necessitate EU action. CFSP should therefore be more important for member

[7] While this is a central Realist argument, the importance of material power is also acknowledged by all other major schools such as Liberalism and Constructivism, albeit often in different ways or with different emphases.
[8] The GDPs of UK and Croatia were not included in these calculations.
[9] The GDP of the UK was included in calculating the share in 2007, where the UK was labeled as an established power. For 2022, the GDP of Croatia was included and was labeled as a rising power.

states than before. Furthermore, considering the CFSP operates on a "one-state one-vote" basis, it seems plausible to apply Zürn's theory of endogenous dynamic of international institutions at the global level to the CFSP. Specifically, it is reasonable to anticipate that rising CEE member states are, in order to secure a more influential role within the CFSP, likely to push back and contest the status quo which, as is often claimed, is heavily dependent of the preferences of larger Western member states (Terpan, 2019). And at first glance, a lot of prominent cases of CFSP contestation has indeed been conducted by emerging member states, mainly (but not only) Hungary in form of outright blocking (Müller & Gazsi, 2022, p. 408), public criticism (Giumelli, 2017, pp. 1062–1063), and individual foreign policy acts (Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017). This makes the link between the rise of CEE member states in the institutional structure of CFSP and contestation of CFSP a plausible proposition to investigate.

Western EU member states could try to take back control

The contestation by emerging states does not go unanswered. Zürn (2018, p. 188) shows that, faced with resistance by rising states, incumbent states are less able to project their power within the institution and advance their interests through it. This is especially true in “one-state one vote” institutions where rising states can easily create a standstill by vetoing. If the institution has acquired enough authority over time, and hence control over it affects the distribution of costs and gains therefore influencing domestic affairs, the incumbent states will be eager to regain control. The first strategy incumbents pursue is to try to change the existing institutional features, foremost equality in voting and procedures, but this often fails as the remaining weaker states and rising powers often respond by using and protecting their institutional privileges against such institutional changes (Zürn, 2018, p. 188). Incumbents then usually move on to threatening to exit the institution but rarely do so. Rather, they can turn their attention towards another institution in the same issue area which is closer to their interest and redistribute resources from the old to the new one. This is called *regime shifting* or *forum shopping*. If no such institution exists, powerful states can establish a wholly new with a move called *competitive regime creation* (Zürn, 2018, pp. 172–173). The purpose of those moves is to increase pressure for weaker states to give in (Zürn, 2018, p. 188). This scenario, however, typically leads to the fragmentation and decline of the institution battled over if incumbents do not adapt the institution to be more legitimate (Zürn, 2018, p. 192).

Taking into account the above-mentioned dynamics, we can consider if it's applicable to modern-day CFSP. In October 2022, France has created the European Political Community or EPC (Cohen, 2022). EPC is an intergovernmental institution of European states to cooperate on security, energy and policy towards third states, mainly Russia. A years after that, 9 member states (headed by France and Germany) have launched a *Group of Friends* to promote the removal of unanimity in CFSP decision-making (Brzozowski, 2023). The official reasoning for this initiative was, as quoted in the Group's Joint statement published by the German Federal Foreign Office, "to improve effectiveness and speed of our foreign-policy decision-making" (Amt, 2023), not stating clear actors that hinder the speed of decision-making. This (and past) initiative to introduce QMV was criticized mainly by smaller and Eastern member states (Brzozowski, 2023).

Taking those events into account, it seems that Zürn's intra-institutional dynamics of action-reaction between rising and incumbent states could be applied to current trends in CFSP. If true, then we can expect a proliferation of contestation from both sides in the near future. Also, this is another proposition on the link between integration and contestation of CFSP, as even large, Western states who hold most of the authority can come to contest it by institution shifting or creating competitive institutions. Both of which would undermine CFSP.

EU actors have formally obtained a leadership role in CFSP, but still lack legitimacy

Even though the potential introduction of QMV would present a major change to the way CFSP (and EUFP generally) functions, as we know it would certainly not be the first significant institutional development to shift CFSP away from being a purely intergovernmental policy system. Namely, in hope of raising "unity, consistency and effectiveness" (Amadio Viceré et al., 2020, p. 259) of the Union's external actions and to position "the EU as a global actor" (Aggestam & Johansson, 2017, p. 1204), the member states have in the 2009 Lisbon Treaty (LT) agreed to introduce a series of institutional innovations to the way its foreign policy is conducted. Most notably, LT merged the posts of High Representative for CFSP of the Council and Commissioner for DG RELEX to create the position of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (who is also vice president of the Commission). The initial name for the position was Union Minister for Foreign Affairs (Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe, 2004, Article I–28), displaying the vision of the HR/VP as the EU's foreign minister (Cross & Karolewski, 2017, p. 5).

The LT also created the European External Action Service (EEAS) as the Union's diplomatic service headed by and assisting to the HR/VP in carrying out EU's foreign and security policy. Apart from serving the HR/VP as a powerful tool in terms of the external diplomatic representation of the Union, the EEAS has also attained a significant internal dimension – the representation of the HR at lower levels of CFSP, filling in the role previously held by member states in the rotating Presidency system (removed by LT) (Juncos & Pomorska, 2023). This means that LT changes have significantly delegated and centralized the formal leadership of EU foreign policy towards Brussels (Aggestam & Johansson, 2017, p. 1203), while being careful not to directly empower existing EU institutions (Bickerton et al., 2015).

However, although the new EU institutions and actors have gained a prescribed leadership role, their perception as legitimate leaders is not shared among member states as "the sources for legitimate leadership continue to be anchored at the national level of member states" (Aggestam & Johansson, 2017, p. 1204). This reiterates the importance of legitimacy in international institutions (Zürn, 2018). Aggestam and Johansson (2017) also note that the institutional delegation and centralization of CFSP leadership functions to the HR and EEAS has been both socially and symbolically challenging and did not automatically turn them into leaders who are followed by member states. On the contrary, the very different notions of what role those institutions and actors should play in EUFP (e.g. on the conflicting interpretations of the role of the EEAS see: Bátora, 2013) have created potential conflicts between them and the member states over leadership as member states "accord a representative role for the HR and the EEAS, while EEAS officials think they should play a key role in delivering proposals that shape EU foreign policy-making towards common positions" (Aggestam & Johansson, 2017, p. 1217).

The EEAS, even though it now possesses considerable resources, simply cannot "replace the political clout of 27 member states" (Maurer & Wright, 2021a, p. 398) that is needed for leading CFSP. Furthermore, since taking over the chairing of CFSP working groups, the member states perceived EEAS chairs as biased outsiders. This has diminished the trust required to perform key roles, from organizer, to broker, to political leader and ultimately hindered their performance and resulted in an increase of blocking common positions (Juncos & Pomorska, 2023) and contestation of norms (Juncos & Pomorska, 2021). The increasing institutionalization of the CFSP has ironically led to further complications, as member states sometimes seem to be hiding behind the

assumption that they are not required to follow up on EU decisions. Instead, they pass this responsibility onto the EEAS or the HRVP, creating delays in decision-making as well as disengagement from proactive implementation of the decisions made (Maurer & Wright, 2021a). The increased activism of EU institutions and actors changed the roles of member states, who were once the main CFSP agenda setters in institutions such as the PSC, but are now turned more into supervisors (Maurer & Wright, 2021b) of the process, further disengaging member states from decision-making and effective implementation. This means that the institutional changes that have empowered the role of EU institutions in the CFSP structure can produce both active and passive contestation of CFSP.

However, not only those EU institutions and actors have gained more influence in CFSP in the last decade. The European Commission's role in CFSP was not significantly altered in LT as member states carefully avoided delegating more authority to supranational institutions (Bickerton et al., 2015). On paper, the Commission's role in foreign policy remained mostly restricted to economic objectives. However, the Commission's influence in foreign policy has at times been bigger than the formally proscribed in the Treaties by leveraging its bargaining power, utilizing its unique institutional features and expertise, gaining access to key decision-making arenas, and acting in a capacity that extends beyond the traditional role of an agent of the Member States (Riddervold, 2016). Because EUFP-making has increased the level of interactions between institutions and member states, the Commission now serves as a meeting point and plays a coordinating role which opens up opportunities for influencing CFSP (Lavallée, 2011). Finally, the proactivity of the Commission in foreign policy is also contingent upon its leadership and the geopolitical context within which it operates. Presently, both factors appear to favour a more engaged Commission in terms in foreign and security policy matters. The current President, Ursula von der Leyen, has proclaimed her intent for the Commission to adopt a "geopolitical" stance. Concurrently, a series of recent geopolitical crises have necessitated an increased level of EU involvement in international politics (Haroche, 2023). The Commission's desire to be more proactively involved in CFSP could be another element of dispute and a potential cause of contestation as most member states did not envision this involvement.

Member states turn to horizontal and informal practices to take lead in CFSP

As a response to the formal delegation of leadership in CFSP to EU actors, member states have started to engage in informal practices which allow them to promote their initiatives in CFSP. Those practices include member states submitting non-papers to rise an item to the agenda, delivering proposals, and representing the EU abroad in certain situations even though those are formally tasks assigned to the HR/VP and EEAS (Aggestam & Johansson, 2017). Along the way, member states are more often interacting horizontally and directly (without the mediation of EU institutions) to influence each other or build ad hoc coalitions on certain topics to steer the direction of CFSP. Informal grouping is often done before raising an issue in the formal CFSP agenda to amplify the influence of the proposal. These groups have no formal rules or contracts, but can be fairly robust and very influential in raising the legitimacy of the output of CFSP (Aggestam & Bicchi, 2019, p. 6) as the support of a larger group of member state displays credibility. Given that this behaviour is becoming a dominant trend in EU foreign policy making, it can be argued that the cross-loading dimension of Europeanisation has taken precedence over downloading and uploading in the EU's foreign policy system (Aggestam & Bicchi, 2019).

Coalition building in CFSP can also create divisions. For example, like-minded states with populist governments can form coalitions to advance their (often illiberal) foreign policy positions within the EU. Recent examples include the Italian and Hungarian populist pressure on the European Neighbourhood Policy (Rivera Escartin, 2020). If these positions contradict established EUFP, they automatically constitute contestation. Moreover, if such a coalition succeeds in gaining predominance among member states in promoting their position to emerge as the established CFSP position, it can provoke EU institutions to publicly contest the new EUFP. An example of this was Commission President Junker denouncing the option to consider setting up 'disembarkation platforms' in Tunis, as agreed upon in European Council conclusions (Rivera Escartin, 2020, p. 9). Building horizontal coalitions can therefore increase contestation as it strengthens previously isolated member states to criticise the mainstream position of CFSP and creates a vertical divide between member states and EU institutions (which they now more frequently bypass).

However, the dominance of the horizontal dimension in EU foreign policymaking is not only evident when states can find allies. It is often most pronounced when states cannot find allies to collectively promote initiatives. For example, states may undertake unilateral foreign policy actions that counter EUFP to strengthen their position and influence or to prompt other member

states to follow their lead, thereby forcing a change in EUFP. A case in point is Sweden's unilateral recognition of Palestine in 2014 which broke away from the established EU consensus to pave the way and generate momentum, particularly among the group of like-minded EU countries (Aggestam & Bicchi, 2019). In a very similar move, in May 2024, Spain and Ireland stepped forward from the EU block to recognize Palestine (Landauro et al., 2024) which was followed by Slovenia the next month (Politico.eu, 2024). These cases demonstrate how contestation can, in the context of an increase member states' reliance on informal and horizontal practices, be strategic and employed, e.g. outside CFSP for the purposes of influencing its internal dynamics. These insights will again be used as propositions for the empirical research of this thesis.

Lack of accountability creates incentives for external influence in CFSP

There are currently no formal sanctions in place against states that cross CFSP. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the EU perhaps wants to allow contestation of its CFSP, so that member states regard it as legitimate, which is crucial for the CFSP to work. However, integrating EUFP (which leads to the increase of its output and buildup of its capabilities and influence) without having any formal system of accountability for member states to stay on the same line can be dangerous. Conditions for internal contestation are created if the EU cannot prevent its member states from pursuing individual foreign policies that run counter to and undermine EUFP (Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017), or establish a formal monitoring system for arms embargo compliance (Kranz, 2016).

On the one hand, as EU's foreign policy (and its authority) strengthens, incentives for foreign powers increase to pursue a Trojan horse strategy to weaken the EU (Carbone, 2009; Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017). Recent examples can be found in the Russian strategy towards the EU prior (Schmidt-Felzmann, 2014) and following the annexation of Crimea (Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017), the Chinese strategy of engaging some member states after the Euro crisis (Raimundo et al., 2021) or Israel's alliances with member states with Eurosceptic governments (Pardo & Gordon, 2018). Even allies such as the US engage in similar activities to hinder EU foreign policy (Chirathivat & Langhammer, 2020). It is expected that "the role of external actors in promoting internal contestation of EU foreign and security policy will be even more prominent in internationalised conflicts and crises" (Lovato, 2021, p. 5). Unfortunately, despite deeper integration, the EU has

not become better in handling ‘divide and rule’ strategies by great powers (even when compared to less integrated organizations such as ASEAN) (Chirathivat & Langhammer, 2020).

On the other hand, member states have realized that they can enjoy the privileges of receiving side payments from foreign powers to undermine EUFP from within, and from the EU itself, so as not to veto the policy and render EUFP completely non-operational. This means that states will not necessarily completely veto CFSP proposals but will have an incentive to either dilute them or at least publicly speak against them. At the same time, they will, in their bilateral relationships with interested powers, produce policies that run counter to the intention of the CFSP towards those powers. The behaviour of Greece, as a state which was considerably hurt by EU’s financial crises, shows it to be a good candidate for a Trojan horse, both for Russia (Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017), and China (Raimundo et al., 2021). As a result, Greece’s activities were filed with contestation in that period.

All the above-mentioned conditions reinforce the dynamics in the domestic level which can bring about contestation at the EU level. More sanctions bring about more chances of (perception of) economic harm to states, which increases the domestic pressure for elites to take a stronger national stance in EUFP. This pressure does not come only (or primarily) from the public, but also from industry. With more sanctions, more industries and corporations have business interests hampered by them which increases incentives for lobbying. As sanctions, i.e., Regulations, are decided in the Council’s ECOFIN configuration in which is more reachable and receptive to industry pressures, there is a better opportunity for industry lobbying to exert influence (Buchet de Neuilly, 2003, pp. 98–99). A fresh illustrative example of business elites and political leaders reinforcing each other in bringing about foreign policy which contradicts EUFP is the case of Germany’s policy towards Russia following the annexation of Crimea, especially the NordStream 2 project (Gens, 2019). These findings underscore the intricate relationship between the Europeanisation of EU foreign policy and its contestation, which will serve as a basis for the initial propositions on these links.

Seven propositions linking Europeanisation and contestation

The purpose of this section in my research is to critically explore the existing body of literature and research to find evidence pertaining to the potential causality between the Europeanisation of

the CFSP and its contestation. To reiterate, this evaluation should be viewed as a starting point for empirical research rather than a definitive conclusion. The outcome will not be in form of strict hypotheses but rather propositions based on insights that have been revealed so far within the field of EU foreign policy studies and related fields.

The key findings of this chapter suggest that the integration and Europeanisation of CFSP can run in parallel to, cause and even reinforce its contestation. The analysis reveals that the rise in authority, output, and visibility of EUFP, underlined by a new institutional structure which has delegated some power away from member states but still does not hold them accountable, has had an influence on the occurrence of acts of CFSP contestation as it changes the conditions in which member states cooperate.

Based on these findings, I propose the following assumptions:

1. The increase in CFSP's scope and output raises the likelihood of its contestation due to diverse interests and tangible costs, such as sanctions.
2. The politicization of EUFP is growing, leading to more incentives for elites to also contest EUFP for purposes of domestic policymaking.
3. The rise of CEE member states influences contestation as these emerging powers may seek to assert their interests more strongly within CFSP.
4. Western EU member states could try to take back control by institution shifting or creating competitive institutions.
5. EU institutions have formally obtained a leadership role in CFSP, but still lack legitimacy.
6. Member states turn to horizontal and informal practices to take lead in CFSP.
7. Lack of accountability creates incentives for external influence in CFSP.

These propositions will serve as the basis for interviews with elite actors in CFSP. Through these interviews, I aim to develop a theoretical model that connects Europeanisation and contestation of CFSP. This approach allows me to consider the complexities of these dynamics and provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The detailed presentation and discussion of the empirical findings will be the focus of the next chapter.

3. METHODOLOGY

The European Union's CFSP has undergone a process of Europeanisation over the past several decades, aiming to foster greater coherence and unity in foreign policy among member states. Paradoxically, this period has also witnessed a rise in internal contestation of CFSP. This project seeks to unravel this research puzzle by investigating the specific conditions and factors that drive contestation among EU member states and institutions. Furthermore, it explores the nuanced role of Europeanisation in this dynamic, exploring whether it has ultimately served to dampen or amplify these internal contestations within the CFSP framework. In this methodological chapter, I will describe and justify all the key research design choices made for conducting this study. My goal is to demonstrate that each choice was made with consideration on the focus of the study and that the results of the research are credible. Next, the detailed description will help make the study replicable and comparable. Finally, by openly considering the unavoidable shortcomings of the research design, I will add context and further credibility of the research and highlight the value of my study despite the mentioned limitations.

> *The main research question of this thesis is:* ***why do we see an increase of contestation in the CFSP, instead of decades of Europeanisation making internal contestation less likely?***

I will start this chapter by justifying my research design in the order proscribed by the research onion model (Saunders et al., 2009), beginning with the research philosophy together with the assumptions underlying it, the research design which is related to the chosen philosophy and the methods through which the approach will be translated into practice. Next, I will go into details of my chosen research strategy: from time horizon, sampling strategy, data collection and data analysis methods. After that, I will touch upon the methodological limitations by listing all the research trade-offs I made and justifying them in the given context. I will show how I moderated the impact of the limitations on the study and how it still provides value despite them. Finally, I will summarize the chapter by reiterating key research design decisions.

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

Each research project is conceived and conducted upon some basic set of beliefs about the world around us and how data on phenomena in it should be collected, analyzed, and used (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 101). These fundamental beliefs are called research philosophies or "worldviews" and greatly impact all steps in the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017, p. 44). In this study I will use the *social constructivist* (or *interpretavist*) worldview which emphasizes that individuals actively create subjective meanings through their experiences and interactions within their social and historical contexts. The main goal of research becomes to interpret the meanings others have of the world because that motivates their actions and can hence explain social phenomena. Constructivist researchers aim to understand these diverse and context-dependent meanings, while recognizing that their own interpretations are also shaped by their personal backgrounds. Through an inductive approach, research applying this worldview seeks to develop theories or patterns of meaning from the data gathered in the field (Creswell & Creswell, 2017, p. 46).

A constructivist worldview presents a compelling framework for studying the CFSP due to its emphasis on understanding the diverse and contextually-shaped perspectives of EU member states and institutions. By acknowledging the subjective and socially constructed nature of meaning-making, constructivism aligns well with the inherent complexity of foreign policy. Member states' interpretations of the CFSP are inevitably influenced by their unique historical experiences, cultural norms, and ongoing interactions within the EU framework.[10] A constructivist approach encourages researchers to consider these contextual factors, seeking a nuanced understanding of the motivations and interpretations that drive contestation. Open-ended inquiry and a focus on participants' voices empower researchers to capture the richness and multiplicity of perspectives within the CFSP landscape. Furthermore, the constructivist recognition of the researcher's own interpretive lens fosters transparency and reflexivity, enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings. Finally, the ability of constructivism to generate theories is invaluable as my aim is to offer a new theory explaining contestation of CFSP.

[10] Initially, I approached EU foreign policymaking from a rationalist perspective. However, through in-depth interviews with CFSP decision-makers, I became increasingly aware of the crucial role played by historical experiences and the concept of appropriateness within the CFSP framework. This experience highlights the importance of researcher reflexivity and the value of direct participant engagement for gaining a nuanced understanding of complex phenomena.

At the same time, postpositivism's core limitations in studying complex social phenomena like the CFSP stem from its reductionist tendencies, which can oversimplify intricate dynamics and overlook the influence of subjective, context-dependent factors. Additionally, its emphasis on objectivity can be challenging to achieve when analyzing human behavior and decision-making, where interpretations are inherently shaped by individual and group perspectives. While the transformative worldview, the third major research worldview philosophy (Creswell & Creswell, 2017, pp. 46–47), offers a valuable lens for addressing social justice, its application to CFSP research faces challenges. Its focus on marginalized groups and specific social justice issues may not fully align with the primary actors and power dynamics within the CFSP. Additionally, findings from such research might have limited generalizability to the broader context of EU foreign policymaking, and integrating transformative principles with existing CFSP research paradigms could pose compatibility issues.

The next step in research design is choosing a research approach which specifies the steps, methods, and desired outcomes of research. Researchers use a *deductive* approach when taking an established theory and subject it to rigorous testing to (dis)prove it. In contrast, researchers use an *inductive* approach when they collect and analyze data to build a new (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 117). In coherence with the constructivist worldview and qualitative research, as well as my desire to generate a completely novel understanding on CFSP contestation, I will primarily utilize an inductive approach. I find it advantageous for studying the CFSP due to its ability to capture the complexity, subjective meanings, and contextual nuances inherent in this policy area. This is especially important since I am trying to understand the connection between two phenomena which have not been linked before – Europeanisation and contestation. By starting with data collection and analysis, an inductive approach facilitates the exploration of diverse perspectives and the emergence of new or refined theories. Additionally, it encourages researcher reflexivity, enhancing the trustworthiness and depth of the research findings.

This study will mainly be a qualitative one focusing on textual data as is usual in the field of Political Science. Qualitative research designs offer distinct advantages for in-depth exploration of human experiences and the contexts that shape them. By prioritizing participants' voices, perspectives, and lived experiences, qualitative methods provide rich insights into the nuances of meaning-making and social phenomena. The flexibility of qualitative designs allows researchers

to tailor data collection methods (e.g., interviews, observations) to the specific research question and context. Additionally, qualitative research's inductive nature fosters the discovery and development of theories grounded in the data, making it particularly valuable for exploring new or understudied areas (Creswell & Creswell, 2017, pp. 50–51). Qualitative research is particularly well-suited for studying the CFSP due to its ability to capture the subjective meanings, contextual nuances, and complexities inherent in this policy domain. Through in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives, interpretations, and the influence of historical, political, and social factors, qualitative methods provide rich insights into the dynamics shaping CFSP decision-making and contestations.

Qualitative research, while offering valuable insights, faces limitations that necessitate careful consideration. Research quality heavily depends on the researcher's skills and awareness of potential biases, making transparency and reflexivity crucial. Maintaining rigor can be challenging, requiring systematic data analysis and interpretation to ensure trustworthiness. Additionally, the volume of data makes analysis time-consuming, and the researcher's presence during data gathering can influence participants' responses. Issues of anonymity and confidentiality can present challenges when presenting findings, and the nature of qualitative data can make visual representation more complex. Finally, findings from qualitative studies may have limited generalizability due to their context-specific nature. Despite potential criticisms, well-executed qualitative research adheres to principles of validity, reliability, and credibility through rigorous data analysis and transparent reporting (Anderson, 2010).

To address the inherent limitations of qualitative research, I have implemented several strategies to enhance the rigor and trustworthiness of my study. Recognizing the potential for researcher bias, I actively engaged in reflexivity throughout the research process. Prior to starting interviews, I created an interview guide (see Appendix A) to ensure consistency and focus. I also prepared an introductory statement to provide participants with context and build rapport. To strengthen the credibility of my interview findings, I employed triangulation by incorporating multiple data sources, including relevant policy documents, official reports, and scholarly articles. Additionally, I utilized thematic analysis to systematically code and categorize the interview transcripts, ensuring a rigorous and transparent data analysis process. The use of Zotero software facilitated the organization and management of interview notes. Finally, I maintained a detailed audit trail

documenting the interview process, data transcription, and coding procedures, thereby promoting transparency and enabling external scrutiny of my research methods.

3.2. RESEARCH METHODS

Within the stated qualitative research design, my research will more specifically conduct a case study inquiry concentrating on member state cooperation in CFSP following Russia's 2022 aggression on Ukraine. Case studies as a research method do extremely well in providing in-depth understanding of complex phenomena within their specific contexts. As an empirical method, case studies are fitting for ("why") research questions that study a contemporary phenomenon which boundaries and are not clearly defined (or definable). They are especially appropriate in situations with numerous variables and limited data points, necessitating theoretical guidance and data triangulation from multiple sources to ensure robust analysis (Yin, 2017, pp. 12–13). Case studies are generally valuable in political science because they can provide evidence for causal claims inaccessible through statistical or formal methods (Crasnow, 2012).

I find that case study as a method is the best choice for my research as it will allow me to examine the complex interplay of factors influencing contestation within the CFSP. By delving into the specific context of post-2022 aggression and drawing on diverse evidence, I can gain a nuanced understanding of why contestation is increasing despite the historical trend of Europeanisation. By focusing on a bounded case, I can meticulously examine the interplay of social, historical, and cultural factors. Case studies are especially well-suited for exploratory studies, which is fitting since I acknowledge that my research is starting as an explorative study (looking into the connection between Europeanisation and contestation). Next, the use of multiple data sources, such as interviews, observations, and documents, strengthens the credibility of findings. Case studies offer a holistic perspective, capturing the interconnectedness of real-world phenomena (Yin, 2017, pp. 12–13). Additionally, they contribute to theory development (George & Bennett, 2005) and refinement while also holding practical relevance for informing policy and interventions.

Focusing on CFSP cooperation following the 2022 Russian aggression my thesis is advantageous due to its real-time relevance and the ongoing impact on EU foreign policy dynamics. The evolving nature of the crisis exposed fault lines and tensions within the CFSP, producing a variety of

instances of contestation thereby providing rich opportunity to analyze contestation and test existing, as well as generate new theories. While a more conventional and practical approach might involve focusing on a single CFSP policy domain, this research adopts a broader lens, treating the entirety of CFSP cooperation following the 2022 aggression as its case study. This decision stems from the recognition of CFSP as a crisis-driven policy area. Global events rapidly reshape the security landscape, propelling new issues to the forefront and necessitating adaptive policy responses. By examining cooperation across diverse policy domains, this study aims to achieve a holistic understanding, facilitating the identification of patterns, trends, and emerging dynamics within member state interactions. Accessing a wide range of data sources and perspectives will provide richer insights and a more nuanced, contextualized analysis. Ultimately, this broader approach holds greater potential to form a comprehensive understanding of CFSP's evolution and member state dynamics in the face of a major security crisis.

Therefore, this research will utilize a *Type 2* or an *embedded single-case* design (Yin, 2017, p. 54), treating CFSP cooperation following 2022 as one phenomenon or case to be studied and CFSP policies towards different international events as subunits of that case. Embedded single-case designs are advantageous as they mitigate the potential problems of holistic approaches to case studies: abstractness, lack of operationalization, and unintended shifts in focus. However, when conducting such a study, one needs to be careful not to focus only on the subunit level and failing to generate insights on the original case level (Yin, 2017, pp. 56–58). In the context of my thesis, this approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the overall dynamics of CFSP cooperation while also examining how these dynamics manifest within different policy areas. To mitigate the common pitfall of confusing the research's focus between the case and the subunit, I will always maintain in mind and stress that the case I am studying is CFSP cooperation, not individual CFSP policies.

As will be seen soon, the case study design will be used to systematize the research into CFSP cooperation after 2022. This is a *longitudinal case* where the same case is studied throughout points in time. Longitudinal case studies are most often used when the research aims to understand how conditions and underlying processes evolve over time, particularly when the theory guiding the study anticipates changes occurring at specific intervals or stages. (Yin, 2017, p. 56). The timeframe of this study is from February 2022 (the day of Russia's aggression) until July 2024

(last interview conducted). In terms of case selection, the importance of studying CFSP cooperation and its contestation is academically relevant since the core research puzzle reveals a gap in the current understanding of the phenomena, also it is politically relevant because the understanding how internal divisions impact the EU's response to external threats has major policy implications. In terms of subunit selection, the policies discussed with decision-makers were the most salient international events in the period from 2022: the Russian aggression on Ukraine, the war between Israel and Palestine, and others. Those policies were prompted in the interview questions, however, the participants themselves mentioned policies they deemed relevant for the research. Finally, as the findings of the case study research will be used for developing a new theory on CFSP contestation, it is important to make sure they are generalizable. There are some principles to adhere to. First it is important to clearly define the scope of the theory by specifying the types of CFSP policies, contexts, actors, or time periods to which the findings apply. Second, to test the generalizations across additional CFSP cases within the defined scope to validate and refine them. Third, to utilize typological theorizing to identify subtypes of contestation and the specific conditions under which different causal paths or mechanisms operate. Fourth, to conduct a comparative analysis, assessing how the findings complement, contradict, or refine existing theories on CFSP and European integration. Finally, employing "most-likely" and "least-likely" cases to subject the theory to rigorous testing and identify potential boundary conditions (George & Bennett, 2005, pp. 115–134).

Keeping the value of case study design and the principles above in mind, we also must recognize that case studies are not a standalone methodology for establishing causal explanations. To maximize their value in political science, it is necessary to integrate them with existing causal theories or framework. Process tracing is a crucial tool that can be employed to meticulously examine decision-making processes or chains of events, seeking to uncover causal mechanisms (Crasnow, 2012). Process tracing is a method used in single-case studies to examine causal mechanisms. It involves carefully tracing the chain of events within a case to understand how an outcome arose. Researchers use process tracing to test theories, build new theories, or provide detailed explanations for specific historical events (Beach & Pedersen, 2019). My research strategy is therefore employing theory-building process-tracing (Beach & Pedersen, 2019, pp. 154–156) on the selected case study findings to detect conditions which bring about EU member states

contesting CFSP. Here process tracing provides a structural analysis of empirical findings to detect a plausible hypothetical causal mechanism (Beach & Pedersen, 2019, p. 154).

Chronologically, the research will begin with a critical examination of the existing research done in the on contestation in CFSP and other international institutions to find evidence pertaining to the potential causality between the Europeanisation of CFSP and its contestation. The outcome of this exercise will be in form of propositions on the Europeanisation-contestation connection and will serve as the basis for the interview questions in the empirical research part of my thesis. The interviews will be conducted with decision-makers in CFSP and their findings will be presented by using thematic analysis which will allow for identifying patterns and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Next, the findings will be analyzed by comparing it to existing research and, by using process-tracing, a new theoretical model connecting Europeanisation and contestation will be developed.

3.3. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The main data collection method of this thesis will be interviews with decision makers in CFSP. Interviewing stands as a powerful data collection method in social sciences due to its ability to access the depth and richness of human experiences. By engaging in conversations with individuals, researchers can consider their "lived experiences" and explore the meanings they ascribe to their actions and surroundings. Through the process of reflection and articulation inherent in interviews, participants provide valuable insights into their thought processes and how they interpret the world around them. In essence, interviewing acknowledges and respects human agency, recognizing language as a fundamental tool for understanding human behavior and the construction of meaning within social contexts (Seidman, 2019, pp. 7–13). In the context of CFSP, as a policy area which is generally secluded to the public as public records of the process are limited, interviewing is a valuable method due to its ability to access the perspectives and insights of key actors involved in its formulation and implementation. Through interviews with policymakers, diplomats, and other stakeholders, I can gain a nuanced understanding of the motivations, decision-making processes, and challenges encountered within CFSP cooperation.

As mentioned, the propositions on the connection between Europeanisation and contestation produced in the critical examination of existing research served as the basic for the interview

questions. The interview questions were meticulously crafted to align with the study's focus on understanding the perspectives of actors involved in shaping the CFSP. To assess the validity of the assumed process connecting Europeanisation and contestation, the questions first aimed to (1) determine whether participants perceive these processes as real and significant within the CFSP context. Recognizing that perception is a prerequisite for influence, this step was crucial. Subsequently, the questions sought to (2) explore whether and how these processes influence the behavior of the participants or other states involved in CFSP. To ground the analysis in concrete instances, the interview protocol consistently included prompts to (3) elicit specific examples of situations where participants observed the effects of these processes. By requesting illustrative examples, the study aimed to capture the nuances of contestation or other dynamics arising from the identified processes within the CFSP framework. The interview guide used in this research is included in Appendix I of this thesis.

The interviews were semi-structured due to the format’s inherent flexibility and ability to capture the depth and richness of human experiences. This approach provides a framework to guide the conversation towards research-relevant topics while granting interviewees the freedom to articulate their perspectives and experiences in their own words. By encouraging participants to provide descriptions and narratives, semi-structured interviews prioritize their lived experiences, aligning with the study's aim to understand how individuals perceive and construct meaning within their specific contexts. Moreover, the dialogical nature of semi-structured interviews fosters knowledge co-creation, with the interviewer actively engaging in the conversation through prompts, clarifications, and potential interpretations. This collaborative process enriches the data and contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Leavy, 2020, pp. 435–440).

Gaining access to elite interviewees presented a significant challenge due to their limited time and potential reluctance to disclose information, particularly among high-ranking diplomats. My primary approach to securing interviews involved email outreach, either directly to individuals or through their offices in Permanent Representations (PermReps). I began by targeting members of the Political and Security Committee (PSC), given its central role in my research. After the initial email, two follow-up requests were sent at weekly intervals. Non-respondents were then excluded from further contact attempts. Having exhausted the PSC Ambassadors, I extended my outreach

to their Deputies, followed by members of the COEST working group. Finally, to broaden the participant pool and address a research gap, I contacted staff working in national ministries of foreign affairs, recognizing their significant role in CFSP processes.

While research underscores the advantages of face-to-face interviews for richer responses, greater spontaneity, balanced interaction, and effective exploration of complex or sensitive topics (Leavy, 2020, p. 442), logistical constraints arising from my location in Zagreb necessitated a mixed-method approach. In May 2024, I conducted seven in-person interviews during a week-long field research trip to Brussels. The remaining interviews were primarily conducted via videoconference, with one via email and one via phone call. Notably, the videoconference interviews yielded results largely comparable to the in-person format. This aligns with the increasing prevalence and familiarity of video technology in the daily work of CFSP actors, a trend likely accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The execution of the interviews was conducted according to methodological guidelines in form of creating an interview guide document that structured the flow of the interview. The interview guide starts the interview with a transparent introduction to myself, my PhD project and the context in which the interview is carried out. Next, the format and general rules of the interview (length, conditions, confidentiality) were explained to the participants, after which they were asked for their consent to starting the interview. While conducting the interview, I tried to follow best practices in terms of actively listening to the participant's words, inner voice, and nonverbal cues, taking notes to aid concentration and formulate follow-up questions (Seidman, 2019, pp. 85–100). Using open-ended questions to explore the participant's experiences without leading them and asking for concrete situations in which the stated manifested itself. This was also important for future corroboration and triangulation of findings. Finally, when necessary, I sought clarification without hesitation, and avoided reinforcing their responses to maintain a natural flow (Seidman, 2019, pp. 85–100).

A total of 20 interviews were conducted between March and July 2024, encompassing 21 participants. This sample represents 18 EU member states, constituting 66.67% of the total membership. To ensure institutional representativeness, participants were drawn from multiple levels within the CFSP framework, including PSC Ambassadors or Deputy Ambassadors (8), COEST or Nicolaidis delegates (6), and Ministries of Foreign Affairs staff (6). This resulted in an

institutionally representative sample which covers two different levels in the CFSP institutional framework and two sides in the national process of coordinating CFSP positions. The inclusion of ministry staff, often underrepresented in CFSP research, enhances the representativeness of the sample by capturing perspectives from both national coordination processes and higher-level CFSP institutions.

3.4. METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS

While I am confident that my study will be of value, like all research projects, it has its methodological limitations. In the following part of the chapter, I will list the trade-offs I had to make, why they were justified in the given context, how I tried to minimize the impact of the limitations and why my project has value despite them.

The first boundary in need of mentioning is a usual constraint of PhD projects: a limited budget which narrowed the scope of the project in terms of all resources that can be dedicated to it. All expenses for additional education, materials and potential field trips will be paid from my personal funds and the University's funds for PhD students as well as external funding such as COST Action ENTER and RENPET. It is however important to mention that these factors limited how big the study can be. The size and hence representativeness of my interview sample was heavily conditioned to me getting access to participants which was challenging. Although I have mitigated this by expanding the research to include actors in other institutions in the CFSP framework (and hence even strengthened my research), I have not been able to reach participants from all EU member states. While including all member states is not necessary, I regret not being able to include the perspective of Hungary, a member state that has been very prominent in the use of contestation practices and which perspective would be very illuminating to my understanding of CFSP contestation.

Furthermore, as in any qualitative research study relying on interviews I had to take into account ethical considerations, including informed consent, data security, and confidentiality. This required meticulous attention to ensure the protection of participants and the integrity of the data. Next, throughout carrying out my research, the inherent subjectivity in interpreting qualitative data posed a risk of bias, necessitating a reflexive approach and careful consideration of alternative interpretations throughout the analysis process. Additionally, the reliance on elite interviews and

specific cases examined through process tracing raised concerns about generalizability. While the findings offer rich insights into the selected cases, they may not be directly transferable to all EU member states or other contexts, requiring caution in extrapolating conclusions.

Then, by taking a step back to look at the scope of the project, one additional limitation of the study becomes apparent: the fact that I only look at CFSP and am not considering all the other fields of EU external action – most notably trade policy. Some authors have argued that external economic relations and policies are the essence of EU foreign policy (M. Smith, 1998). To mitigate the limitation of solely focusing on CFSP, I have: acknowledged the limitation and justified the research focus on CFSP based on its specific objectives. Where possible, I have integrated comparative references to trade policy or other external action areas, drawing on existing literature to explore potential intersections or tensions. Lastly, I will suggest future research directions that explicitly examine the interplay between CFSP and other external action areas, demonstrating an awareness of the broader context and a commitment to future comprehensive understanding.

Finally, I must state a primarily theoretical limitation which has great consequences on my whole study: the fact that the main theoretical concepts used in this study are far from universally defined. Namely, there are tens of different definitions and notions of Europeanisation, Politicization and Contestation. Using only one of them could lead to my work being easily criticized by authors who do not subscribe to this definition. Therefore, I have deconstructed the main definitions of those concepts and, from the elements they share, reconstruct new definitions which functionally can be more agreeable to a wider set of theoretical branches.

To sum up, although my research design has some limitations, I have tried to mitigate their impact to the best of my abilities. Ultimately, I am confident that the research project, when finished, will be of significant value since it will be the first cross-case systematic study of CFSP contestation and the first one which will, following an in-depth audit of conditions that bring about contestation explore how the process of Europeanisation influences those conditions.

4. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present the data collected during the empirical research conducted for this thesis. The aim of the research was to examine whether there is a link between integration, Europeanisation and contestation of CFSP. The research consisted of 20 interviews with 21 participants, carried out between March and July 2024. The analysed group constitutes a representative sample of actors involved in conducting the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP): PSC Ambassadors, Deputy PSC Ambassadors, COEST working party delegates, EU correspondents in Ministries of Foreign Affairs, as well as EU staff. Most of the interviews were conducted online, with approximately a third carried out in person in Brussels during a field-research trip in May 2024. The questions for the semi-structured interviews were determined based on propositions linking Europeanisation and contestation of CFSP, derived from a critical analysis of existing research in the field (conducted in the previous chapter).

The data collected in these interviews provide valuable and otherwise unobservable insights into the current state of cooperation in CFSP. Given the nature of the data and the research questions, Thematic Analysis (TA) was chosen as the most suitable method for analysing the data as it is an accessible and flexible approach that enables the identification and examination of key themes and patterns within the data. This method therefore provides systematic approach to gaining a nuanced understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In the following sections, the collected data will be presented using TA, grouped into sections without any interpretation or conclusion by the author. Whenever possible, the findings will be connected to cases and independent sources as to corroborate and expand the interview findings. The implications of these findings will be discussed in the next chapter of the thesis.

4.1. THE PRESSURE TO COOPERATE IN CFSP

International crises raise the importance of CFSP for member states

Recent international crises, such as the Russian aggression on Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the changing relations with and dynamics between the US and China[11], have revealed have necessitated a unified European approach in foreign policy matters (I-8, I-10, I-13, I-19, I-20).

[11] This geopolitical situation has been described as a polycrisis (I-10, I-15).

These increasing geopolitical complexities and challenges have that the importance of the external dimension of EU politics and CFSP is growing for member states as the shift from a unipolar to a multipolar world order further emphasizes the need for unity among EU member states to avoid being manipulated by larger powers (I-7, I-13, I-16). Member states acknowledge that the geopolitical influence of actors in international relations now matters more than ideas or economic influence, echoing a return of realpolitik (I-15). Influencing global events is now recognized to be beyond the capabilities of any single member state (I-14, I-19). Consequently, member states are experiencing an increased 'pressure' (I-13, I-15, I-18, I-20) to cooperate in EU foreign policy making and to be more flexible in holding onto national positions (I-15) and drawing red lines (I-13). Simply put, member states find that all mechanisms to solve current crisis are found in cooperation (I-16).

The growing importance of CFSP for member states is visible in an overall greater engagement of member states in CFSP matters (I-6, I-7, I-9). On an operational level, this is primarily evident from the significantly more prominent role of COREPER II, the institution that brings together the top diplomats of member states, in CFSP (I-8, I-9). Also, the increase of interactions (e.g. meetings) and working parties also displays the growth of attention to CFSP (I-18). CFSP is increasingly becoming not only a platform for sharing information between states (I-18), but also developing their own foreign policy positions (I-17). Furthermore, the rising frequency with which member states are asked about the EU's stance by third states in international platforms like the UN, underscores not only the EU's relevance on the global stage, but also elevates its importance to member states (I-11). The European aspect of foreign policy has thereby become a new quality of their foreign policy (I-11) and a key part of the bilateral agenda for member states (I-18). Part of the reason also lies in the fact that the EU has access to settings, such as the G7, where individual (especially smaller) member states do not (I-11). Member states recognize that by offering smart proposals, they can greatly shape the outcome of EU foreign policy (I-11), which carries more influence in the international arena than their individual policies. This is especially true for small and medium sized member states (I-13, I-19).

As a result, most participants note a change in EU’s status in global politics, observing that the EU is no longer solely a soft-power (I-1, I-2) leveraging mostly only its economic strength (I-4). It is now a regulatory power (I-1) which is increasingly becoming distinctive in security matters (I-1,

I-3), but also expanding its power in terms of trade (I-11). It now possesses key assets needed for international engagement (I-13) and is far more proactive (I-3, I-4). Coupled with its enlargement, this shift has greatly expanded EU's role (I-4, I-9) and has made it a more assertive (I-7), established actor (I-11), and a strong international player (I-2). One participant even described the EU as a "heavy weight player" (I-11). All the while, the EU is staying true to its core values (I-2, I-16) and democratic principles while responding to international crises, thereby serving as a role model for others (I-4, I-16). These are significant developments, given the specific nature of EU's decision-making process and democratic composition which takes more time (I-13) and effort (I-2, I-4) to act compared to unitary, especially autocratic, countries (I-16). Nevertheless, participants almost universally agree that the EU's status and influence in international relations is growing as is evident in EU's response to the Russian aggression on Ukraine (I-1, I-3, I-12), but also the COVID-19 pandemic (I-9, I-10).

Although the value of cooperation and unity in EU foreign policy is increasingly recognized, member states still primarily focus on achieving their individual foreign policy objectives (I-13, I-17, I-20). CFSP is predominantly viewed as a valuable and beneficial channel, yet it is merely one among many others for achieving national goals (I-18, I-20). Generally, states acknowledge CFSP serves as an arena where they attempt to persuade others of their positions. Even though they occasionally allow a contrary position to become the EU stance, they seldom alter their own policy preferences (I-17, I-20). The CFSP proves exceptionally useful in geographical areas where member states have fewer bilateral relations or topics of lesser political importance. In such cases, states typically act through the EU/CFSP (I-17). Conversely, when dealing with countries with which a member state has intense bilateral relations, member states often prefer to use bilateral relations over the CFSP (I-7, I-10, I-17, I-20). This preference also extends to institutions like NATO, which boasts a longer tradition and more developed assets in terms of defence and security. Many member states prefer to conduct these areas through NATO rather than the CFSP/CSDP, emphasizing that these two channels should remain compatible (I-7), not duplicate each other (1-19). For larger member states, the significance of the CFSP as a stream for conducting foreign policy further diminishes. These countries have access to, and sometimes prioritize forums like the G7 over the CFSP for their foreign policy agenda (I-13, I-14). In the G7, for instance, they find themselves amongst other powerful, like-minded states, making it easier to reach an agreement (I-

13). In essence, they find the G7 more effective for achieving foreign policy objectives than the CFSP.

The history of the EU's response to Russian aggression in Ukraine serves as an illustrative case study for these dynamics. The invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 profoundly shocked most EU member states (I-8, I-10, I-11, I-12), leading to an overnight change in the threat landscape and elevating defence on the EU's political agenda (I-2, I-10, I-19) as it seemed to pose an almost existential threat (I-12, I-14). Consequently, it dramatically increased the pressure for collective action. The result was a swift unification of states in condemning and responding to the aggression (I-1, I-11, I-14), with the speed and decisiveness of the response surprising even the member states themselves (I-12, I-15). Finding unity did not necessitate a lot of arguing between states as some (mostly Eastern) member states have long warned others of the Russian threat, but were not heard (I-8, I-9, I-14). When the invasion started, their voice was the only one that remained (I-11) and became a common position.

The EU was successful not only in decisively condemning the aggression, but also enact a unprecedentedly comprehensive sanctions regime on Russia, as well as being able to provide major military support to another country via an instrument (I-12). Consequently, CFSP proved to be a clear added value for member states (I-13), deeply changing the European mindset, as evidenced by Denmark's abolition of its CSDP opt-out via referendum (I-10). These dynamics have greatly accelerated changes in EU foreign policy cooperation (I-7), marked by a significant increase in activity and progress (I-3, I-10). Operationally, the PSC agenda has never been so crisis-oriented (I-12), and there has been greater involvement from COREPER II and the European Council than ever before (I-5, I-8), while technical discussions at working group levels have been cut down (I-4). This signals that the highest level of the EU is actively dealing with foreign and security policy.

Conversely, as salience on Russia is dropping, the EU's response is also slowing down (I-5, I-12). As one participant noted: with time the pressure changes and it becomes difficult to maintain unity and not to get stuck (I-5, I-12). This is when different perspectives on how to execute the unanimously agreed broad approach toward Russia came to the forefront (I-14, I-15, I-16, I-19). Those perspectives include the bilateral relations between member states and Russia (I-2, I-4) or notions on the further development of defence and security policies inside the EU (in relations to

NATO) (I-4, I-20). Now we see a return of long and complicated discussions in working parties (I-5), which is slowing down the decision-making process in the Council (I-2).

When comparing the dynamics of CFSP in response to Russian aggression in Ukraine and the Israel – Hamas war of 2023, certain patterns emerge in EU foreign policy making. It is evident that in the case of Russia, there was far more unity among member states compared to the Palestine issue (I-6, I-7, I-8, I-10, I-13). The first reason for this was the difference in proximity – with Ukraine, it was easier for member states to comprehend the threat (I-12) and react. Additionally, the blatant situation of Russia invading another European country was simpler to grasp. The situation in Palestine was more complicated, making it harder for member states to converge (I-15). While both cases are nominally marked by historical disputes, the situation in Palestine is far more complex and member states have historically developed very different and divisive positions on the matter (I-14, I-15, I-17). In such circumstances, finding unity is challenging; no matter the argument presented, minds are unlikely to change (I-11). Hence, the unity found among member states in 2022 following Russia's invasion of Ukraine did not translate into 2023 during the conflict in Palestine. The EU was unable to move beyond the last agreed-upon language on the region dating back to 2016 (I-18). However, it is not accurate to say that the unified response to Russia had absolutely no influence on other topics. Even though it did not automatically lead to agreement among member states on responses to all future crises, it has become somewhat surprising for member states to fail to find an agreement on Palestine after acting so decisively towards Russia. This shift in perspective has impacted not only the wider public but also the thinking in the capitals (I-15). It prompts member states to consider whether they could now again do more (I-12).

The influence of Eastern member states was (mainly) not caused by their rise in economic power

The Russia case provides significant insights into the internal dynamics between (groups of) member states within CFSP. While Eastern member states have indeed grown economically stronger (I-2, I-6, I-14), this is not the sole or most crucial factor contributing to their increased influence in CFSP. Historically, Eastern and Baltic member states have been vocal about the threat posed by Russia, arguing that the larger Western member states, and consequently, the EU's approach, were too lenient (I-11, I-14). Despite an increase in their economic power, these Eastern states could not directly translate this into influence within the EU due to the continued dominance

of established member states in CFSP, who hold a majority of positions within institutions (I-8, I-10) and wield considerable economic and nuclear power (I-9).

The situation proved frustrating for Eastern states, given their extensive experience with and knowledge of Russia's modus operandi, and the existential threat they faced due to their geographical proximity (I-4, I-5, I-8, I-14). This suggests that the perspective and interests of Eastern member states was partly ignored in crafting EU's response to Russia. However, there is no direct evidence suggesting that they viewed the Western member states' lead in CFSP as purely illegitimate, but rather deeply misguided. Following Russia's invasion, Eastern states were vindicated, and their proposed approach became the EU's position (I-9, I-11). Bigger member states even conceded that Eastern states were right, but had not been sufficiently heard, and pledged to rectify this (I-14). Consequently, Eastern states have since gained more influence in CFSP, evidenced by the 2024 appointment of former Estonian prime minister Kaja Kallas as the new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (I-13). Additionally, given the focus on Russia and the East, a vast amount of attention has been shifted towards the region (away from Africa for instance), further amplifying the influence of Eastern member states (I-2, I-13).

The case underscores that the influence of Eastern member states is not solely dependent on their economic power, but rather hinges on their accuracy in predicting Russia's actions, the adherence of others to the logic of appropriateness (having a perception of what is right), and the shared recognition of the importance of European unity in foreign policy (I-9, I-14, I-19). Hence, following the Russian invasion, established member states did not resist (but rather proactively started) granting Eastern member states and their perspective more influence (I-14, I-20). While Eastern member states may sometimes appear to provide constant opposition (I-2), they are generally not perceived as spoilers. The establishment of the EPC was not a case of counter-institutionalisation, as its purpose was not to circumvent CFSP, but to also recruit third states to join sanctions on Russia, which did not occur in 2014, rendering them less effective (I-2, I-3, I-4, I-6, I-9, I-10, I-11).

Established member states are advocating for the extension of QMV to CFSP, viewing it as a means speed up decision-making and respond more swiftly to international crises (I-13, I-17). This proposal has largely been rejected by smaller and emerging member states, who argue that QMV

would undermine their position (I-16, I-18). Instead, they propose that states with specific sensitivities on agenda items should utilise the flexibilities already provided in the Treaties, such as constructive abstention, whereby a member state can choose to abstain rather than veto a collective action (I-18). The use of these mechanisms is encouraged by other states, including those that are part of the 'Group of Friends' that promotes the extension of QMV to CFSP (I-17). The encouragement to utilize Treaty flexibilities can therefore be seen as common ground between established and emerging member states in a situation where the pressure to cooperate in CFSP to respond to global events.

4.2. THE CFSP DILEMMA

Doing more means facing a dilemma between bilateralism and CFSP more often than before

Member states agree that the EU is doing far more in foreign policy than before. This essentially means that the output of CFSP is growing (I-1, I-2, I-3, I-6, I-9) as the EU is becoming more assertive and member states feel they need to do more to tackle the issues at hand (I-2, I-3, I-4, I-7). The result of this increase of (pro)activity is more work for everybody involved: member states and EU staff (I-2, I-3, I-6, I-10). There are a lot more items on the agenda (I-6) and many more meetings (I-15). With the increase in topics, it's now easier to lose track of what has been agreed upon (I-4). The deadlines are getting much shorter (I-6, I-15). Working in this environment has also become emotionally more challenging (I-8). This means that everybody needs more resources than before (I-3), and that it has become much harder to coordinate your activities within the structure of your country (I-6).

In the last decade, the European Council has become more involved in CFSP (I-15), especially on big issues. Following the Russian invasion, it seemed that everything was coming from the European Council (I-5). Formally, the European Council does not discuss details but makes big strategic decisions and then tasks FAC and PSC to fill out the details. At times it seems that many things are already agreed upon on the higher level, institutions such as Coreper II only agrees formally (I-8). Immediately after February 2024, there was a lot less discussion on lower levels

such as COEST[12] (I-5). In those situations, the process runs much faster and very smoothly. However, when the issue at hand becomes less salient, the whole process slows down again and issues that seem agreed upon get stuck at the technical level (I-6). This is then a return to normal: since CFSP discussions start and most of the decisions are made (or get stuck) at the working group level to be passed on to PSC and finally to Coreper II for rubber stamping. Therefore, it is key to understand the dynamics of the policy cycle.

In this set-up, the capitals represent "the brain" (I-1) of member states. They have a much wider outlook on things as they do not only engage in foreign policy through CFSP, but also UN, NATO, G7 and other channels (I-1, I-10). The Permanent Representations (or PermReps) are something like "tentacles" (I-1) for capitals to get a feeling what other member states thinking on an issue. While the PermReps have a considerable influence on the attitudes and positions that capitals ultimately take (I-1, I-7, I-10, I-14), the Ministries of Foreign Affairs are mostly the actor that gives out instructions to PermReps on how to engage in CFSP (I-1, I-6, I-13, I-17, I-18, I-19, I-20). Within state ministries, there are various setups, with most having a CFSP or EU department tasked with coordinating instructions to PermReps (I-17, I-18, I-20). Also, each ministry has a European correspondent, the counter-parts of the PSC ambassadors in the capitals, who is member of COREU communication network that facilitates information sharing and decision-making. Depending on the topic, PermReps are also in direct contact with thematic experts and departments in MFAs (I-6, I-17, I-20).

The coordination process usually starts even before items come to the agenda, as it is most important to influence things before they are formally presented (I-13) or at the lowest possible level (I-16). The first step usually involves PermReps informing capitals about what will be on the agenda in the next period and what positions other states are likely to take. When the item does come up on the agenda there are internal coordination meetings between ministries and PermReps to define positions, as well as networking events between diplomats in Brussels to find allies. Internal meeting can be small and informal, but they can also be formal and include members of PMs cabinet. Finally, depending on the situation, capitals give either more or less specific instructions to PermReps. If a topic is controversial, the instructions are more specific. Then

[12] COEST is focusing on technical and expert level discussions. That's why discussions in COEST are usually long and complicated and difficult to reach an agreement on (I-5).

delegates in EU bodies try arguing that position to their counterparts, informing capitals on the results (I-7, I-14, I-17, I-18, I-20). If the state ends up isolated in its position, it tries to find arguments to shift the debate and, as a last resort, considers if it needs to be flexible to its approach (I-13).

The process doesn't always run smoothly, and the increased frequency of coordination consumes significant time and resources. While capitals are now more aware of how CFSP works (I-5), their understanding of the process in Brussels is still limited, as are their resources (I-6). PermReps often have to spend time explaining to the capital what they have done (I-14). This is especially true in smaller member states (I-6). This results in capitals often lacking internal coordination (I-7), leading to delays in issuing instructions or failing to issue them at all (I-6). Sometimes it seems that PermReps and capitals have altogether different foreign policies (I-6) as PermReps at times feel that capitals are short-sighted and narrow-minded, lacking the European reflex to coordinate positions (I-13). The priorities are also different; since capitals have a larger scope, issues that seem pressing for PermReps aren't perceived as urgent for capitals (I-10). Those findings shouldn't suggest that there is a dramatic tension between PermReps and Ministries, rather they should just illustrate how the increase of CFSP activity strains actors involved.

Procedurally, the EEAS is very influential because it now chairs important institutions like the PSC, sets the agenda, and writes all documents and texts (I-5, I-6, I-13). Some acknowledge that this has ensured consistency by tracking processes and issues (I-4, I-19), while others point out that the EEAS is not as driven and motivated to accomplish things as member states were when they chaired during their Presidency, resulting in slower progress (I-5, I-7). The quality of chairing heavily depends on the person (I-6). The proposals from the EEAS (and Commission) are becoming less neutral, often pushing their position in them (I-5, I-20). Even though the EEAS is generally doing a good job of rounding up support (I-7), member states claim that their proposals are often not sufficiently consulted with them, leading to slight frustration among member states as it is much harder to work against a text presented to them beforehand (I-5, I-6, I-13, I-17). The EEAS is also operating under a principle where, if there is no agreed-upon position on a topic, it will use the last agreed-upon position (since it cannot make decisions on its own). Sometimes this (old) position is perceived by member states as even worse than the proposed position they have rejected. In such cases, they may rather agree to the new proposal but include a national statement

expressing their actual disagreement with it. This was the case in the EU-Ukraine Association Council conclusions in March 2024 (I-5).

Then, the European Commission, despite not having a formal role in CFSP, has also become more influential, significantly increasing its ambition and drive in CFSP (I-9, I-11, I-13). The power of the Commission stems from its current President's strong focus on foreign policy and her alignment with key partners such as the USA and within the G7 (I-9). The President is generally more desired for bilateral participation by third states, as they understand that she manages the EU budget (I-11). The Commission primarily exerts this influence by using its right of initiative. However, these proposals are not always sufficiently consulted with member states (I-13, I-17). An example was the 'migration management' deal with Lebanon singed in May 2024 (I-17). Consultations take time but are necessary as they help gauge whether proposals will have adequate support. By skipping consultations, the Commission saves time and make progress. This can sometimes be seen as positive (I-11, I-13, I-17). However, the Commission sometimes overestimates the support their proposals have among member states (I-17). Moreover, the Commission occasionally pushes proposals even when it knows they lack full support (I-7). This makes member states defensive (I-13) and elicits irritated reactions (I-17).

The result of the increased importance of and attention given to CFSP, as well as an increased participation of EU institutions, is that there are many more items on the agenda (I-3, I-6). As discussed above, the deliberation of issues in CFSP has positive effects for member states, as well as fostering the development of routine and improvement of cooperation (I-9). Yet, more items and proposals on the agenda mean that there is a greater chance one or more states will have a reason to oppose it (I-3). There are generally always 2 to 3 member states that have issues with any proposal (I-2). The states that raise issues are not always the same; which ones do depends on the issue at hand (I-3, I-4, I-6, I-7). This is understandable, since having 27 member states in the EU means that there are many different opinions and perspectives on any issue (I-10). In other words, with the proliferation of issues on the agenda and perspectives discussing it, there is a greater chance that a member state will have sensitivities about that issue (I-3, I-4, I-7, I-18). This is when that state comes into a dilemma between its own national preferences and allowing for the EU to act in unity (I-12, I-14, I-15, I-16, I-17). These situations are the definition of how the EU works (I-14) and are the reason why member states meet in the Council (I-12). Although member

states are not necessarily constantly in a state of tension between the EU and the national (I-16), this is generally the case in situations when most states support a CFSP proposal which touches upon a national sensitivity (I-15).

During my research, this particular situation—where member states are weighing between upholding their individual national sensitivities and recognizing the importance of the EU acting as a foreign policy actor—emerged as exceptionally relevant. Consequently, many of the interviews were dedicated to understanding how national sensitivities in foreign policy arise and how member states respond when faced with this dilemma. The findings from these inquiries will be presented in the subsequent sections of this chapter. In the reminder of the text the terms "positions", "preferences", "sensitivities" and "red lines" will be used interchangeably, as I (and presumably the participants of this study who have used all those terms) feel that a single does not comprehensively encompass the meaning of a member states core foreign policy positions that they do not want to compromise on in CFSP, even though I acknowledge that the literature in negotiation theory clearly distinguishes between "positions" and "preferences".

4.3. NATIONAL RESISTANCE TO CFSP

National sensitivities are rooted in national history, geopolitics, domestic politics, economic costs and foreign influence

When inquiring about the sources of member states' positions in CFSP, one is consistently directed towards what one participant referred to as their "DNA" (I-14). This political foundation of a state's foreign policy positions is primarily rooted in its political history (I-3, I-7, I-8, I-10). Political history explains why Germany, for instance, is very sensitive about portraying military strength (I-14) and is very sympathetic to Israel (I-13), while Ireland shows strong compassion towards Palestine and France is eager to project military strength (I-14). Some countries have even codified aspects of their political history into their constitution. For instance, Austria's constitution mandates that it must maintain military neutrality. This is then directly reflected in their positions and behaviour in CFSP-making (I-3, I-19).

The importance and position that member states assign to a third country are also heavily tied to their geography and geopolitical situation (I-10). For instance, Poland and the Baltic states are

very cautious about Russia, while this issue is not as salient for Spain (I-7). Geography and history often cannot be viewed separately, as evidenced by the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina always being of great importance to Croatia (I-3). The interplay of these two factors generally constitutes a state's long-term political DNA, an extension of which includes member states' relationships with others: from conflicts (I-18), cultural ties (I-8) to political coalitions (I-7, I-8, I-10). For instance, the bilateral dispute between Greece and North Macedonia has clashed with the EU's geopolitical interests in enlargement and ultimately blocked the process (I-18). On the other end, a significant number of member states consider NATO as their primary security provider and were for decades very hesitant in advancing EU defence capabilities (I-4, I-7, I-8, I-19).

While this is by no means a fully exhaustive list of factors that influence a member state's core set of foreign policy positions and priorities that they act upon in CFSP, it is illustrative of the permanence of some policy preferences. Political history has for centuries developed a state's position and it is understandable that, as mentioned before, most of the time states do not change their own policy preferences as a result of CFSP discussions (I-17, I-20). However, extreme situations like the Russian occupation of Ukraine have the potential to prompt member states to change their long-lasting foreign policy positions: as states that have long considered NATO their sole security provider don't do so anymore (I-8) or Denmark reverting its CSDP opt-out (I-9). The fact that in the latter case the decision was made via public referendum, underscores the significant role that domestic policy and public preference play in shaping foreign policy. This highlights the necessity to explore further how these internal dynamics influence member states' positions in CFSP, as they can lead to substantial shifts in policy direction.

On this topic, the results were quite mixed. One group of participants noted that they feel that the visibility of CFSP in the domestic arena is generally low (I-1, I-3, I-4, I-8) and that the work of diplomats in EU institutions is not really influenced by the public as they work in a secluded environment and are not politicians or elected officials (I-2). Some admit that after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, in some states the salience of CFSP has increased but still maintained that the outcome of elections generally doesn't shift countries policy preferences (I-4). Also, in the responses from this group, the influence of domestic politics can indirectly be found in cases where the EU has been used as "the bad guy" to whom they can blame everything on and member states publicly criticizing and complaining, but not blocking CFSP (I-3).

On the opposite end of the spectrum, a second group of participants stresses the importance of domestic politics for CFSP (I-6, I-10, I-11, I-13, I-14, I-17, I-18, I-19). The influence is marked by the permanent election cycle inside the Union, where at any given time some member state is facing an election (I-6, I-7, I-10, I-11, I-18). Politicians are then always evaluating what issue or approach can win them domestic elections (I-11, I-17). This is why, on very salient issues in EU foreign policy, we can witness a shift in positions before (I-6, I-9) or after elections (I-10), which then changes a member state's behaviour on all levels in CFSP (I-6). Generally, the willingness of states to advance CFSP is lower before an election since there is always a significant part of the electorate that is traditional about sovereignty in foreign policy (I-11). The case of the Russian aggression is descriptive of this trend since it was by far the most salient topic in domestic politics, which some candidates took advantage of to win over votes – promoting an alternative approach to Russia – however, mostly not changing member state's positions after the elections were over. The lack of substantive change in positions towards Russia following the elections in Italy and Slovakia serve as good examples of this trend (I-4, I-9). This is not to say that the governing parties do not influence a state's behaviour in CFSP. Eurosceptic options in power are problematic for EUFP cooperation (I-3, I-16).

Apart from (upcoming) elections, the influence of domestic politics on positions in CFSP can also be examined by considering member states' positions towards sanctions on Russia. Sanctions have often been described as the most difficult aspect of EU's policy towards Russia (I-2, I-3, I-4, I-6, I-9, I-10, I-13, I-17). The main reason lies behind the economic costs that such comprehensive sanctions inflict to member states (I-2, I-3, I-4, I-9, I-12, I-13, I-17). The bigger the existing trade relationship with Russia, the greater the cost that hit a country (I-4, I-12, I-13). Not only do those costs hurt the general population to which politicians need to appeal to win elections, they also hurt the state's industry and business sector (I-12). Those actors have strong lobbying capabilities, influencing the final position a state will take on sanction design. As private companies they can still sell goods to 3rd countries and perhaps don't have the motive to worry if those goods will end up in Russia (I-9). Most of the sanction's circumvention comes from 3rd countries (I-8, I-10). Legally it's hard for states to stop this behaviour, even though there is a sincere effort to close these loopholes (I-7, I-9, I-10).

At the European level, the sanctions present a significant workload. Initially, sanctions were generally easier to agree upon when they only targeted individual persons (I-3, I-4, I-8). However, even then there were numerous challenges to the ECJ and demands from member states for the removal of some individuals from the list (I-2). Over time, the sanctions became more comprehensive and complex (I-6). Both practically and legally, their enactment was very difficult (I-9, I-10). Once they were agreed upon, some member states demanded that they should be put up for renewal every six months (I-2). The motivation for doing this is not clear (I-6), while some assume that it was done to keep the issue on the agenda (I-2). Generally, support for sanctions diminishes over time as they don't seem to hurt Russia enough. If a sanction can hurt Russia, then the pressure to agree on them grows – leading to greater pressure for member states to yield their individual sensitivities (I-9). On the flip side, member states can elaborate their opposition to (certain aspects of) sanctions to Russia by claiming that they will not significantly hurt Russia, as is the case for Belgium's opposition to EU sanctioning the trade of Russian diamonds (I-17).

As mentioned, a common and long-lasting sensitivity for member states is the question on developing EU's defence and military capabilities (I-17). Despite this, security and defence are now heavily in focus (I-4, I-11) and now making up almost half of the workload in PSC (I-1). Although the focus on defence came as a response to the geopolitical shock of Russian aggression on Ukraine and has boosted engagement (I-3, I-4), it has also been very controversial (I-3, I-8). Namely, raising the topic reveals again the differences between countries, as some still regard NATO as the primary security provider (I-4), others are constitutionally neutral (I-8, I-12) and others do not have the means to contribute resources (I-4). Building up EU defence capabilities is also divisive because it is tied to industrial interests of some member states who have a defence industry (I-12). For instance, France's push for the European Peace Facility (EPF) to exclusively purchase European, essentially French, arms highlight the dilemmas in defence cooperation (I-18). However, it is a fact that a lot of taboos have been broken and things move forward very fast, sometimes at the expense of inclusivity in decision-making (I-11).

Inside member states, defence items on the agenda make it more difficult to coordinate a position. The process necessitates the involvement of various ministries, each with their own culture and goals, is required, further complicating the process. This includes the Ministry of Defence for defence-related topics and the Ministry of Economy for defence industry topics, reflecting the

interplay between defence, economic considerations, and the internal market (I-20). However, now it seems that there is a broad agreement between member states on defence issues and each country demonstrates commitments contributes according to their means (I-12). For instance, neutral states provide civilian, not military support (I-3, I-9, I-12, I-20); small countries do not provide troops but can focus on providing diplomatic support (I-12).

Finally, there is the possibility of external influences on member states' sensitivities. While some respondents suggest that there are "Trojan horses" (I-10) inside the EU, consisting of states still dependent on Russia (I-16), most stress that the external influence is not targeting state leaders but the wider population. This is done through the spread of misinformation (I-5, I-7, I-16). The aim of this activity is to radicalize and polarize (I-16). The EU and member states are aware of the problem and are actively working on developing capabilities to tackle it (I-10, I-16). In terms of direct influence on member states' positions in CFSP, the most influential actor is not Russia (using a Trojan horse strategy), but rather the USA. Its influence is not necessarily destructive but helps to facilitate an agreement between member states that is synchronized with the major powers in the G7 (I-13). Overall, the evidence of member states' positions in CFSP being directly a product of third powers pursuing a "Trojan horse" strategy inside the EU is very scarce, at least according to the participants of this study.

States first try to find a common language and influence each other within or outside CFSP

When member states find themselves in a situation where a proposed CFSP text contradicts their fundamental positions, they have several options to manage this predicament. The most common approach is to voice their concerns or "break silence" (I-2, I-3, I-6, I-8, I-10). In other words, a state informs others that the text is unacceptable to them, implying that they will block it if no changes are made. Breaking silence is seen as a standard and legitimate course of action in CFSP. Generally, all states are then open to finding a compromise (I-3, I-9, I-14, I-17). New modes of communication have made the process of breaking silence relatively informal; news can spread instantly via messaging apps (I-1, I-10), followed by rounds of internal and transnational discussions. This can occur at any stage of the policy process and at all institutional levels within the CFSP. Sometimes, the same text can be approved at a lower level but become problematic at a higher level, and vice versa (I-6, I-11).

The solution often lies in neutralizing the language if the nature of the concern can be accommodated with a simple change of language (I-10, I-11). However, this is not always possible (I-12). In such cases, other methods are used. For instance, in the case of sanctions on Hamas and Israeli violent settlers, a method of 'spacing in time' was utilized. The agreement stipulated that the Hamas sanctions would be announced publicly first, followed by the announcement of the other sanctions two weeks later, even though the decision was made on the same day. This allowed ministers to communicate to the public or parliaments that they had first sanctioned Hamas and then consented to the sanctions on violent settlers (I-17). If these measures are insufficient, states can request the addition of clauses that allow them to exclude themselves from the sensitive part of the policy. For example, on neutral states' insistence, a clause was added to EPF that allows their contributions to go only towards non-lethal equipment for Ukraine (I-3, I-9, I-12, I-19, I-20).

The success of a member state in convincing others to accommodate its concern largely depends on its argumentation for that sensitivity (I-14, I-17, I-20). While arguing your position often does not change the positions of other states, failing to elaborate upon your rationale for breaking silence is perceived as unconstructive. This then makes finding suitable language for the text to be modified and move forward almost impossible (I-8). Other states can be influenced by another breaking silence, as they can side with that state (I-6, I-8). This is not only true for smaller states who are more reluctant to make the first move in voicing opposition, but also large states who let smaller states break silence and then monitor others' reactions (I-2). Interestingly, respondents note that it is now more frequent for bigger states to be alone on an issue than before (I-7).

If the arguments a state gives are not strong enough to convince others, or no arguments are given at all, a state can resort to a transactional strategy (I-11, I-14). Transactional strategies can occur in countless forums and contexts (I-15), but they primarily manifest in two ways: during negotiations on a specific issue, which is a standard part of the negotiating process, or between negotiations, where concessions on one issue are made in exchange for gains on another (I-14). Sometimes, compromises are made where something is given up to gain something else in return. The prevalence and intensity of transactional behaviour have significantly increased over the past decade. Hungary, in particular, has been frequently engaging in such behaviour to an extent that seems to disregard any boundaries (I-6, I-11). Others often have to accept that this is the cost of achieving things, for instance, regarding sanctions on Russia, or take inspiration as they see that

those leaders experience no consequences in the EU while achieving domestic gains (I-11). However, the real costs of transactional behaviour are often not publicly visible and can be perceived as a form of blackmail, as was the case with Orbán's walk-off during the vote on Ukraine's EU accession (I-13).

In the process of influencing decision-making within CFSP, member states can take actions outside of it in hopes that these will influence other states and shift the dynamics within CFSP. Firstly, when there is a deadlock within CFSP, states can take individual foreign policy actions such as recognizing a country. This occurred with Germany's unilateral recognition of Croatia in 1991, and more recently when Ireland, Spain, and Slovenia recognized Palestine as a state (I-13, I-17). This move was heavily consulted within CFSP, with the clear aim of influencing other member states to take action. However, since the number of countries that stepped forward was so small (I-17) and perspectives on the topic are historically diverse (I-13), the move did not nudge the EU towards a unified response but rather highlighted its divisions and complicated matters further (I-17). Secondly, EU states can collaborate in other international arenas to advance issues in the hope that other EU states will follow suit. This is often done by larger member states or even by the European Commission who raise issues in forums like the G7, which then ultimately influences thinking within the EU (I-9, I-13, I-14, I-17).

While the legitimacy of transactional strategies, unilateral action or regime shifting in CFSP is subject to interpretation, there is a growing and concerning trend of leaks being used as a strategy to influence CFSP. An unprecedented number of these leaks to the media are negatively affecting relationships between states and eroding trust within the EU, often with little to no repercussions (I-11). These leaks, which now appear to be systematic, can occur at any level and can be directed towards either the press or a third state (I-14). The decision-making process in CFSP, encompassing both top-down and bottom-up systems, occasionally sees issues deliberately escalated to COREPER II, where they gain more political visibility and are more susceptible to leaks. This potential risk often discourages open discussion in COREPER II and postpones the introduction of complex issues such as sanctions or enlargement on the agenda until a firm position is established (I-14). States resort to using leaks and similar illegitimate methods of influencing EU policymaking when they believe they can still shape the final form of CFSP policy without

blocking it. If they find they cannot, they resort to a different set of behaviours, which will be laid out in the following section.

4.4. CONTESTATION AS A WAY OUT

If there is no agreement, states look for a way out

Once states find that they cannot significantly alter the content of a policy, they naturally have the option to block the entire policy. However, this is sometimes not in the state's interest as they recognize the value of the EU's response to international events. The next option for states is to accept the policy without actively taking ownership of it (I-6, I-7, I-11, I-12). This lack of ownership can manifest itself in ways such as not supplying soldiers for missions (I-7, I-12), or simply not actively promoting the policy (I-6, I-11). This option is suitable if the CFSP policy is not too closely tied to the state's field of interest (I-6). However, such cases are very rare as sensitivities mostly occur in areas that are of great importance to states. In these instances, states may feel the need to not only refrain from taking ownership of such policies, but also to actively distance themselves from them at least on a symbolic level (I-18).

The simplest way for a member state to distance itself from a CFSP policy is by not participating in the decision-making process. Member states can distance themselves from a policy by not joining the discussion in the first place, even though they completely lose the chance to influence the direction of the policy (I-18). While this remains an exception, there have been multiple instances where only 26 out of the 27 member states have been involved in reaching a decision or making a statement (I-12, I-17, I-18). A notable example is Orbán’s walkout during the vote on Ukraine’s path to EU accession, leaving the remaining 26 member states to proceed (I-3, I-4, I-9, I-13, I-14). The EU Treaties allow for such flexibility, stating that unanimity does not require the participation of all states in the vote (Council of the European Union, 2024). This use of flexibility is generally not perceived negatively (I-17). In fact, many (mostly smaller) member states appreciate this approach as a preferable solution to enhancing decision-making in CFSP than the introduction of QMV (I-16, I-18). Currently, there are internal discussions about formalizing a procedure that would allow the HR/VP to make a statement without requiring consensus from all 27 member states (I-18).

Another instrument that states use to distance themselves without blocking decisions are national statements (I-5, I-9, I-12, I-13, I-14, I-15, I-17, I-18). A national statement is a separate declaration made by a member state on a CFSP text that has passed procedure, most commonly used in COREPER II (I-9, I-15, I-18). This tool allows a member state to express its individual position or reservations about a particular CFSP text, decision, or policy (I-5, I-12, I-14). It provides a tool for a member state to formally record its views without blocking a decision agreed upon by the majority of member states. Although national statements are procedural interventions that hold no legal weight (I-5, I-12, I-18), they are invaluable as they create room for compromise by allowing states to express their positions (I-14). Simply put, it offers a "way out" (I-18), a exit strategy for states with sensitivities. It's not agreement, but it's also not obstruction (I-9), and it's entirely legitimate (I-14).

Without the option of issuing a national statement, states would likely block proposals outright. However, as international events encourage member states to adopt a more flexible approach in foreign policy cooperation, they often resort to this tool – what would have previously resulted in a blocked proposal is now expressed through a national statement (I-15, I-18). While national statements are not legally binding, they do have a legal dimension. Member states use them to clarify their legal interpretation of certain aspects of the CFSP text to ensure there is no contradiction with their national constitution (I-13). This can theoretically alter what has been agreed upon. For instance, Poland used national statements to clarify that while they agreed with the text preventing and combating violence against women, it's important to note that in the Polish constitution, sex is equated with gender (I-18). States can use national statements for internal purposes (I-18) and can reference them in future CFSP decision-making (I-15, I-18). However, national statements are not a panacea as they are often not made public and cannot be used to appease the wider domestic population (I-13, I-17).

For this reason, political leaders of member states sometimes choose to publicly criticize CFSP policies that they did not block (I-4, I-12, I-13, I-17, I-18). These situations are often announced while decisions are being made: a member state agrees to a decision but announces that their minister or prime minister will criticize the same decision the next day (I-13, I-17, I-18). This is done if domestic affairs are the source of a state's sensitivity or if state leaders sense that this will provide them with an advantage in upcoming elections (I-4, I-11, I-17). The criticism is announced

in CFSP institutions, but actors within them mostly don't criticize the decisions themselves (I-12) because they are not politicians (I-2) and do not stand to gain much from domestic affairs. After his walkout from the decision on Ukraine's membership, Orbán extensively criticized the decision in public. This was not surprising, as he had criticized the idea of Ukrainian EU membership even before the meeting (I-14). The combination of leaving the decision process and then criticizing the decision was presumably chosen to performatively appease domestic constituencies (I-3, I-4, I-18).

However, while very similar, it is important not to confuse Orbán's walkout with using a constructive abstention (I-9, I-14, I-18). A constructive abstention is a formalized mechanism in CFSP by which a member state can make a formal declaration that it will abstain from participating in a particular decision, following which it will not be obliged to apply it (Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe, 2004, Article 31 (2)). The difference with Orbán's walkout lies in the fact that European Council meetings do not have a formalized decision-making scheme like the Council, so there was no abstention registered nor was there a formal declaration by Hungary declaring its constructive abstention. However, on other occasions, Hungary and other states use constructive abstention to keep CFSP moving forward while maintaining their positions and avoiding having to implement EU decisions (I-3, I-10, I-11, I-16, I-18). Most often, it is used by neutral states (I-4, I-19) and, compared to national statements, for decisions of greater importance (I-14).

Even if it is followed by public criticism of EU policy, using constructive abstention is regarded as legitimate (I-14, I-18). Furthermore, it is even encouraged both by established states, who see it as a way to prevent CFSP from hitting deadlocks (I-17), and also by smaller states, who view it as a preferable option to introducing QMV (I-16, I-18). National statements and constructive abstentions, as well as "passarelle" clauses, are useful for states, but often they are not sufficient because they do not prevent a CFSP decision from being made and all other member states from abiding by it (I-13). If the costs of such a scenario are too high, member states still block CFSP decisions. However, there are cases where member states do not block CFSP, but instead pursue individual foreign policies that run counter to it (I-4, I-9, I-14, I-20). This is also seen as a way to resolve the dilemma between pressure for the EU to act and maintaining one's individual interests (I-14) in terms of economic, political, or cultural ties to a third country (I-8). These situations can

sometimes be very confusing for other member states, but they generally consider such instances as quite illegitimate behaviour (I-3, I-4, I-9, I-20).

However, even though frustration with these cases has increased (I-2), member states can only publicly criticize those countries in return (I-3, I-4) or partially isolate them (I-6). However, this possibility is also limited since unanimity is required - this forces restraint in criticisms (I-4, I-8) and those isolated countries can then be perceived as alternatives by others (I-3). Being overly diplomatic sometimes comes at a cost - strong positions might be compromised (I-8) and spoilers can take advantage of the lack of real pushback to their behaviour (I-20). However, member states are generally quite content with the development of things as CFSP is clearly progressing and delivering more than before (I-10, I-11, I-13). Perhaps because of this, among the participants of these interviews, there was no real urgency about the need to introduce sanctions for member states that do criticize CFSP or pursue individual foreign policies that run counter to it.

One further reason for the apparent lack of distress over internal contestation could lie in the fact that the EU and its member states have developed strategies to mitigate the potentially constraining effects of internal contestation on CFSP (Alcaro & Dijkstra, 2024). By employing techniques such as delegation of tasks to EU institutions (e.g., the EEAS, Commission, and HRVP) and functional compartmentalization of issues, member states have demonstrated an ability to navigate disagreements and maintain a degree of policy coherence. In the cases of Kosovo-Serbia (Bargués et al., 2024), Venezuela (Ayuso et al., 2024), and Iran (Alcaro, 2024), the EU prioritized specific, achievable goals (e.g., visa liberalization, humanitarian aid, nuclear negotiations) while sidelining more contentious aspects. This pragmatic approach, while not always leading to comprehensive conflict resolution, has enabled the EU to maintain a presence and exert influence in complex geopolitical situations. This suggests that internal contestation, while still a factor to consider, may not be the insurmountable obstacle it is often perceived to be (Alcaro & Dijkstra, 2024) while still allowing individual member states to safely find ways out the dilemma between the pressure for European foreign policy cooperation and their individual sensitivities.

Conclusion

This thesis's empirical findings are derived from a series of semi-structured interviews with important decision-makers in the CFSP structure: from member states' delegates and EU staff in Brussels to MFA experts in capitals. The importance of a unified European approach to foreign

policy has risen because of international crises like Russia's aggression against Ukraine. However, the proximity and perception of the threat determines the level of pressure to act. The extent of response to those crises has expanded EU's capabilities and it is no longer purely a soft power in international relations. While this has elevated the importance of CFSP for member states, still focus on achieving their individual foreign policy objectives, often preferring bilateral relations or other forums like NATO for certain areas of foreign policy.

When looking at internal relations between states in CFSP, the research indicates that the rise in influence of Eastern member states within CFSP is not primarily due to their economic power. Their increased influence can be attributed to their accuracy in predicting Russia's actions and the subsequent moral high ground they have held. Furthermore, as the EU engages more actively in foreign policy, member states are not only strained in terms of resources, but also experiencing tensions between their national sensitivities and the need for EU unity in foreign policy decisions as they are faced with a dilemma between bilateralism and CFSP.

Member states' national sensitivities are deeply rooted in factors such as national history, geopolitics, domestic politics, economic costs, and foreign influence. They play a significant role in shaping a member state's core set of foreign policy positions that they act upon in CFSP. When faced with national sensitivities, states first attempt to find common ground and influence each other within or outside CFSP. However, when these efforts do not yield the desired results, states resort to various strategies to manage their difficulty without blocking CFSP.

In situations where member states have national sensitivities but do not want to block CFSP, they often resort to distancing themselves from the policy, issuing national statements, using constructive abstention or leading individual foreign policies that may run counter CFSP. These strategies allow member states to maintain their national interests without blocking EU decisions. However, these actions can strain relations within the EU and potentially compromise strong positions. Despite these challenges, there is general satisfaction with the progress of CFSP among member states. In the following discussion chapter, these empirical findings will be used to develop a new theory explaining the contestation of CFSP. This theory will provide a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between national interests and collective action within the context of CFSP.

5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The empirical findings of this thesis, presented in the previous chapter, were derived from semi-structured interviews with key policy-makers within the CFSP structure. These findings offer valuable insights into the complex dynamics of EU foreign policy, particularly in the context of escalating international crises that propel the progress of EU foreign policymaking. While member states experience pressure to cooperate at the European level, they remain heavily influenced by their individual priorities and sensitivities, which are rooted in their political histories and domestic politics. In formulating CFSP policies, member states employ various tactics to influence its shape through activities within or outside the EU. However, when these efforts fail to sufficiently influence the policy proposal, member states face a dilemma: allow an unfavourable position or block it. If they choose not to block, they often distance themselves from the policy by abstaining from the decision-making process, issuing national statements, or using constructive abstention as a formalized method of expressing dissent without obstructing policy implementation. In more extreme cases, states may pursue individual foreign policies that run counter to the CFSP. Although these behaviours vary in legitimacy, they are acknowledged as necessary for the progression of CFSP and the EU as an international actor.

While presenting the empirical findings was insightful, it is also necessary to discuss them to consider their nuances, uncover patterns and relationships that may not be immediately apparent, and facilitate the validation or challenge of existing theories, thereby contributing to the broader academic discourse. This discussion will illuminate the complexities of EU foreign policymaking, offering a more robust and nuanced understanding of the interplay between national interests and collective action within the CFSP framework. Specifically, it will explore why states choose to contest CFSP, shedding light on the motivations and strategies behind their decisions, and how this contestation fits within the broader context of European foreign policy cooperation. Importantly, this contestation is not merely a coercive phenomenon but has a constructive dimension. Considering all of this, it becomes possible to develop a new theory of CFSP contestation, expanding academic understanding of the process and providing insights for practitioners to formulate effective and inclusive policies in the future. This exactly is the purpose of this Discussion chapter of my thesis.

This chapter will begin by discussing the results related to the global influences on and internal dynamics of CFSP, aiming to understand the factors influencing member states' considerations on CFSP positions. Following this, we will explore the decisions that member states make when confronted with a CFSP proposal that, while widely accepted and addressing a pressing event or issue, is unfavourable to them. In both instances, the results will be compared to existing research and interpreted by applying process-tracing as a method and Sociological Institutionalism (SI) as the main theoretical lens of this thesis. Finally, I will develop a new theory featuring a condition-based mechanism that predicts whether member states will choose to contest rather than block a policy, as well as the type of contestation they will employ.

5.1. PROCESS TRACING

The pressure to cooperate in European foreign policy is rising due to international crises

The first major result of the research was that major international crises, the Russian aggression on Ukraine particularly, have had a major influence on member states to realize the need for a unified and more proactive stance in foreign policy (I-1, I-2, I-3, I-7, I-8, I-10, I-13, I-19, I-20). This is not surprising given that the history of the development of a European foreign policy was driven by international events, mostly crises (M. E. Smith, 2004), such as the end of the Cold War (Peterson & Sjursen, 1998), the break-up of Yugoslavia, and the Kosovo crisis (M. E. Smith, 2001). Various iterations of European cooperation in foreign policy such as the EPC were created exactly “to prevent international problems from disrupting the Community and, to a lesser extent, to make sure a common European voice was heard in international affairs” (M. E. Smith, 2004, p. 4). These global shifts and crises impact not only the institutionalization, but also the direction of EU’s foreign policy (Youngs, 2010). From a theoretical perspective, sociological institutionalism also acknowledges that institutions evolve trough external events, however stresses that those events have to first be interpreted by actors in institutions who then chose the next course of action based on what they deem appropriate (Saurugger, 2017, p. 9).

The empirics confirmed that the external trigger in form of Russian aggression was interpreted as a sign that the EU should sharply react to this act with all the tools it has available (I-1, I-3, I-8, I-9, I-12), even changing minds of states that have long been reluctant to confront Russia (I-11, I-

14). Furthermore, the event pushed member states to agree to further build up its foreign policy and security capabilities (I-1, I-4, I-9, I-11, I-19). This was even true for states that until the aggression were dismissing any involvement in defence cooperation such as neutral states (I-3, I-9, I-12, I-20) or Denmark who has overturned it opt-out (I-9, I-10). These results are in line with existing research showing that the Russian aggression and EU's comprehensive reaction to it was an epiphany moment facilitating the emergence of a "collective European responsibility to act" (Maurer et al., 2023). In other words, the aggression triggered an increase in pressure on member states to use and advance CFSP (I-13, I-15, I-18, I-20).

The potential for events to trigger such an increase in pressure depends on the nature of the event and its perception of member states. Existing research has also established that the more diffuse and urgent a crisis, the more likely member states will act trough to the EU framework (Pusterla, 2017). The blatancy and proximity of Russian attack on Ukraine left little room for member states to ignore or misinterpret the event, even considering their different political histories and relationships with Russia (I-4, I-5, I-8, I-12, I-14, I-15). A sufficient amount of pressure to cooperate in foreign policy matters makes states more flexible in their positions in CFSP (I-13, I-15). In other words, the stress-sensitivity, i.e. their sensitivity to the outer world (Petersen, 1998, p. 38), of the whole group has risen. By contrast, the war in Palestine is neither close nor straightforward (I-6, I-7, I-8, I-10, I-13, I-14, I-15, I-17), therefore not being able to raise sufficient pressure. However, even the Russian case's ability to increase pressure to cooperate is limited, as with time the (perception of) salience of the aggression drops, so does the pressure and the possibility to act in unity (I-5, I-12, I-14, I-15, I-16, I-19). Then again, states' flexibility to cooperate decreases.

Triggers that increase pressure to cooperate do not have to be (only) external, they can be endogenous (M. E. Smith, 2004, pp. 34–35). The institutionalization of CFSP has enabled member states to influence each other (Sweet et al., 2001), meaning that their (inter)actions can also be triggers that increase pressure to act in unity. The widespread agreement on the importance of EU foreign policy has then further risen the pressure to cooperate among states. While there is a notion that the biggest member states are solely steering the direction of EU foreign policy (Hofmann & Mérand, 2020), following the Russian aggression the influence of smaller (mostly Eastern and Baltic) member states in CFSP has risen as they have been proven right on the danger which Russia

presented (I-2, I-9, I-11, I-13, I-14). In other words, the influence capability (Petersen, 1998, p. 38), i.e. their ability to shape and affect the decisions and outcomes within CFSP, of the Eastern member states has risen. They have then used this influence, granted to them by others because it was thought to be right (I-14), to further promote the importance of a unified EU response towards Russia (I-2, I-13, I-14).

Furthermore, the momentum triggered by the Russian invasion was also seized by EU institutions to increase their activity in driving the agenda of CFSP. This is true for the HV/VP (I-8, I-13, I-18), the EEAS (I-5, I-6, I-13), as well as the Commission (I-9, I-11, I-13). Their proactivity is pushing member states to do more in CFSP (I-4, I-7, I-11, I-13, I-17, I-19), thereby endogenously increasing pressure to cooperate. However, member states identify EU institutions as biased (I-5, I-8, I-20) and different from themselves in ways of working and perception (I-5, I-7), which is consistent with existing research (Aggestam & Johansson, 2017; Juncos & Pomorska, 2023). Additionally, in exerting pressure to cooperate in CFSP, EU institutions do not sufficiently include the perspectives of member states (I-5, I-6, I-7, I-13, I-17) which irritates them (I-13, I-17). While their practices do drive things forward, they sometimes cause member states to contest in form of national statements (I-5).

The cases above displays both the predominance of the logic of appropriateness in gaining influence in CFSP, as well as feedback loops in pressure that can be triggered by external events. International crises can empower internal actors to additionally push for cooperation. Their long-term success is determined by their perceptions as appropriate policy drivers: Eastern member states certainly have gained that status while EU institutions did perhaps not. The result is irritation and concrete cases of contestation which could lower the pressure to cooperate. However, those are not the only notable internal factors as negative internal practices that break trust between member states such as employing transactional strategies or using leaks can also lower the pressure among member states to cooperate (I-11, I-14, I-15). This demonstrates that legitimacy of both actors and methods by which actors use to exert influence can enhance or lower the pressure for member states to act in unity.

Member states can also try to influence each other outside the EU. Large member states can do so by cooperating in other arenas such as G7 to (coupled with the influence of other actors in G7) exert influence on other member states to come closer to a position in CFSP (I-11, I-13, I-14). In

other words, they engage in regime shifting (Zürn, 2018, p. 173). Regime shifting is a common form of contestation happening during the policy formulation phase in CFSP (Biedenkopf et al., 2021, p. 333). It is considered contestation not because it goes against a CFSP policy since it does not exist yet, but it is contestation because it undermines CFSP as the primary polity for member states' foreign policy coordination. Smaller member states, which do not have access to arenas such as G7, can execute individual foreign policy activities that perhaps do not directly run against existing CFSP, but certainly break the mold of the impasse in CFSP. For example, Ireland's, Spain's, and Slovenia's recognition of Palestine as a state (I-13, I-17). Those cases are often not successful because the influence of single smaller states is not enough to raise the pressure to push all other states towards one position. Rather, the difference between them is even more exposed (I-17). While they display that member states believe in the power of ideas and gathering consensus behind those ideas in CFSP (Tonra, 2003, p. 750), their lack of success points to the limits of triggering mimesis (Saurugger, 2017, pp. 6–7) as an outcome in individual foreign policy actions.

Finally, a source of pressure can be located completely inside member states. Namely, the importance of CFSP as an institution and a channel for achieving member states' foreign policy goals has risen for most (I-5, I-7, I-9, I-11, I-15, I-17, I-18, I-19). This does not mean that the member states have completely Europeanised themselves from within. They still primarily think about how to achieve their individual political goals (I-18, I-20) and perceive the CFSP as a very relevant institution to respond to the current threats. This is consistent with Zürn's (2018, p. 250) notion of "reflexive authority". However, when engaging in CFSP, states need to play by its normative rules, which corresponds to the basic assumption of actor-centred constructivism that actors' interests are socially constructed and that norms can be strategically deployed (Saurugger, 2017, pp. 9–10). This becomes especially important in the following sections of this chapter when considering the ways in which states resolve situations in which they are under extensive institutional pressure to cooperate, but also feel resistance because the cooperation is threatening their individual positions.

Even though it is often neglected in foreign policy analysis, it is important to take into account that states are not unitary actors (Gvosdev et al., 2019) when it comes to adherence to perceived roles (Cantir & Kaarbo, 2016). The results of my research suggest that within member states, actors vary on the level of their obedience to CFSP norms and rules, as PermRep staff is at least far more

mindful of the formal and informal ways of conduct in CFSP than capitals (I-6, I-7, I-10, I-13, I-14) which is also obvious in their restraint to pushback against spoilers (I-4, I-8). This finding is also consistent with existing research describing how national delegations are far more Europeanized than their counterparts in capitals (Chelotti, 2016, p. 135) and would mean that national delegations could be another source of pressure for capitals to prioritize cooperation to individual national preferences.

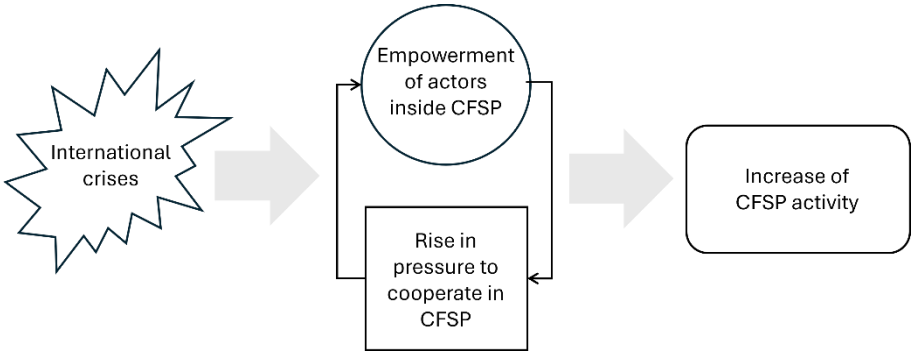

Figure 7: Rise of pressure to cooperate in CFSP

The sources of national resistance to cooperation are foremostly identitarian

The research of this thesis that states positions in CFSP are mostly sourced in their historical political experiences (I-3, I-7, I-8, I-10, I-14). This is consistent with past research that highlights the importance of history, path-dependency, identity, ideas, roles and culture for member states positions in CFSP (Aggestam, 2018; Allen, 1997; Cantir & Kaarbo, 2016; Hadfield, 2006; Hill, 1997; Risse, 2012; Tonra, 2003). Since foreign policy is widely still considered a special, sovereign domain for states; the resonance of history and identity is greater in CFSP compared to other domain of cooperation in the EU. These factors are important for big, but also small states (Wivel, 2005) and are manifesting themselves even on lower levels of the Council decision-making structure (Juncos & Pomorska, 2023). This displays that relations between member states are a product of mutually understandable historical memories (Hofmann & Mérand, 2020). States prioritise their national interests and sovereignty even when it meant that they risked EU not contain external threats (Lamoso-González, 2024).

Generally, it is hard not to understate the importance of European history on the interactions between states (Webster & Roberts-Pedersen, 2018). Since identities (and hence positions) are deeply entrenched, it is understandable that states rarely change them substantially in deliberation

(I-17, I-20). Member states remain loyal to their national identities and preferences, radical changes of which happen only in few exceptions and were most often caused by major international events (Hadfield et al., 2017, p. 11). These changes in turn also carry the potential for increased resistance of member states. Namely, following and as a response to the Russian aggression, CFSP's focus was heavily expanded towards defence and security matters (I-1, I-4, I-11). On an operational level, this entails the involvement of ministries of defence (that are far less Europeanised in their culture and goals) in formulating states' positions (I-20). This can prove to be a new source of resistance to cooperation in latter phases. These results go along with the basic understanding in SI of rationality being socially constructed, as states derive their positions and course of action in CFSP from their past experiences that determine their current role. Therefore, it is for them mostly not easy to distinguish between what is profitable and what is appropriate or right. Only in extreme cases, for example when the existence of a state is perceived to be threatened as in the case of Russian aggression, does consequentialism (the value of survival) overrule identity as the main driver of CFSP action as evident in the sharp redirection of some member states policies towards Russia and building up EU security capabilities. However, this can also plant the seeds for future member states' resistance to CFSP.

Apart from political history and the (inter)national identity that is derived from it, a member state's current CFSP position can be influenced by dynamics in the domestic arena. For this, the research has produced at times conflicting evidence. Some participants generally feel that their work is not influenced by the public arena since they are not elected politicians and the population is not aware of (especially EU) foreign policy making (I-1, I-2, I-3, I-4, I-8). On the other hand, others state the fact that national government are all elected with the EU experiencing a permanent election cycle with EU foreign policy (especially in times of great international crises) becoming a salient topic that can be used for winning elections (I-6, I-10, I-11, I-13, I-14, I-17, I-18, I-19). Ultimately, however, it is not certain if the rhetoric used in election campaigns will translate to change in CFSP positions (I-4, I-6, I-9, I-10).

In these findings, we see actors being influenced by institutionalization at varying degree, depending on their position in the structure. The EU response towards Russia has become very salient, therefore inside member states leaders need to accommodate the electorate's increased scrutiny of their conduct in CFSP. This is reminiscent on the concept of "reflexive

Europeanisation" (Chryssogelos, 2019) which can turn politicians into strategically resist EU approaches in foreign policy to influence their ratings. Non-elected diplomats, on the other hand, experience less public pressure and do not think they actions are guided by domestic politics. However, since diplomats mostly enforce instructions given by capitals, that is elected leaders (I-1, I-6, I-13, I-17, I-18, I-19, I-20), in an indirect way they are indeed influenced by domestic affairs. This is consistent with recent research showing that populist parties coming to power have de-Europeanised member states involvement in CFSP (Dyduch & Müller, 2021; Müller & Gazsi, 2022), although rarely tilting or blocking EU foreign policy decisions (Cadier & Lequesne, 2020).

The point where domestic national considerations truly become important are CFSP policies that have the potential to inflict direct costs on member states. Here we primarily talk about sanctions which have, in EU's response to Russia been one of the most difficult policies for states to find a compromise (I-2, I-3, I-4, I-6, I-9, I-10, I-13, I-17). Naturally, the countries that have had more trade with Russia would be hit harder with costs (I-4, I-12, I-13). There have been reports of uneven implementation of sanctions across member states (Giumelli et al., 2022). However, it seems that the post-aggression consensus among member states on condemning Russian actions has, at least declaratively, brought states together (I-7, I-9, I-10) to enact an unprecedentedly comprehensive sanctions regime with most disagreement occurring over individual provisions that are costly to some states' economies (I-12) and would not meaningfully hut Russia (I-17). A similar discussion is related on the build-up of EU's military and defence capabilities, which has become a mainstream position, which is pushed mostly by member states that already have an advanced military industry which would greatly benefit from the EU purchasing resources (I-12, I-18). These cases display the relationship between member states' economically rationalist thinking (protecting their economies) and their strategic use of accepted CFSP norms to argue their positions (inflicting harm to Russia) which is a theoretical cornerstone of actor-centred constructivism as a subfield of SI (Saurugger, 2017, p. 14).

Finally, regarding foreign influences on member states, the perception of participants is that it is mostly concentrated on the spread of misinformation of the general populations (I-5, I-7, I-16) to radicalize and polarize societies (I-16). Only few note that there are "trojan horse" states in the EU (I-10, I-16). Those are of course always other states, not their own. The findings are also consistent with the interpretation that decision-makers are somewhat secluded from the general population

and consider themselves and their actions not being directly tied to it: their actions are not directly influenced neither by the third states nor the influence they are exerting on their electorate. This, somewhat false, consciousness is another example of rational and normative behaviour being interlinked and grounded in the social setting in which they are exerted.

Following the discussion above, we can conclude that the member states' positions in CFSP derive from their political identity first and domestic considerations second. However, the rules and norms of CFSP both constrain the horizon of and offer a toolset of appropriate action that states can take to promote these positions. Traditionally, the identity of most states prefers a sovereign interpretation of foreign policy to their priority topic which can produce resistance towards the expansion of CFSP. States are mostly swayed from their identitarian position when an external trigger forces them to supersede it with a more rationalist calculation of their options, leaning them towards accepting the necessity of cooperation. However, even in this new position that acknowledges the value of a unified EU foreign policy, member states keep in mind their individual interests in formulating and implementing CFSP responses to the new global context. They do so again by strategically using CFSP norms and rules. These dynamics portraits member states as actors who try to achieve their goals in CFSP by acting upon what they perceive to be appropriate course of action in this setting.

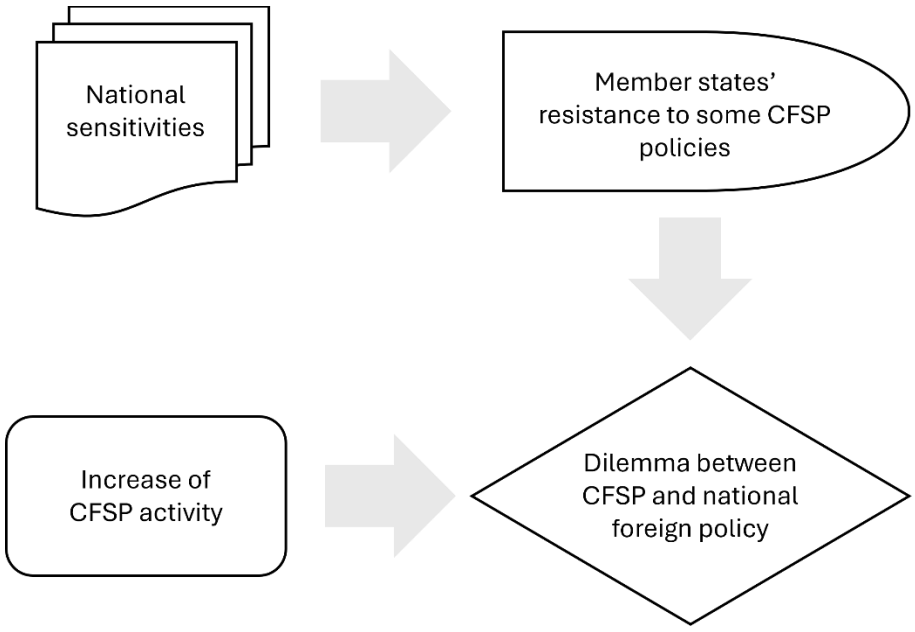

Figure 8: Origins of the CFSP dilemma

Contestation as a way out of the dilemma between CFSP and individual preferences

Although member states have a wide range of tools to use to shape the direction of CFSP, from breaking silence (I-2, I-3, I-6, I-8, I-10) to outright blocking proposals, they can nevertheless find themselves in a situation where they feel like they have to choose between allowing a European foreign policy position to advance and their own national sensitivities (I-12, I-14, I-15, I-16, I-17). This echoes the common notion that European integration "offers important benefits, but also poses serious challenges to nation-states" (Petersen, 1998, p. 34). One the one hand, the pressure for the EU to (re)act in unity can be overwhelming due to external or internal factors with most member states preferring one course of action. On the other hand, a member state can consider this proposed position to be at odds with its vital national interests[13], creating resistance. Usually, the easiest thing for that member state is to veto the proposal. However, member states often do not choose to block CFSP proposals as there is a broad consensus on the importance of acting in unity in international relations (I-8, I-10, I-13, I-19, I-20). In the case of Russian aggression, member states understand that a unified EU foreign policy has benefits for them (even in form of ensuring pure survival). That is why they rather find different "ways out" (I-18) of the dilemma "charting a path between hard-fought national preferences and hard-won EU-level innovations" (Hadfield et al., 2017, p. 14).

[13] Michaels and Kissack (2021) call this "national acceptability of EU external action".

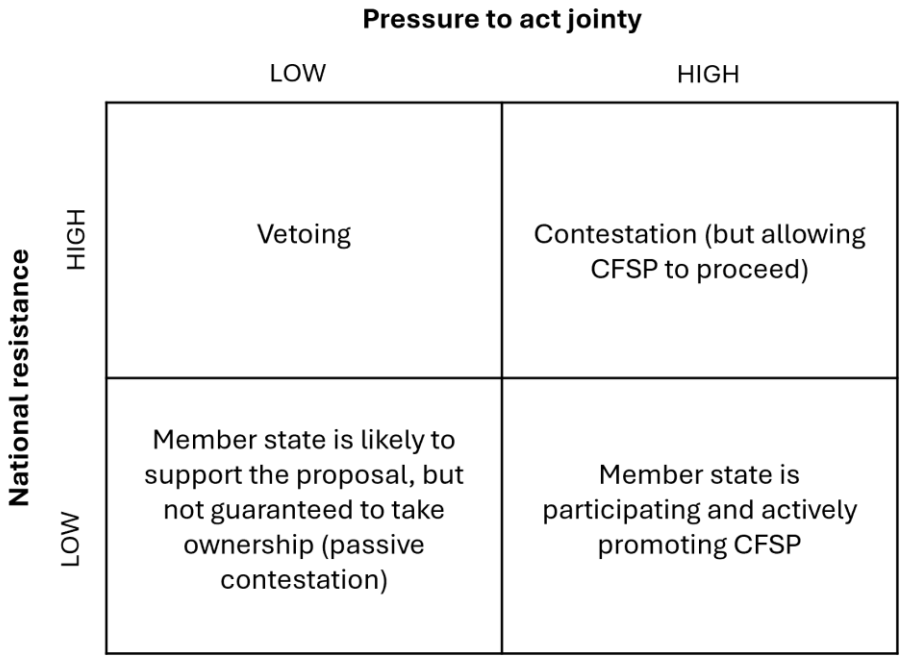

Figure 9: Contestation as the answer to the dilemma

The choice of which way-out states take is usually connected to the source of their sensitivities (I-13, I-17). If the proposed policy is not a position is would generally support (for instance because it is not aligned with its identity or role), but is still not central to the state's interests, the state may simply agree to the policy but not actively participate in its implementation (e.g., not sending troops, not promoting the policy) (I-6, I-7, I-11, I-12). This method, closely aligned with the concept of "passive contestation" (Maurer & Wright, 2021a), is stripping the member state of the costs that the policy may afflict on it and the obligations of actively promoting a position with which it may not agree with. Yet, in more important topics or more controversial positions (compared to the member states preferred one), states feel the need to actively distance themselves from them at least on a symbolic level (I-18). Usually, passive contestation is only viable in situations when the pressure to cooperate is also not high, as not a lot of attention is given to the policy after decision-making.

The first method of member states distancing themselves from a CFSP policy is by not participating in the decision-making process (I-3, I-4, I-9, I-12, I-13, I-14, I-17, I-18). Member states can do this by simply not joining the discussion of some topics in the first place (I-18), but more often states chose to distance themselves only after they have failed to steer the policy in a different direction during discussions. They do so by abstaining from the policy. There have been

multiple instances where only 26 out of the 27 member states have been involved in reaching a decision or making a statement (I-12, I-17, I-18). This method is interesting since it is mostly not very visible (if we exclude the Orbán walk off which was a clear exemption in the ways states ordinary behave), in and off itself does not express the state's reasoning nor exclude it from abiding and implementing the decision. Therefore, it is only mostly a symbolic act without clear context and, depending on the decision-making level, not even necessarily recorded in writing. Doing this would not make much sense from a purely rationalist perspective as little can be gained and a lot of influence is sacrificed if states abstain completely from the discussion (I-18). However, if interpreted from an SI angle, it may seem unnecessary (if they feel they cannot exert any influence on the process) or inappropriate (as not to be burdened by the feeling of compliance in making the decision) for states to participate a discussion or decision. Therefore, while seemingly irrational to forgo even symbolic influence, abstaining from participation in CFSP decisions might be best understood as a strategic blend of limited voice and partial exit, allowing states to signal dissent and sidestep the psychological burdens of loyalty to a policy they cannot control, echoing Hirschman's (1970) concept of "exit".

If states want to express their perspective and have it recorded for future use, they use national statements added to conclusions and other documents (I-5, I-9, I-12, I-13, I-14, I-15, I-17, I-18). By doing this, they still do not block the decision, nor do they get exemption from its implementation (I-5, I-12, I-18). However, they can still use it to express their position and reference it latter on (I-5, I-12, I-13, I-14, I-17). The importance of doing this becomes obvious if one remembers the legitimacy and influence Eastern and Baltic member states have gained following (for other member states unexpected) Russia's invasion of Ukraine. If being proven to be right eventually has so much value in CFSP, then recording your opinion, even if it carries no legal weight, becomes an understandable way of conduct. The fact that the message is directed primarily towards other member states (i.e., their delegates in CFSP) explains why national statements are most frequently used in COREPER II conclusions which are not open to the public (I-9, I-13, I-15, I-17, I-18). This doesn't matter because the sensitivity which they are appeasing is not necessarily sourced in domestic politics, but rather in the national identity of the state (as perceived by the delegates). Furthermore, there could be little value of expressing your position towards the wider public (which is generally not so invested in foreign policy). Rather, it could be

more important that other member states are aware of it now and in the future because the power dynamics in CFSP is significantly determined by the logic of appropriateness.

However, public perception and domestic considerations remain crucial, whether for influencing their own electorates or pressuring other member states. Consequently, member states may choose to publicly criticize CFSP policies they did not formally block (I-4, I-12, I-13, I-17, I-18). The fact that the upcoming criticism is announced to other member states in advance (I-13, I-17, I-18) indicates strategic intent. Moreover, it suggests that even sharing information about planned criticism of the coordination mechanism is considered appropriate within this institutionalized setting of foreign policy cooperation. This practice can be interpreted as respect for the "coordination reflex" (Schoutheete, 1980), demonstrating its persistence even when member states seek to distance themselves from specific policy outcomes. The criticism is mostly done by elected national leaders who have most to gain by influencing public perception (I-3, I-4, I-11, I-17, I-18). This form of member states' expression is less formal, rarely diplomatic; it is rather political and populist in discourse. That is why it is not perceived appropriate by member states (I-16). While this kind of public criticism clearly distances member states from a CFSP policy, it still does not formally remove its obligations in enforcing it.

To formally distance themselves from and remove any obligation of enforcing a decision they are sensitive towards, member states use constructive abstention (I-3, I-10, I-11, I-16, I-18). Constructive abstention entails a formal and diplomatic, but public declaration of distancing from a CFSP decision, as well as refrain from its implementation (making it a form of non-commitment strategy, see: Petersen, 1998, p. 41). That is why it is often used by neutral states who would be in constitutional breach it they would enforce some CFSP decisions that imply military action (I-4, I-19). The decision upon which states use constructive abstention are more important ones, that is why in those cases often the pressure to cooperate in unity as well as the resistance of individual member states is high. Here we see a clash of two logics of appropriateness as it is simultaneously (A) not appropriate in CFSP to block all other member states to act and (B) not appropriate in a national foreign policy system to cross your vital national principles and interests. That is why states use constructive abstention as a third way. This behaviour is then considered appropriate and legitimate for other member states in CFSP (I-14, I-16, I-17, I-18), and presumably relevant actors inside the state. Exactly this formalized mechanism of constructive abstention demonstrates

that CFSP, as most other institutions, develop mechanisms to manage conflict and maintain stability which are then perceived legitimate and reproduced (Saurugger, 2017, p. 6).

<table>
<tr><th>National sensitivity level</th><th>Form of contestation</th><th>Legitimacy</th></tr>
<tr><td>Low</td><td>Not participating in the decision-making process</td><td rowspan="3">High</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Middle</td><td>National statements</td></tr>
<tr><td>Constructive abstention</td></tr>
<tr><td>Public criticism of CFSP</td><td>Middle</td></tr>
<tr><td>High</td><td>Leading individual foreign policy running against CFSP</td><td>Low</td></tr>
</table>

Table 4: Forms of CFSP contestation

Finally, regardless of how they have behaved during CFSP decision-making, states can still decide to run their individual foreign policies even if they run counter CFSP because there are no sanctions against such behaviour (Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017). While this kind of behaviour is at time puzzling (I-20), because states are expected to block positions fundamentally do not agree with, it so not completely unreasonable. Namely, by not blocking a CFSP response, member states can still enjoy the benefits that it produces (for instance, deterring further Russian aggression in Europe) while also maintaining benefits of their individual foreign policy (for instance, still trading oil with Russia). Existing research also notes that populist governments generally do not sway or block CFSP, but they carry out their individual foreign policies alongside (Cadier & Lequesne, 2020). This active form of contestation is largely seen as illegitimate (I-3, I-4, I-9, I-20) because it undermines the CFSP on both symbolic and practical levels. Symbolically, it exposes a lack of unity among member states and the absence of effective enforcement mechanisms. Practically, it diminishes the efficacy of CFSP policies, particularly in areas like sanctions, where collective action is essential for achieving desired outcomes. This behavior is deemed inappropriate because it deviates from the norm of collaborative foreign policy action. However, such behaviour, while viewed negatively, might ironically motivate efforts to strengthen enforcement mechanisms. This is evident in the increased monitoring and proofing of the sanctions regime on Russia (I-7, I-9, I-10), a direct response to previous instances of non-compliance. Therefore, individual instances of illegitimate behaviour, if perceived as threatening the system's integrity, can potentially trigger

institutional change, particularly if other member states actively resist such violations rather than succumbing to "tacit contestation" (Maurer & Wright, 2021a).

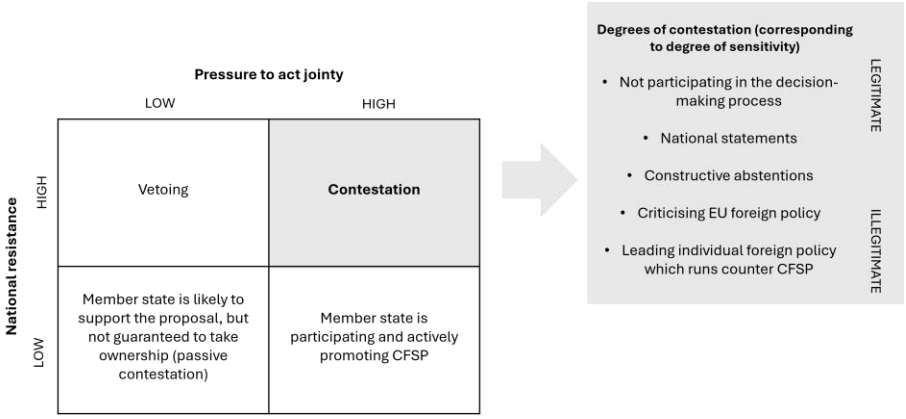

Figure 10: Choices of contestation matrix

All the tools described above, which member states utilize to navigate the dilemma between CFSP objectives and their individual foreign policy preferences, constitute forms of CFSP contestation as defined in the theoretical chapter of this thesis. They represent challenges to the CFSP system, whether enacted passively or actively, symbolically or practically, internally or publicly, and with varying degrees of perceived legitimacy. However, even though they inherently carry a (controlled) degree of undermining CFSP unity, these endogenously produced behaviours are increasingly becoming accepted and legitimized within the CFSP framework. This acceptance stems from their ability to reconcile two often-conflicting logics of appropriateness – the European and the national – while simultaneously allowing the CFSP to advance and thereby collectively benefit all members. As actors within institutions are motivated to act appropriately, member states facing the CFSP dilemma are likely to regularly turn to these various forms of contestation. This pattern aligns with the process of institutional isomorphism, where actors adopt similar practices to manage shared challenges (Saurugger, 2017, p. 6). In the following section of the discussion chapter, I will systematize these findings into a new theory of CFSP contestation. This theory will be based on a conditional mechanism linking external and endogenous factors (i.e., Europeanisation) to member state contestation of the CFSP.

5.2. A THEORY OF CONSTRUCTIVE CONTESTATION IN CFSP

Building on the preceding analysis, this section proposes a new theory of contestation in CFSP. This theory utilizes a conditional mechanism approach to explain how and why member states choose specific contestation strategies when faced with a CFSP policy that conflicts with their national interests or sensitivities. While existing research, such as Petersen (1998), examines member state strategies in the face of integration dilemmas, their analysis does not account for the unique institutional setting and geopolitical context that shapes contestation within CFSP today. A new theory is needed to be able to account for the endogenous processes inside CFSP, as well as the evolution of member states' strategies, particularly the shift from outright blocking to more nuanced forms of contestation, necessitating a new theoretical framework that can better explain the constructive functions of contestation in the current geopolitical context. To address these theoretical gaps, this thesis proposes a new theory of "constructive contestation in CFSP." The theory argues that the rise in pressure for EU member states to cooperate in foreign policy has incentivized member states to become more flexible on accommodating their individual preferences. Instead of blocking CFSP proposals, they are now turning to contestation as a way out that allows the progress of an EU response while maintaining member states' commitments to their individual sensitivities, ultimately strengthening the CFSP's effectiveness.

As illustrated in Figure 11, the theory starts with a (A) *trigger*. It is most often it is an external event in the form of a crisis in the EU's proximity that necessitates a response beyond the capacity of any single member state. This trigger increases the overall (B) *pressure* to cooperate within the CFSP framework. Actors within CFSP, such as the High Representative, the EEAS, or influential member states, can then use this trigger to further increase the pressure for the EU to proactively respond to and manage its environment. However, consequently, it becomes more likely that a proposal will be perceived as encroaching upon a member state's area of sensitivity, leading to (C) *resistance* to the CFSP position. If that member state is unable to influence the change in the proposition, it is faced with a (D) *dilemma* in which it must choose between allowing for a CFSP position to emerge or appeasing its individual national sensitivities. Since member states are increasingly aware of the benefits a unified EU response to international events has for them, they are less likely to resolve this dilemma by blocking. Instead, they employ various strategies that

allow them to distance themselves from the decision and the obligations it entails, but without preventing it from taking effect. In other words, they contest the policy. These practices of (E) *contestation* are mostly seen as legitimate member by states because they allow for a pragmatic balance between collective action and national sensitivities.

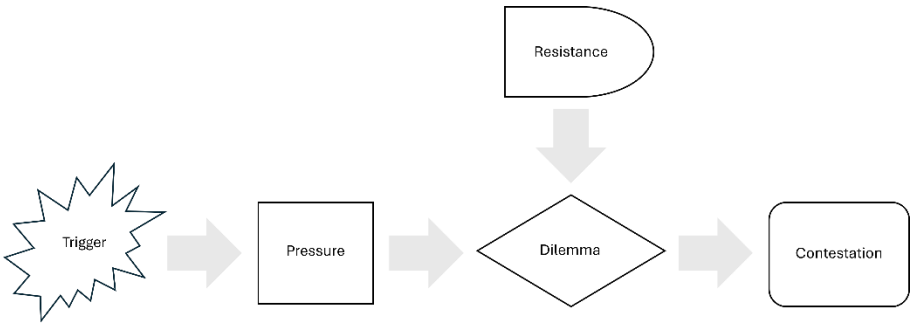

Figure 11: Core components of the theory of constructive contestation in CFSP

This theory further posits that a member state's choice of contestation as a strategy is contingent upon the balance between the pressure to cooperate and the level of national resistance. As depicted in Figure 12, when both the pressure to cooperate and the member state's resistance to a policy proposal are low, acceptance is the likely outcome. However, passive contestation may occur due to the policy's low salience. Conversely, high member state resistance coupled with low pressure to cooperate typically results in a blocking strategy. When the pressure to cooperate is high, but the member state's resistance is low, active support is the most probable response, driven by the benefits of a strong European stance. Finally, if both the pressure to cooperate and a member state's resistance are high, contestation emerges as the most likely strategy. This accommodates the need for a European response while respecting the member state's core national preferences.

Crucially, the choice of the specific form of contestation the member state will choose depends on the nature and level of its sensitivity on the topic. When sensitivities stem from a general misalignment with the proposed policy direction but are not central to core national interests, passive contestation through non-participation or abstention might suffice. This allows the state to avoid the costs and obligations associated with the policy while still maintaining a degree of symbolic distance. However, for more significant or controversial topics where national identity or vital interests are at stake, states may resort to more active forms of contestation. National statements serve to formally record dissent for future reference and influence, while public criticism aims to shape domestic and international perceptions. Constructive abstention provides

a formal and diplomatic means to distance oneself from a decision and its implementation, particularly when constitutional constraints or fundamental national principles are involved. Finally, pursuing individual foreign policies counter to CFSP, while deemed illegitimate, can be a strategy to reap the benefits of European unity while preserving national autonomy in specific areas. Ultimately, the level and nature of sensitivity guide the member state's choice of contestation strategy, allowing them to navigate the tension between European cooperation and national preferences.

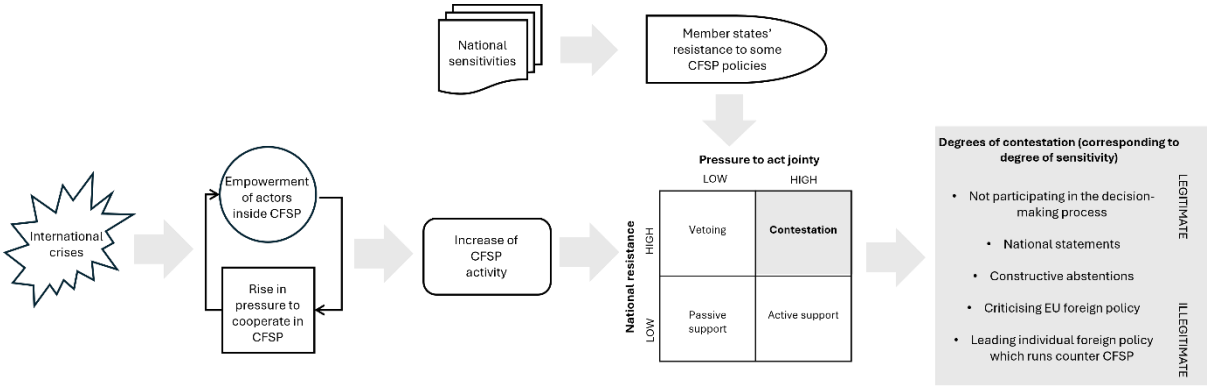

Figure 12: A theory of constructive contestation in CFSP

Contestation, as the outcome of the process, is not hindering CFSP progress, but paradoxically facilitating its advancement by providing a legitimate avenue for member states to reconcile their national preferences with the need for European cooperation in foreign policy. By allowing states to distance themselves from policies that clash with their core interests or identities, contestation mechanisms create a space for compromise and consensus-building. This is crucial for both member states advocating for stronger CFSP and those with reservations. For proponents of European integration in foreign policy, contestation offers a means to accommodate diverse perspectives and maintain unity, preventing outright vetoes that could stall progress. For states with "red lines," contestation provides a legitimate way to express dissent and protect national interests without undermining the broader CFSP framework. Contestation is therefore becoming an increasingly legitimate practice in CFSP, which is likely to be re-used by states as they find themselves faced with important CFSP proposals that they have national reservations towards.

This theory of constructive contestation (or TCC) is a theory-guided research on member states' strategies for furthering their interests in EU foreign-policy making, filling a recognized gap in the literature (de Flers & Müller, 2012, p. 27). It is one of the rare models that attempts to explain

contestation as the outcome of a process involving the interplay of conditions on three levels (national, European and global), thereby mirroring the encompassing framework of politicisation research (Zürn, 2019). Next, when compared to existing research done on CFSP contestation, TCC first clearly defines contestation and distinguishes it from politicization, solving the problem present in a large body of literature that results in conceptual inaccuracy and overstretching (Biedenkopf et al., 2021, p. 326). In line with existing research, contestation is considered as the outcome of strategic choice of actors (Contessi, 2010) and as normal behaviour in the context of CFSP (Badell & Schmitt, 2022; Maurer & Wright, 2021a). However, TCC supplements the current understanding by specifying under which conditions member states turn to contestation as the strategy which they consider most appropriate by developing a condition-matrix between the levels of pressure for cooperation and national resistance to the policy. It moves beyond the notion of conflict between national sovereignty and supranationalism in European foreign policy by acknowledging that member states have been transformed from nation states to member states (Bickerton, 2013). Still, it keeps in mind the identities and interests of those member states and investigates the novel strategies they use to achieve them with CFSP today.

Furthermore, differing from most of the existing research that considers contestation as having an eroding impact on the progress of CFSP (Badell & Schmitt, 2022; Johansson-Nogués et al., 2020; Juncos & Pomorska, 2021; Orenstein & Kelemen, 2017; Panke & Petersohn, 2012; Rieker & Blockmans, 2021), this theory recognizes that contestation can be employed as an accepted and legitimate behaviour for allowing CFSP to progress. This understanding also differentiates TCC from research that did has identified positive impacts of contestation as a practice either by displaying freedom and plurality in the system thereby raising its legitimacy (Risse, 2014; Wiener, 2014) or by other actors accommodating the concerns of the contestants (Johansson-Nogués et al., 2020; Zürn, 2018). TCC shows that contestation can have an immediate constructive effect on CFSP, as a practice it is not perceived legitimate because it signals the inclusiveness of the system, but because it allows for policies to move forward thereby raising the capabilities of the EU without the need for institutional reforms. TCC implies that with the spread of contestation, we are witnessing an era of, to paraphrase Hooghe and Marks (2009), “permissive contestation”. In other words, the CFSP is not truly a system based on unanimity; rather, it operates on consensus decision-making, where group members collectively agree to a decision, even if some do not fully support every aspect (Butler & Rothstein, 1991).

Situating TCC within the broader research field of Europeanisation reveals shared ground in the focus on the dynamic interplay between national foreign policies and the evolving CFSP. Importantly, both acknowledge that Europeanisation shapes member state behaviour while member states actively shape the CFSP through their actions. The novelty of TCC comes from the focus on contestation as an outcome of the Europeanisation process. Namely, TCC stipulates that following external and internal pressures to cooperate in EU foreign policy making, member states become more flexible in their CFSP strategies which makes them less likely to veto policy proposals. In turn, they employ contestation practices. This process, caused by European integration and its internal dynamics and resulting in the redirection of member states behaviours to be more cooperative, is Europeanisation if we conceptualize it as a process (as specified earlier in this Thesis). Thereby, TCC uncovers a completely new connection between Europeanisation and contestation. Additionally, TCC can enrich the body of research that considers Europeanisation as an outcome by explaining how member states' strategies have become more Europeanized through the adoption of contestation practices, thus enhancing its explanatory power.

Next, in relation to politicization, the second major theoretical approach employed in this thesis, TCC shares its recognition of contestation as a significant phenomenon in CFSP that is tied to authority, legitimacy and the global context. Both view contestation as the outcome of strategic consideration by member states to navigate tensions between national interests and European cooperation. However, apart from most politicisation research, TCC encompasses a broader spectrum of behaviour that is labels contestation: passive and tacit strategies (Maurer & Wright, 2021a), rather than just active ones. This illuminates not only the prevalence of contestation in CFSP, but also the motivation for actors using different kinds of active, passive or tacit contestation practices. Finally, this is only possible by developing a systemic framework that integrates contestation analysis with the broader context of CFSP, including the influence of national, horizontal and global factors.

In summary, TCC builds upon the foundations of Europeanisation and politicization research while addressing their limitations. By integrating the two approaches, TCC positions itself as a bridge between them resulting in a more holistic approach that combines the systemic perspective of Europeanisation with the actor-centric focus of politicization research. As a result, TCC offers a

more nuanced and comprehensive framework for understanding the spectrum of contestation strategies employed by member states within the evolving CFSP landscape. In other words, TCC has greater explanatory, but also predictive power, than the existing approaches as we are observing a parallel rise in EUFP power and its contestation. TCC and its understanding of the relationship between EUFP and its contestation explains some key puzzles in researching EUFP. For instance, it can explain why, e.g., we both see the EU able to enact unprecedented sanctions on Russia (as to seem more united than ever), but also be more contested than ever as many states have come forward with acts which question the same sanctions (as to seem more divided than ever). Therefore, TCC predicts that as CFSP progress will continue, contestation will follow suit, which can be a valuable insight not only for academics but also EU policymakers.

While TCC offers valuable insights, it's crucial to acknowledge its limitations. Firstly, TCC employs a specific definition of contestation that focuses on member state behaviour after the decision-making process. While this definition has been expanded from earlier work (as elaborated in Section 3.2.), it may not fully capture the range of contestation behaviours that occur during the policy formulation phase, including vetoing. This raises the question of whether the theory might benefit from a broader conceptualization of contestation. Secondly, TCC's current focus is solely on member states as actors in CFSP contestation. This leaves out the potential influence of non-state actors such as NGOs, CSOs, interest groups, the public, and media, which could play a significant role in shaping CFSP outcomes. Thirdly, TCC's scope is limited to the CFSP domain. As M. Smith (1998) argues, this may neglect crucial aspects of the EU's broader external relations. Expanding the theoretical lens to encompass a wider range of EU foreign policy instruments could provide a more comprehensive understanding. Finally, as a newly developed theory, TCC requires further systematic testing and empirical validation to assess its explanatory power and identify potential areas for refinement.

Building upon the foundation provided by TCC, several avenues for further research present themselves. Firstly, empirical testing of the theory through in-depth analysis of specific CFSP cases is crucial. By examining the contestation strategies employed by member states in response to varying pressures and policy contexts, researchers can assess the theory's explanatory power and identify potential refinements. Secondly, a more nuanced understanding of the conditional mechanism is necessary. Incorporating additional factors, such as the specific policy domain under

consideration, could enhance the mechanism's ability to predict and explain contestation behaviour. Finally, investigating the long-term effects of contestation on the CFSP holds significant value. Exploring how contestation shapes institutional development, influences member state relations, and impacts the EU's capacity for unified foreign policy action will provide insights into the broader consequences of this increasingly prevalent phenomenon.

Conclusion of discussion

This discussion chapter has considered the empirical findings of the thesis, uncovering patterns and relationships within the complex dynamics of EU foreign policymaking. By applying the lens of Sociological Institutionalism, the chapter has illuminated the interplay between national interests and collective action within the CFSP framework. The analysis revealed that external and internal pressures to cooperate in foreign policy matters are on the rise, primarily driven by major international crises. This pressure incentivizes member states to adopt more flexible positions in CFSP, even when confronted with proposals that may clash with their individual sensitivities.

When faced with such a dilemma, member states often turn to contestation as a means of navigating the tension between CFSP cooperation and national preferences. The chapter has systematically explored the various forms of contestation employed by member states, ranging from passive and symbolic strategies like non-participation and national statements to more active and formal methods like constructive abstention and pursuing individual foreign policies that run counter CFSP. Importantly, the chapter has highlighted that these contestation practices, while inherently challenging the CFSP system, are increasingly becoming accepted and legitimized within the framework. This acceptance stems from their ability to reconcile the often-conflicting logics of appropriateness – the European and the national – while simultaneously allowing the CFSP to advance and thereby collectively benefit all members. Hence, as European integration in these circumstances has produced a change in member states' behaviours, we can label the process as Europeanisation. This change is in the form of the adoption of contestation as a new strategy that helps everyone in the system and allows for further integration. This allows us to consider contestation of CFSP as, to paraphrase Calusewitz (1982), the continuation of Europeanisation by other, unexpected, means.

Building upon these insights, the chapter has proposed a new "theory of constructive contestation" in CFSP (or TCC). This theory utilizes a conditional mechanism approach to explain how and why

member states choose specific contestation strategies. It posits that the choice of contestation strategy is contingent upon the balance between the pressure to cooperate and the level of national resistance to a policy proposal. The theory further outlines how the nature and level of a member state's sensitivity influence the specific form of contestation they employ. TCC offers several contributions to the existing literature. It provides a clear definition of contestation, distinguishing it from politicization and addressing conceptual inaccuracies present in some research. TCC also supplements the current understanding of contestation by specifying the conditions under which member states turn to it as a preferred strategy. Notably, TCC departs from the dominant view of contestation as an inherently disruptive force within the CFSP. Instead, it recognizes that contestation can be employed as an accepted and legitimate behaviour that facilitates the progress of CFSP. By providing a legitimate avenue for member states to reconcile their national preferences with the need for European cooperation, contestation paradoxically strengthens the CFSP framework. Additionally, TCC's systemic approach and conditional mechanism enhance its explanatory and predictive power, offering valuable insights for both academics and EU policymakers.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The results of this research have illuminated the complex interplay between external pressures, internal dynamics, and member state behaviour within the CFSP framework. The findings demonstrate that major international crises, particularly the Russian aggression on Ukraine, have significantly increased the pressure on member states to cooperate in foreign policy. This pressure, coupled with the growing influence of EU institutions and certain member states, incentivizes member states to adopt more flexible positions in CFSP decision-making. However, when faced with proposals that clash with their national sensitivities, member states often resort to contestation as a means of navigating the tension between collective action and individual preferences. The research has identified a spectrum of contestation practices, ranging from passive and symbolic strategies to more active and formal methods. Importantly, these contestation practices are increasingly becoming accepted and legitimized within the CFSP framework, as they allow for the advancement of EU foreign policy while respecting member states' core national interests.

This dynamic has led to the development of a new theory of "constructive contestation" in CFSP, which provides a conditional mechanism approach to explain how and why member states choose specific contestation strategies based on the balance between the pressure to cooperate and the level of national resistance to a policy proposal. The dilemma faced by member states arises from the inherent tension between the CFSP's pursuit of a unified European foreign policy and the individual national interests and sensitivities of its members. On the one hand, member states recognize the benefits of a strong and cohesive EU stance in responding to international challenges. This recognition, coupled with the external and internal pressures to cooperate, creates an impetus for member states to accommodate CFSP positions. However, on the other hand, member states are deeply invested in protecting their national identities, historical experiences, and core interests. When a CFSP proposal clashes with these sensitivities, it generates resistance within the member state. This resistance can stem from concerns about the policy's impact on national sovereignty, economic well-being, or alignment with the state's historical or ideological stance.

When both the pressure to cooperate and a member state's resistance to a policy proposal are high, contestation emerges as a viable strategy. Contestation allows member states to distance themselves from the decision and its obligations without hindering the overall progress of the CFSP. By employing various contestation practices, member states can express their dissent,

protect their national interests, and maintain a degree of symbolic or practical autonomy, all while upholding the broader framework of European cooperation. This delicate balance between collective action and national sensitivities is what makes contestation an increasingly accepted and legitimized practice within the CFSP. Building upon these insights, we can now address the research questions of this thesis. We will first tackle the sub-questions, as their answers are essential for understanding and ultimately answering the main research question of this thesis.

When considering what influences member states' cooperation in CFSP (RQ1.1), the research shows that member state behaviour is shaped by a dynamic interplay of external pressures, internal dynamics, national sensitivities, and perceived benefits of cooperation. External crises, like the Russian aggression on Ukraine, heighten the urgency for unity, while internal pressures from EU institutions and influential member states further amplify the impetus to cooperate. However, national sensitivities, rooted in historical experiences, identities, and core interests, can generate resistance when CFSP proposals clash with national interests, creating a complex decision-making landscape for member states. The research uncovers recent changes in member state behaviour (RQ1.2) in form of increased flexibility, a rise in contestation, and a shift from blocking to contestation strategies.

The reasons behind the increased use of contestation (RQ1.3) lie in its ability to address the dilemma member states face when balancing a CFSP position against their national sensitivities. Contestation provides a means to protect national interests, maintain a degree of autonomy, and express dissent, all while contributing to the overall progress of the CFSP. Member states chose specific contestation forms (RQ1.4) based on a complex interplay between the pressure to cooperate, the level of national resistance to a policy proposal, and the nature and intensity of their sensitivities. When both pressure and resistance are low, acceptance is likely. However, high resistance coupled with low pressure may lead to blocking strategies. Conversely, high pressure and low resistance typically result in active support. The most nuanced scenario arises when both pressure and resistance are high, where contestation emerges as the preferred approach. The specific form of contestation (e.g., passive, active, symbolic, practical) is then determined by the nature and intensity of the member state's sensitivities.

The combination of insights above allows us to answer the main research question of this thesis:

RQ1: Why do we see an increase in contestation in the CFSP, instead of decades of Europeanisation making internal contestation less likely?

The rise in CFSP contestation is not a contradiction to Europeanisation, but rather a consequence of it. Europeanisation, as a process of change driven by European integration, has undoubtedly influenced member state behaviour in CFSP. However, this influence is not a linear path towards full convergence and the elimination of national sensitivities. Instead, Europeanisation has made member states more flexible and pragmatic in their CFSP strategies. The increasing pressure to cooperate in foreign policy, driven by external crises and internal dynamics, incentivizes member states to accommodate CFSP positions even when they may clash with national interests. This is because member states recognize the benefits of a unified EU response in a complex and challenging international environment. However, this accommodation does not imply the erasure of national sensitivities. When faced with the dilemma of appeasing national sensitivities or accommodating the CFSP position, member states turn to contestation to navigate this tension. Contestation allows them to maintain a degree of autonomy and protect their core interests while still contributing to the overall progress of the CFSP. This explains why, despite decades of Europeanisation, contestation is not diminishing but rather evolving into a more nuanced and accepted practice within the CFSP framework.

Further research is crucial to deepen our understanding of this phenomenon. Systematic empirical testing of the theory of constructive contestation is necessary to assess its explanatory power and identify potential refinements. Additionally, a more nuanced understanding of the conditional mechanism is needed, incorporating additional factors such as the specific policy domain under consideration. Investigating the long-term effects of contestation on the CFSP is also essential. Exploring how contestation shapes institutional development, influences member state relations, and impacts the EU's capacity for unified foreign policy action will provide valuable insights into the broader consequences of this increasingly prevalent phenomenon. Future research could also examine what happens to contested issues over time, including how member states need to adjust when issues re-emerge and how acts of contestation prevail or change, feeding back into national capitals. By continuing to explore the complexities of contestation, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the evolving dynamics of European foreign policy cooperation. It is my hope that this research will inspire and guide future inquiries in the field.

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Austrian Director for Common Foreign and Security Policy at the Ministry for European and International Affairs, email, July 2024

Austrian Director for Security Policy at the Ministry for European and International Affairs, email, July 2024

Belgian EU Correspondent at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, online, June 2024

Bulgarian CFSP Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, phone, July 2024

Croatian PSC Ambassador, online, March 2024

Danish Nicolaidis Delegate, online, May 2024

Dutch Senior Policy Adviser at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, online, July 2024

French COEST Delegate, Brussels, May 2024

German Deputy PSC Ambassador, online, July 2024

Greek Deputy PSC Ambassador, online, April 2024

Italian COEST Delegate, online, June 2024

Latvian COEST Delegate, Brussels, May 2024

Lithuanian COEST Delegate, online, April 2024

Lithuanian Deputy PSC Ambassador, online, April 2024

Luxembourgian PSC Ambassador, online, June 2024

Political Administrator at the Council of the EU, online, March 2024

Polish Head of EU Institutional and Political Coordination Division at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, online, July 2024

Portuguese PSC Ambassador, Brussels, May 2024

Romanian PSC Ambassador, Brussels, May 2024

Slovak PSC Ambassador, Brussels, May 2024

Slovenian COEST Delegate, Brussels, May 2024

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Interview guide used in research

Name of Interviewee: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

My name is Antonio Karlović and I am a PhD candidate in European Politics at the University of Zagreb.

In my thesis, I want to understand the progress of European foreign-policy, CFSP in particular: the current state of cooperation and member states' behaviour.

For the purpose of this thesis, I am conducting interviews with actors in CFSP at all levels. Thank you once again for your time & cooperation.

I would like to inform you that I will be taking notes during our conversation. This is to ensure accuracy and precision in capturing the information you share. Please rest assured that these notes will solely be used for the purpose of my research.

I want to assure you that all the information you provide today will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. To maintain anonymity, I will code each interview (for example, I-1, I-2, etc.). If I use a direct quote from our conversation, I will first send it to you for approval. However, when quoting, I will only refer to the coded reference. At the end of my thesis, I will list the participants alphabetically by function (e.g., "Croatian PSC Ambassador, Zagreb, March 2024") to ensure corroboration of the thesis.

Practically, the interview will take between 30-45 minutes. There are, of course, no right or wrong answers. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time during the interview

without any repercussions. If you ever have any questions regarding the research afterwards, you can always reach me on antonio.karlovic@studenti.fpzg.hr

Before we start, do you have any questions or need any clarification on the research or the interview process?

If you are comfortable with these conditions and ready to proceed, we can begin the interview.

1. **How would you describe the status of the EU in the international arena today?** (Also, connected to this, how would you describe the importance of EUFP for member states? Is it important for all of them? Has that changed? How is that impacting cooperation?)
2. **Why are we seeing situations like member states agreeing on a policy only to after that criticising it publicly (national statements, statements from heads of state etc.) or even leading individual foreign policies that run counter to EU policy?**
3. **What would you say the visibility or salience of EU foreign policy is in domestic politics right now?** (Has this changed in the last 20 years? How has this affected your and your colleagues' behaviour? How do you think this affected member states behaviour regarding the EU's Russia policy? Could you illustrate this with a particular incident?)
4. **Do you think that the output of CFSP has grown during the last two decades?** (How has this affected your work? How has this affected the behaviour of other member states? How has it affected member states' compliance with CFSP policies (towards Russia)? Is there an instance you remember where this played out?)
5. **Which aspect of CFSP towards Russia was in your view most controversial and difficult?** (How controversial were sanctions? Why do you think that is? How did it affect your behaviour and the behaviour of other member states? Is there an instance you remember where this played out?)
6. **How would you describe the power dynamics in EUFP-making today?** (Has it changed in the last decade? Are Eastern member states more assertive? How does it impact cooperation in the EUFP? Would you mind sharing a case where this was evident?)
7. **Following the Lisbon treaty, a new institutional structure in CFSP was enacted with the creation of the EEAS & the removal of the rotating presidency among member states. How has this affected EU foreign policymaking on Russia from 2014 onwards?** (Can you describe a specific situation from which this was evident?)

8. **In EU's policy towards Russia following the 2014 annexation of Crimea, there have been some member states who have either openly opposed some aspects of the policy or have led individual foreign policies which run counter to CFSP. What would you say the main reason for such behaviour is?** (Could you illustrate this with a particular incident? How has this behaviour affected you? How do you think it generally affects the EU's policy towards Russia? Can you give me any examples?)

We have now arrived at the end of the interview.

Is there anything else that you think is important to say on the topic of my research, which we didn't have time for, or I didn't ask you about?

Can you recommend somebody else I should talk to regarding my research?

I sincerely appreciate your time and thoughtful responses. Your insights have been incredibly helpful in deepening my understanding of European foreign policy. Thank you for your willingness to contribute to academic knowledge in this field.

Again, if you have any follow-up questions on my research, you can always reach me on antonio.karlovic@studenti.fpzg.hr

If you are interested, I will take note to share the results of the research with you after the Thesis is completed.

Lastly, if I find a need for further clarification on any points we discussed today, would it be acceptable for me to contact you again (probably within the next month)?

Thank you very much!

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Antonio Karlović was born in 1994 in Zagreb. After graduating from Ban Josip Jelačić High School in Croatia, he enrolled at the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Zagreb. There he earned his B.A. in Political Science as well as his M.A. in International Relations and National Security. In 2018, he completed his M.Sc. in Political Science at the University of Copenhagen. He started his PhD in European Politics at the Faculty of Political Science in 2019.

He has published several academic papers:

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