

## **HOW EUROPEANIZED HAVE SMALL STATES' FOREIGN POLICY BECOME?**

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Although, the making of EU foreign policy (EFP) knows its origins from the purely intergovernmental European Political Cooperation set up in 1970, a lot of scholars still question whether in reality EFP exists, as till today member states still undertake their own foreign policy actions and national foreign policies for both large and small EU member states still matter. When it comes to the subject EFP, the majority of scholars still tend to focus on large member states. In fact, the analysis of interactions of small EU member states in the CFSP is quite limited, given the growing number of small states in the EU. These interactions are best analysed by resorting to Europeanization, which presents three distinct but interrelated processes, identified by Ruben Wong (2005) as: Adaptation and Policy Convergence, National Projection and Elite Socialization.

With regards to Adaptation and Policy Convergence, although the CFSP is regarded as an intergovernmental decision-making body, along the years its institutional framework has been strengthened and even though this does not present forced adaptation it still manages to seep into domestic politics. For small states, the impact is more profound due to the small size of their foreign ministries and the fact that as EU member states that have to deal with the various foreign policy issues on the EU's agenda. For this reason, participation in the CFSP has taxed the administrative capacity of several small states, which in turn also affects the national foreign policy-making process due to limited resources. The latter is the case for both Malta and Cyprus, as both countries have limited resources and national foreign policy interests are focused on their immediate neighbourhood but as EU member states they now have to deal with a wide array of foreign policy interests.

Adaptation in national government institutions also plays an important role for small states since they need to identify ways and means of adapting so as to be more efficient at the EU level. For the new member states, such as Malta and Cyprus a lot of the adaptation took place prior to accession, for example both countries adapted their national foreign policy by reorganizing existing governmental structures in order to refine coordination between the national Ministries and the Permanent Representation to the EU.

National Projection features the state as being pro-active in uploading its interests and preferences, instead of being reactive. It is argued that it is beneficial for small states to project their foreign policy interests at the EU level as this leads to politics of scale effect, as small states are seen to have less bargaining power. Nevertheless, national projection can be expected of larger states due to the fact that small states often have a lower number of personnel and policy experts. However, as unanimity still prevails as the main voting method in the CFSP, this favours small states since they are placed on the same level playing field as the larger member states. Taking the example of Cyprus, in 2004, 'when the Council was contemplating whether to grant Turkey a date for the beginning of its membership negotiations, Cyprus reportedly threatened to veto the granting of any such date, unless Turkey changed its position on the Cyprus issue.'<sup>1</sup>

When it comes to the CFSP, informal and consensual decision-making systems are in place and this is where elite socialization comes into play. Elite socialization is beneficial for member states as this fine-tunes the ability of national officials to influence decision-making at the EU level. However, this process can also lead to having national officials representing the nation state at the EU level increasingly thinking in European rather than national terms. Numerous scholars have acknowledged that for smaller member states 'learning to play the game' by cooperating with other member states, building coalitions and sharing of information is essential for small states to be successful in uploading their foreign policy interests at the EU level. This 'closed group' and informal decision-making in the CFSP is identified by Grøn and Wivel as a challenge, for small states as this 'type of cooperation allows the large states to circumvent the institutional safeguards of small state influence.'<sup>2</sup>

The Europeanisation of small states' foreign policy, without any doubt has taken place in the process of accession to the EU. The extent to which Europeanisation has occurred is a highly debatable topic. Some scholars agree that small states should pursue foreign policy interests at the EU level as the EU can increase the small states relevance on an international level, whilst others believe that it is very difficult for small states to influence the CFSP. What is certain is that up to now small states have still retained active national foreign policy interests and active bilateral relations, while still being active at the EU level. In this way, small states are being smart by deciding which foreign policy interests to upload at the EU level and which interests would be better pursued via national foreign policy means.

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<sup>1</sup> Sepos, A., 2008. *The Europeanization of Cyprus, Polity, Policies and Politics*, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, page 125.

<sup>2</sup> Grøn, H., C., Wivel, A., 2011, *Maximising Influence in the European Union after the Lisbon Treaty: From Small State Policy to Smart State Strategy*, *Journal of European Integration*, page 528.