Europeanisation of Central Eastern Foreign Policy – possibilities and problems

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Central Eastern European states have become an interesting phenomenon in Europe – sometimes very pro European, sometimes against. There have been changes in government that have brought about a change in policies, including foreign policy and including their approach to the European Union. This paper looks at the foreign policies of mostly Poland but also Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia: their similarities to Europe’s policy, and how the situation can change. The paper looks at possibilities and benefits of Europeanising one’s foreign policy, and the problems. The paper focuses on public opinion, current issues Europe is dealing with and the political situation in Central Eastern Europe. The goal is to analyse the expectations on CEE foreign policy and to see if they are possible to achieve.

Keywords: Eastern Europe, foreign policy, Europeanisation, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Czech Republic, European Union

Introduction

Central Eastern European countries have come a long way in the last 25 years after the end of the Soviet Union and its influence. The four countries known as Visegrad states have all become members of NATO and the European Union, and have all become at least somewhat influential in Europe. Their various policies have changed significantly in order to fit in with the rest of Europe. Foreign relations have changed as well, the foreign policies of all countries, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, have changed compared to what is generally seen as “European.” All countries have swung towards and away from Europe and are offering a very interesting case for analysis as to why and how all of this has happened.

In the era of the first referendum on leaving the European Union, many are asking who could be next. The four Visegrad states have all been critical of EU’s handling of the refugee crisis and all have had opinion changes regarding European politics. There are many who see one or
more of these countries taking a step back from Europe. There are many issues that CEE countries are not happy about: EU’s opinions on domestic policies (mostly Poland and Hungary), EU’s handling of the migrant crisis and overall approach to its members. The countries have criticized European Union’s financial affairs and overall management. Yet, there is strong support for some European policies and EU’s funding is popular. Common foreign and security policy has been popular all over Europe and is increasingly discussed in Europe among member states.

This paper looks into CEE countries and their possibilities regarding Europeanised foreign policy. There are different ideas as to what Europeanisation is and how it works. This paper will look at those various versions in connection CEE countries and their foreign policies. The countries could benefit from a stronger united foreign policy and they can try to influence it. On the other hand, their current governments are not supportive of Europe, public opinion is in favour of a common foreign policy but not universally and there are multiple issues that need to be resolved. The paper will look at different possibilities regarding the four countries and their foreign policies in Europe, focusing on Poland but also covering the other three in order to analyse the possibilities of those countries becoming more Europeanised regarding foreign policy.

Analyzing foreign policy

Foreign policy making is a complex topic, covering various topics and ideas. It is always difficult to determine why a country’s foreign policy is the way it is. All of those factors contribute to developing and analysing foreign policy. In general, these factors could be summarised into two groups: external and internal. External factors are often classified via traditional international relations’ theories like realism, liberalism and constructivism; all dealing with the anarchy in the world, interdependence and expected behaviour (among others: Kaarbo et al. 2013; Hill 2003). When looking at countries within or near European Union, it represents all of them. The EU is a flagship of liberalism, has definitely relied on expected behaviour and its relations with realism are complex. External factors do affect European countries’ foreign policies and European Union is clearly one of them.

Internal factors are even more complex, dealing with the public perception and opinion on foreign policy; the background and personalities of the decision makers; the process of decision making in the country; and the identity of the country, often related to their cultural background and history (among others: Beasley & Snarr 2013; Hill 2003; Hudson 2007; Ehin and Berg
2015; Pahre 2006;). When looking at Eastern Europe and the four in question in particular, history and culture are two definite influencers. European history is full of wars and conquering, resulting in influences on identities and current decisions. Memory politics plays a big part in current affairs, including in Eastern Europe (Mälksoo 2013). It influences public opinion and the decision makers themselves. Identity in general plays a big role in foreign policy decision making. All four countries at least somewhat identify themselves as European. The complicated term “Eastern European” also plays a part as Eastern European countries in general do not like to identify with it and it is understandable, though the countries are often categorized so.

Leadership plays a big part in foreign policy making. The backgrounds of the leaders, their political leanings and overall personas are important. Leadership is a difficult topic and includes various sides for analysis (Grove 2007). The four Visegrad countries have all had changes in their political leadership between 2010 and 2015 and it has had an influence on their foreign policy as well. Donald Tusk was an independent and active pro-European prime minister; Jaroslaw Kazcynski, the man who preceded him was independent and active but not pro-European; and the woman leading Poland in 2016, Beata Szydlo, is the polar opposite of Tusk, though very active. This has had a significant influence on Poland’s foreign policy.

Sometimes it is not the person in charge but the group of people and their opinions, their political leanings often one of their strongest influencers. What countries to focus on, what agendas to set and what goals to achieve, all of this is often influenced by which political party is in power. This is also true in Europe, though with different results. There are countries that are more or less pro-European regardless of government (Estonia, for example) but there are those who change their positions a great deal. Hungary is a good sample case as with a clearly conservative party, Fidesz gaining power, their approach to Europe has changed compared to their predecessors, MSZP who are socialists. Different political parties also bring different decision making and that in itself is already a big influence.

Politicians and the ruling elite are still subject to public opinion and in a democratic country, that opinion matters and often influences the outcome. Public opinion influences foreign policy a great deal (Baum 2008), at least in a democratic country. There could be a longer debate about how public opinion itself is affected by the media and available information but that is a different matter. Public still has an opinion and they are not afraid to act on it, as showed the 2016 British EU referendum. Therefore, the public’s view of Europe’s foreign policy, whatever it may be, is relevant.
There are also other factors influencing foreign policy that cannot be placed under internal or external, as they are both. The most common is the size of the country as it influences both the internal affairs and is at the same time, part of internal affairs. However, what the size means, depends on the world and overall external actors. There are clear ideas regarding small states and their behaviour and how it differs from others (Hey 2003) but that train of thought is often more complex. First, size is often difficult to describe and is somewhat relative, dependant on the situation and the factors taken into consideration. Looking at territory, number of people, amount of possible influence, and size of economy, all give a different result. Second, Poland is a big country by Europe’s standards, yet a small one globally. The neighbourhood and context matter, as does the geographic location.

Overall, there are many factors influencing a country’s foreign policy and they apply to Eastern Europe just the same. For this analysis, the focus is on changes in leadership, cultural and historical issues, and external factors and changes in Europe. They must all be taken into account when looking into any country’s future possibilities.

**Europeanisation**

The term “Europeanisation” has been around for quite some time and has been used to describe various phenomena. What it is exactly, has been analysed multiple times as well (among others, Olsen 2002; Baun et al 2006; Major 2005; Moumoutzis 2011, Exadaktylos & Radaelli 2009; Olsen 2011). Europeanisation has moved from policy research into foreign policy scholarship and has many different angles. It has been used to look at an anthropological angle (Borrneman & Fowler 1997) and developmental issues (Lightfoot 2010). There is very little consensus as to what the phenomenon is or how useful it really is (Olsen 2002). Some look at it as a policy process (Subotic 2011) and describe Europe as a state of mind. What has been made clear, is that Europeanisation has some relation to Europe which currently is mostly itself almost interchangeable with the European Union and change: policy changes are most common.

One version of Europeanisation is based on how Europe spreads its ideals and approaches. Olsen (2002) describes five different approaches to describing the issue: 1) changes in external boundaries; 2) developing institutions at the European level; 3) central penetration of national systems of governance; 4) exporting forms of political organisation; and 5) a political unification project. All of these give a good general background understanding of Europeanisation as a policy from the centre, towards the outside. It could also be said that Europeanisation is a state of mind (Subotic 2011). Though one must also keep in mind that
Europeanisation is definitely not synonymous with European integration (Major 2005). So maybe policy process in the widest sense of the term is really most accurate.

If one approaches Europeanisation as a process or a description of process, there are still multiple aspects one must look at. First, how is that process initiated? There are two most common approaches: bottom up and top down (Baun et al 2006). The latter is more easily explained, it is mostly about the European Union and its regulations affecting the states. Because of this, Europeanisation has been useful to describe various domestic policies because that is logical – many policies, especially those connected to the European Community, are more or less compulsory for the member states. For the new members this has even been part of their joining process, the countries have to change their economic and legal system and adopt policies that the European Union has subscribed. There is a lot of research connected issues, for example in Eastern Europe (Meyer-Sahling & van Stolk, 2014; Lightfoot, 2011). This of course makes sense, in order to be a member of the EU or to be at least close to it, the European Union has many requirements. A good example is Armenia, sometimes considered to be a “perfect” neighbour for the EU (Dercour & Wolczuk 2015) because they agree to Europe. So Europeanisation seems in this case be connected to regulations or specific needs. Foreign policy is not connected to any specific regulations nor is it necessarily a need as Europe does not really have a common foreign idea. Still, the top down approach can be a case here as well as even though there are very few regulations in place and even those are intergovernmental, European Union could still influence its members and often that influence is great in volume (Baun et al 2006).

The second version of Europeanisation policy is bottom up where states themselves change their policies to match Europe, initiated by themselves. Some declare it publicly like Romania and Bulgaria (Bechev 2009), others do it quietly and sometimes even not as part of a strategy like Greece regarding Turkey (Agnantopoulos, 2013) or Sweden-Denmark regarding China (Michalski, 2013). Though as stated before, maybe European Union is influential enough to warrant those changes without asking. On top of these examples, there are plenty of countries who have changed their attitudes to match Europe because of membership or other unrelated reasons (democratic transition, pragmatic reasons or others) but more on that later.

Overall it seems that Europeanisation as a process probably fits the bottom up approach more when it comes to foreign policy. It is mostly because foreign policy is one of those topics that has always been one of the least supranational in the European Union. There is no clear
consensus on what actually happens during Europeanisation of foreign policy or why it happens at all. Olsen (2002) describes that there are two processes involved, first EU itself is changing when creating central institutions and penetrating national processes; second, when national policies start to change. Foreign policy has some of the first aspects but not all, there are central institutions but they are not too powerful and in general don’t follow the framework usually set for this kind of analysis. The fact that European Union does not actually have a clear central foreign policy, is part of it and will be discussed later.

Another question is how Europeanisation can be measured. Operationalising this phenomenon would help with utilising it better. Wong and Hill list seven degrees of Europeanisation (Wong & Hill, 2011a:211) that can be used to analyse how far have countries changed.

1. Significantly Europeanised;
2. Willing to Europeanise but still a partial or slow process;
3. Erratic in the degree of Europeanisation, either over time of between issue-areas (or both); no cumulative effects visible;
4. Consistently instrumental in the approach to Europeanisation;
5. Resistant to Europeanisation – though may still display some degree of change;
6. De-Europeanising – i.e. positively attempting to rid itself of any perceived restraints imposed by European foreign policy;
7. Never significantly Europeanised

The list gives an overview of how to evaluate countries and their relations with Europe. It is not a linear scale or a model to be followed but it does give some indications of how to at least compare countries to each other. Still, one would have to define what being Europeanised means, in order to start evaluating it.

In the end, one can see that Europeanisation is a difficult phenomenon, has various sides to it and has been used to analyse different policies. The goal of this article is to focus on one of those topics and see if utilising this approach is a good idea. Foreign policy differs from many others, therefore it could be looked as a special case.

Problems with foreign policy in Europe
Foreign policy can usually be described as a state’s actions towards the outside. It could mean a strategy or it could just be a general behaviour. There are so many things that can affect a country’s foreign policy. Most of these factors can be summarised into two groups: inside and outside of the state. From inside the country (or dependant on the country), just to name a few, it could be a country’s size (Hey 2003), its decision makers (Hudson 2005) and decision making process (Hudson 2005). A country’s resources and possibilities are a factor as are many other things. From the outside, there are even more factors, for example (especially for the small states) international pressure (Hey 2003) or world order in general. Whether it is peaceful or whether there is chaos. There are many things that influence a country’s foreign policy. Some of the many things are a country’s allies and neighbourhood. Europe plays a part in its countries’ foreign policies, one way or the other. The problem with Europeanisation is that Europe’s influence is just one among other factors. If foreign policy of a country turns out to be similar to Europe (though difficulties with that were discussed before), how is it certain that this is a process of Europeanisation not something else. State’s foreign policy may only appear similar to rest of Europe because of other factors.

There is also a second question, why is this happening? What makes a country change its foreign policy to a more Europeanised one? The simplest explanation is EU influence. Even though European Union does not have a centralised foreign policy, there is a connection. Wong and Hill (2011b) see that is connected to other policies that are strictly centralised (economic etc.) or that CFSP does have an effect. Members are affected by all aspect of the European Union. For some, it is simply that, Europeanisation is automatic or at least resumed when a country becomes a member. Europeanisation is therefore connected to their membership in the EU, like in the case of Slovakia (Kajnč 2011). Maybe the whole idea is not specifically EU based but connected to other agendas like the Northern Dimension or security as it is with the case of Finland (Haukkala & Ojanen 2011). These are the examples that show that European Union has an effect on foreign policy in different ways. What about specific examples?

_Eastern Europe as an example_

When looking at European countries and their changing foreign policies, certain changes are evident. Eastern European countries have changed its foreign policies in the last 25 years and have become more European in many ways. This is a good and fertile ground for Europeanisation research. Yet, even here are some pitfalls. Aligning foreign policy with Europe may have multiple reasons behind it but it may also be accidental. Ratner (2009) looks into
democratic transition and sees that internal and external issues are often connected and that democratic transition changes foreign policy anyway. When analysing Eastern European and other “new” European countries, this plays a part. What if, the changes in foreign policy in Eastern Europe since 1990s have not been due to being next to Europe nor is their goal to be similar to Europe, maybe they are just becoming democratic and therefore changing their approach. It could easily be that what is considered to be “Europeanised foreign policy” is just something that democratic countries have when they are in Europe. Also, Eastern Europe tends to be rather volatile in its foreign policy approaches, moving closer and further away from Europe, swinging back and forth. Poland is a good example who has changed its approach multiple times. Yet, they are a member of European Union as are many others so some level of Europeanisation is present.

Almost all of Eastern Europe has joined the European Union and many others (Balkan countries, Moldova, possibly Ukraine) are following. They are also changing their foreign policies, Bulgaria and Romania both pledged to be more Europe-centric after their accession to the European Union (Bechev 2009) and have done so (somewhat). Many others have changed as well but the question is, why is it happening? Europeanisation does not specifically claim to have an ideological basis but it is often implied. With the case of Eastern Europe, one can be quick to claim proof of it. Yet, the situation does sometimes imply something else, maybe it’s not an ideological change or that it is something that comes from within, it’s not because the countries’ priorities have shifted, but it is a necessity. Eastern Europe wants to be in the European Union and therefore follows EU rules and expectations. Why they want to be in the EU, is a different issue altogether. Still, the end issue is that there are very few solid examples of Europeanisation of Eastern European foreign policies and they might have other reasons behind them. This refers back to the topic of spill-over from other areas and EU membership as a factor that makes the situation somewhat automatic. Still, Eastern Europe is just part of Europe.

Old Europe

If Eastern Europe has had multiple reasons for change, Western Europe is somewhat different. In the case of “Old Europe” we see Europeanisation going both ways. It illustrates the complexity of the phenomenon. Western European countries design their foreign policy themselves or it happens on its own but they are largely affected by their internal issues. A good example of this is United Kingdom whose foreign policy has been affected by many issues and
people like Tony Blair’s person and style (Dyson 2006), relations with the US and domestic policies. They are also a big country by European standards so they themselves have an influence on others as well as being influenced by them.

The top down approach implies that a country might change their foreign policy according to the EU. There are plenty of examples of this process happening to both established European states like Germany (Müller, 2011), Denmark and Sweden (Michalski, 2013) or Southern European countries like Malta (Fiott, 2010) and Greece (Agnantopoulos, 2013). Most of these cases examine either the general changes in foreign policy before and after EU accession or specific topics (like the case of Germany and Israel) that have changed over the years. There is also a difference between Europeanization and EU-ization (Flockhart, 2010) but for the sake of this article, they are seen as the same phenomenon. So there is plenty of evidence that processes like these are common. Even Western European countries change their foreign policy to match Europe. Especially regarding Western Europe, there is also the bottom-up approach to consider.

A version of Europeanisation is when instead of changing one’s foreign policy to suit Europe, the state instead uses the European framework to further their own agenda. Germany is an example of this (Müller 2011) with their influence on Europe. Though how much of that process is planned and how much accidental, is difficult to say. Germany has not been clear about their desires and in general it does seem that their foreign policy decision are at least not completely strategically planned (Hellmann et al 2005). Another example is Greece (Economides 2005) whose dispute with Turkey found the European framework useful.

These are just a few examples but they illustrate the relationship Western Europe has with Europeanisation. It is the starting and the end point at the same time. It might be connected to the idea that Europeanisation is closely linked to identity and national interest (Michalski, 2013; Müller, 2011). This means that in some cases (and one would claim Germany to be a good example here) Europeanisation could represent both sides to the argument.

There is one more big problem with Europe’s foreign policy. When comparing foreign policies to Europe’s what would be the “European Foreign Policy.” There are currently documents in place and some actions have been taken but as history has shown, it is not much. The reactions to the crisis in Ukraine in 2013 and onwards were slow and not unanimous. What is Europe’s foreign policy?
The obvious issue here is of course the lack of clearly stated and centralised European foreign policy. This is probably the key issue differentiating this from any set or written policy. There are no set rules for European foreign policy and to many it seems no common understanding. The Common Foreign and Security Policy exist as do more and more foreign policy initiatives but there is no central documentation that would make research into it, watertight. There are those that characterise European foreign policy, maybe call it Venutian (as opposed to Marsian like the US) (Malici 2006). Others claim that Europe has high ambitions and Europe would like to be (or maybe even is) a rising superpower (Krotz & Maher 2011). Theorists aside, a common foreign policy is emerging from the empirical evidence as well. There has been a rapid expansion in the scope and institutional capacity of EU foreign policy-making (Tonra & Christiansen 2004). What used to be a clearly intergovernmental policy has become increasingly supranational and states have started to use the European foreign policy framework for their own interests (Müller 2011, Cebici & Aaltola 2011). This coupled with the emergence of Russian trade sanctions, clearer policies towards neighbouring countries and implementation of European External Action, there is basis to think that European foreign policy could become a reality.

**Past and present of Visegrad states**

Europeanisation of Visegrad states is difficult to measure, mostly because European foreign policy is difficult to pin down and foreign policy in general is difficult to measure. Europeanisation can be seen as democratisation or westernisation and Visegrad states have definitely gone through both those processes in the last decades. All have become members of the European Union and NATO as well so it is understandable why their policies, including foreign policy, have changed. Still, why and how Europeanised are they?

**Poland**

Poland is the biggest Eastern European country in the European Union, one of the big six. Their opinions are important and they have a significant influence. They have also displayed some of the biggest changes in their foreign policy during the 21st century, especially towards European Union and Russia. They have played a significant part in negotiations with Ukraine in 2004 and again after the 2013 crisis started. On the other hand, Poland’s opinions on Europe and its neighbours have significantly changed in the last decade. The biggest difference probably has been the government of Donald Tusk (in office 2007-2014) who were active in Europe, supporting the Lisbon treaty and overall more integration (BBC 2008). This was in contrast to
the president at the time, Lech Kaczynski. After Tusk left office to head the European Union, his successor followed the same principles until their defeat in the next election. The new government in place since 2015 has been the re-emergence of Law and Justice party, led by Jaroslaw Kaczynski, prime minister before Tusk and brother of late president Lech. The stark contrast between the Tusk pro-European government and the current Law and Justice government (led by Beata Szydlo), is clear. Poland has actively complained about Europe for a long time and after the Brexit vote, has made it clear that they support a more decentralised Europe (The Guardian 2016). The foreign policy of Poland has changed in general as well, the approach to Russia has become more negative, mostly due to the 2010 plane crash that left a large part of Polish leadership (including Lech Kaczynski) dead. The plane crash was investigated during Donald Tusk’s government and deemed to be an accident but the investigation has been reopened (Newsweek 2016). Overall, Poland’s relationships with others have changed and if there was a clear indication of pro-Europe or Europeanised approach, it has now been diminished.

Hungary

In 2006 Hungary became the first post-Soviet state to re-elect their government, leftist liberal party with mass appeal and fairly pro-European approach. Ten years later Hungary has become one of the leading Eurosceptics with a very conservative and nationalist party at the helm of the country. Their relationship with Europe has only become more problematic with the migrant crisis and differences of opinion regarding Hungary’s approach to freedoms within the country. The most notable difference of opinion has been regarding the migrant crisis where Hungary has taken clear actions against any refugees and migrants which in return has led to problematic relations with other European leaders (Traynor 2015). Hungary along with other Visegrad states has also called for a de-centralised Europe (Guardian 2016) and has made clear statements against European foreign actions. The Hungarian prime minister Victor Orban was and has been one of the most vocal opponents of sanctions against Russia (Reuters 2014) and has not changed his mind (EU Observer 2016). This is one of the few clear indications where a country has stood against what is considered to be European Union foreign policy.

Hungary has never been a very pro-European country, especially compared to the Baltic States, for example. Hungary’s position has never been that strong in Europe, compared to Poland but their part as a neighbour to the Balkans and their historical ties to other neighbours have had some influence and could have more. On the other hand, their political leadership is clearly
against European politics and has stated so multiple times. European Union foreign actions are not popular in Hungary and European Union is not popular with the Hungarian government.

**Czech Republic**

In 2009, Czech Republic became the first clearly Eurosceptical country to hold the European Union presidency. Their influence on policies during those 6 months was minor and Czech Republic has moved back and forth on their approach to Europe, more than most countries in Europe. A country geographically at the centre of Europe, identity and current issues, both play a part in their approach to Europe and foreign policy in general. Czech Republic has had a strange position in Europe, being closely related to its central European neighbours but also having a difficult Eastern European past. The country has also a very mixed view of Europe, currently mostly being against it, a fight led by the outspoken president Milos Zeman (Guardian 2015).

Czech Republic is small by world standards and fairly small by European standards but they have had an impact on Europe and have managed to upload their policies to the European Union (discussed at large by Neumann 2015). There are many agendas Czech Republic can have: Eastern Partnership, overall spread of democracy, and energy security. These issues are relevant to the country and relevant to Europe, Europeanization (both ways) is possible.

**Slovakia**

Slovakia’s approach to Europe has always been different from its neighbours. Known to be one of the less Eurosceptic and has definitely benefited a lot from European Union membership. Sometimes seen as the “little brother” to Czech Republic, their approach has been somewhat mixed regarding European affairs. Still, in the last few years Slovakia has become significantly less friendly towards the European Union and is more similar to its neighbours now, than ever before. Among other issues, Slovakia has supported the more decentralised government of Europe (Guardian 2016) and is strongly against the current refugee system but unlike its neighbours, focuses on a more universal solution (Politico 2016). In Slovakia’s case, a part of it might also be connected to the fact that out of the four Visegrad states, Slovakian public is most supportive of a common foreign policy, 70% positive and only 22% negative (Eurobarometer 84). The reasons behind this support might stem from Slovakia’s geographical position and neighbours as both the migrant crisis and Russia’s actions have had an influence. Energy security and Eastern partnership are also relevant to Slovakia, similar to the Czech
Republic. There are opportunities here for Europeanisation as well as obstacles if the developed policy does not suit the political elite.

**Future Europeanisation of Visegrad foreign policy**

Foreign policy is influenced by many things, as stated previously: external issues, history and identity, public opinion, decision makers and decision-making process, among others. When taking that into consideration, this paper now looks at what are the possibilities of Europeanising Visegrad foreign policy, focusing on the ruling parties, public opinion and external issues. Doing that would have benefits and there are some clear reasons why this would be advisable for the Visegrad countries and some indications that this might happen, common foreign policy is supported by some countries, there are clear outcomes the countries might wish for and co-operation might be the best way in some cases. There are also hindrances and problems with a more Europeanised foreign policy: the political leadership is very right wing in some cases, public opinion does not always support common foreign policy and some countries clearly do not agree with Europe’s agenda.

**Public Opinion**

In the 21st century and in a democratic country, public opinion matters. This also includes foreign policy making and larger security and even defence matters. European Union has also been an issue of public scrutiny for a long time and some countries have been constantly Eurosceptic, United Kingdom being a clear example. Support for a common foreign policy is still among one of the more popular ideas of the EU and the union average is 63% support and 26% opposed (Eurobarometer 84). Two Visegrad states are above average, aforementioned Slovakia with a very strong support and Poland with around the same results as the union average (67% support, 21% opposed). Public opinion could at least be a factor in these two countries, when it comes to changes in foreign policy. Then again, numbers are never permanent as displayed by both Poland and Czech Republic where public support for EU foreign policy fell by 8% between 2015 and 2016 surveys (Eurobarometer 84). Part of this can be explained by European Union actions, part by the migrant crisis as support for EU matters in general has declined in both those countries. On the other end of the spectrum is Czech Republic, where the public opinion is one of the least supportive of common foreign policy, 50% support and 43% opposed. Hungary is below EU average as well, 62% support and 31% opposed. Public does not have to define, what that policy is so it is not clear what kind of policy is seen as common, just the idea of a common one is supported. This support is likely to change.
once common foreign policy becomes more known and people have a better chance to make up their mind.

*Government decision makers*

Visegrad states have been making headlines in Europe for their governments, mostly Poland and Hungary. Still, as seen from overview of the four countries, all have a distinct anti-European approach and will probably not change that anytime soon. The biggest fuel to the current situation has been the migrant crisis and due to their location, some Visegrad states have been under fire for their treatment of migrants and approach to Europe in general (Wall Street Journal 2015). At the same time, it is Europe’s own agenda that could solve the migrant crisis and support for that would help. Still, as Europe currently has no plans and migrants themselves do not fall under foreign policy, it is likely that the migrant topic will affect Visegrad view of EU foreign policy in a positive way.

There is one other issue that is clearly foreign policy and European: EU-Russia relations. On one hand, this topic is relevant for all Visegrad (and Eastern European) states as Russia’s actions in Ukraine have been problematic for the countries and at the same time, Eastern European countries are all heavily affected by the economic sanctions. This would be an issue where a common foreign policy would help and where Visegrad input would be crucial. Visegrad states could upload their own policies into the European system, especially a big state like Poland could benefit, especially under the current regime that is clearly anti-Russian. Whether this agenda would find support, is another matter. Still, as seen by the case of Czech Republic, there are clear elements of trying to upload their own agenda, all four together could make their voice heard.

There are two obstacles to this plan. First, the four countries have difficulty agreeing with each other as Poland is currently anti-Russian and Hungary has fairly friendly relations with Russia. Second, the security needs that the countries might have, have already been covered by NATO and it is understandable why some states might not be interested in adding a new layer to the co-operation. This has been a common problem with EU’s foreign and security policy and might explain the lack of interest in a common foreign policy across Europe. And as with public opinion, if Europeanisation turned out to be adapting to a European agenda as opposed to projecting their own, the approach to Europe and its foreign affairs might become even more negative than it already is. As there is a general negative approach towards European Union, it
is difficult to expect them to work together inside the Union, may it be their own agenda or even more, adopting a European one.

**External factors and other policies**

There are other factors influencing foreign policy, a country’s own cultural background and identity, and external affairs. In the case of Visegrad states, their European identity has always been a complex issue as has been the future of Europe. Europe’s migrant situation and inability to move forward on Eastern Partnership, both have an influence on Visegrad’s view of Europe and of its foreign activities. External factors currently are not working in favour of a more Europeanised foreign policy. Still, both those topics offer an opportunity to influence said policies and develop a new agenda for both. Especially since Eastern Europe at large has stayed away from most policy making.

**Conclusions**

Central Eastern Europe has been struggling with their place in Europe and their foreign policy has been difficult to pin down, even by themselves. Currently it is not that Europeanised and it seems that it might not be that any time soon. Still, if one sees Europeanisation as a way to project one’s own foreign policy unto Europe, using the European framework, there are multiple possibilities for it to work out. Visegrad states have some specific interests in foreign policy that the European Union could help achieve and therefore there is a chance that further Europeanisation might occur.

Europeanisation is also a top-down process and from that angle, Visegrad states have very little interest in European affairs. Public interest is not overwhelming or in some cases, underwhelming, and the governments of the countries are currently not pro-European in general. Those two factors together in turn make it difficult even to project one’s own vision unto Europe as support for anything European is minimal. It is difficult to predict the future but during the time when Euroscepticism is on the rise and the first EU exit referendum has happened, possible Europeanisation is a relevant topic. For Eastern Europe, with Russia being more active and the overall security situation changing, a more clear European foreign policy would help. Therefore, there are options here for Visegrad states to find their own way together with Europe.
References


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