

Approaching contestation of EU foreign policy: Analyzing various causes, modes, and effects

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This working paper sheds light on the various causes, modes and effects of the contestation of European Union foreign policy (EUIP). It summarizes the findings of different contributions to a recent Global Affairs Special Issue, focusing for example on the contestation regarding the EU's role in nuclear non-proliferation, migration or trade, but also contestation of its geopolitical standing. We highlight considerable variation in contestation causes, modes and effects across as well as within foreign policy clusters: Contestation could translate into more or less EU resources being available to act externally, into a change of focus and priority in EU foreign policy-making, and/or into a strengthening or weakening of the intergovernmental and supranational dynamics at focus. In the discussion of the findings, closer attention is paid to the relationship between internal and external factors shaping contestation.

Disclaimer:

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1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) seems to have reached a new momentum in its development, characterized by renewed contestation. EU policies and actions are being contested, both domestically – by the proliferation of nationalist, populist and Eurosceptic voices (De Wilde, Koopmans, Merkel, & Zürn, 2019; Falkner & Plattner, 2019; Zeitlin, Nicoli, & Laffan, 2019) – as well as on the global level – by re-emerging global power competition, the open contestation of norms of multilateral cooperation by emerging as well as new isolationist powers (such as former United States (US) President Donald Trump), and within international (non-governmental) organizations (Aggestam & Hyde-Price, 2019; Copelovitch, Hobolt, & Walter, 2020; Hill & Hurst, 2020; Ikenberry, 2018; Johansson-Nogués, Vlaskamp, &

Barbé, 2020; Riddervold & Newsome, 2018). While the contestation of EU actions and policies can be considered as a long-term phenomenon, especially with regard to EU foreign policy, the novelty of the situation stands in the multiplicity of contesting voices, as well as the nature of the new contesting actors (Johansson-Nogués et al., 2020). Furthermore, this contestation intertwines with a reconsideration of the values on which the EU is based and which it seeks to promote, which suggests a new shift in the Union's role and representation. Given on-going challenges in Europe (e.g. migration and solidarity crises, rise of illiberalism) as well as recent developments in EU politics (with a new Commission and therefore also new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP) coming into office in 2019), we aim to analyze afresh EU foreign policy in this arguably new environment: What are the origins of contestation (re-)emerging within and towards EU foreign policy? Which voices are contesting EU foreign policy? To what extent do EU values and norms still matter in foreign policy, when it comes to immediate reactions to external events? To what extent does this contestation impact the decision-making process, the actual implementation of decisions and thereby the effectiveness of EU foreign policy?

Contestation and EU foreign policy

The Cambridge Dictionary defines contestation as “the act of arguing or disagreeing about something” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). The concept has gained considerable momentum in International Relations (and in particular Constructivist International Relations) research over the past decades. Starting from a paradigm of norm diffusion and norm cycles (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998), with empirical realities changing, research moved to theorizing the causes, mechanisms and effects of norms, in terms of their meaning, their implementation and their evolution (Acharya, 2018; Niemann & Schillinger, 2016; Wiener, 2014, 2018). In this research strand, Antje Wiener's (2018, p. 2) definition of norm contestation as “a social practice of objecting to or critically engaging with norms” is among the definitions most commonly cited. Research on EU foreign policy and its contestation can therefore lean on this strand of International Relations research and its various theoretical propositions on types and modes of contestation (Deitelhoff & Zimmermann, 2018; Wiener, 2014, 2018; Zimmermann, Deitelhoff, & Lesch, 2018). Accordingly, contestation has started to receive more scholarly attention in European studies over the past decade: This includes theoretical considerations on the links between contestation and politicization trends in Europe (Costa, 2019) as well as more empirical studies on contestation from the inside and outside in various EU policy areas (Johansson-Nogués et al., 2020), such as neighborhood policy (Góra, Styczyńska, & Zubek, 2019). This Special Issue aims to contribute to this evolving strand of research by analyzing the varieties of contestation causes, modes and effects on EU foreign policy. For the purpose of this Special Issue, we define contestation of EU foreign policy as an implicit and explicit expression in discourse and/or action of political opposition towards European integration and/or concrete EU policies in the realm of foreign policy. By uncovering various root causes for contestation in foreign policy and distinguishing modes of discursive and action-based contestation, we reach a more nuanced understanding of what effects various contestatory practices have on the polity (i.e. institutions, decision-making structures) and policies of EU foreign policy (De Wilde & Trenz, 2012).

The three key research questions this Special Issue addresses are the following:

- How is EU foreign policy contested (modes), from the outside and/or the inside, and why do we see (increased) contestation in this policy area (causes)?
- What are the effects of EU foreign policy for the distinct policy areas and their internal and external integration dynamics?
- What can we learn from these patterns of causes, modes and effects of contestation about EU foreign policy-making?

This working paper presents the contributions and summarizes the findings of the Special Issue “Contestation of European Union foreign policy: causes, modes and effects” published in *Global Affairs* (Petri, Thevenin & Liedlbauer 2020). The subsequent sections will differentiate between four clusters of EU foreign policy, introduce

the Special Issue contributions and discuss how they relate to these EUFP clusters. In the next step, an overview of the contributions' findings is given before several reflections on cross-case lessons from the different patterns of contestation and avenues for future research are presented.

Clusters of EU foreign policy

We define EU foreign policy as “the area of European policies that is directed at the external environment with the objective of influencing that environment and the behavior of other actors within it, in order to pursue interests, values and goals” (Keukeleire & Delreux, 2014, p. 1). EU foreign policy can take multiple forms, can be implemented by various institutional actors and through various instruments, and can vary substantially across regions. To make sense of this multiplicity, we follow the literature on clustering EU foreign policy into four areas: (1) Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), (2) Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), (3) external action (e.g. trade, enlargement policies), and (4) internal policies with an external dimension (e.g. energy, climate, migration policies) (Keukeleire & Delreux, 2014). The former two clusters describe policies in which an “intergovernmental logic” dominates, meaning that Member States are in control of policy decisions (e.g. unanimity rules in Council structures) and that there has been no or only a very limited transfer of competences to the EU level. The latter two clusters form policies in which the “supranational logic” is more present, grasping policy areas in which more substantial transfers of competences to the EU level have taken place, therefore giving more institutional power to the various EU institutions and bodies next to the Council structures, namely the European Commission and European Parliament. External actions are examples of this latter category, in which supranational competences and the roles of the various institutions are more extended (e.g. the European Commission’s role in negotiating international trade agreements). In contrast, these supranational dynamics are more nuanced for internal policies with an external dimension as areas in which EU external engagement is built on the EU having developed a (more or less significant) internal *acquis* on specific policies, which enables – or even requires – EU actions on the same policies in the international arena (*in foro interno, in foro externo*).

This Special Issue aims at shedding light on the diversity of contestation causes, modes and effects in these various policy clusters of EU foreign policy. The seven articles composing this Special Issue cover all four clusters: CFSP and CSDP (Herrera 2020; Lecocq 2020), external action (Eliasson & Garcia-Duran 2020; Hasić, Džananović & Ramić-Mesihović 2020), and internal policies with an external dimension (Badell 2020; Petri & Biedenkopf 2020; Terzi 2020). There is a certain focus on the latter two clusters of EU foreign policy for two reasons: First, these areas are often described as less “traditional” foreign policies (Damro, Gstöhl, & Schunz, 2018; Keukeleire & Delreux, 2014), who have accordingly received less explicit attention from a “foreign policy” perspective than CFSP/CSDP, representing a comparative gap in the literature. Second, we expect to see differences in contestation dynamics between CFSP/CSDP and the two other clusters of foreign policy, since these represent domains in which EU policy-making capacity is greater due to an increased transfer of competences and the more dominant “supranational logic”. By comparing a diverse range of policy areas of EU foreign policy, we can uncover considerable variation in contestation causes, modes and effects across as well as within foreign policy clusters: Contestation could translate into more or less EU resources being available to act (e.g. EU policy instruments), into a change of focus/priority in EU foreign policy-making, and/or into a strengthening/weakening of the intergovernmental/supranational dynamics at focus.

Special issue contributions

With respect to the research questions, the contributions of this Special Issue give various insights. In the CFSP and CSDP clusters, the focus is first and foremost on intergovernmental dynamics and the absence of EU consensus for policy formulation. Manuel Herrera (2020), who concentrates on the issue of nuclear non-proliferation and on internal and external contestation towards the EU as an actor itself, highlights that this contestation is mainly a product of the EU’s actions, both in multilateral (i.e. the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference) and

bilateral (i.e. EU-India relations) settings. Sharon Lecocq (2020) starts from an external phenomenon, namely the proliferation of hybrid actors and orders in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and illustrates how EU internal contestation over two cases (Hamas and Hezbollah) poses challenges for EU geopolitical aspirations in its Southern neighborhood.

The two contributions in the external action cluster provide an inside-outside perspective on contestation by shifting their focus on non-EU local and civil society actors. Johan Eliasson and Patricia Garcia-Duran (2020), who examine the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in EU trade policy, question how the internal contestation of trade agreements, such as the Transatlantic Trade Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), impacted internal EU trade-policy-making and thereby also the EU's negotiation role externally. How the EU's "good neighborly relations" norm is challenged by local actors in Western Balkan countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia) is demonstrated by Jasmin Hasić, Nedžma Džananović and Lejla Ramić Mesihović (2020). The authors emphasize that this outside contestation of EU norms by (local) elites not only has consequences for the EU's geopolitical standing but also for its regional achievements.

The fourth cluster is covered by three different contributions. Franziska Petri and Katja Biedenkopf (2020) analyze the contestation of EU external climate policy from within by looking at debates in the European Council, Council of the EU and the European Parliament. While they point to the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement as the main external cause of contestation, they conclude that the EU could, despite internal protests by certain member states and populist parties, strengthen its position towards climate protection at the global level. In contrast, Diego Badell (2020) highlights that EU norms were weakened globally due to insufficient cohesion of member states' positions in the aftermath of the US withdrawal from the United Nations Global Compact of Migration. In this case as well, disagreement on EU (external) migration policy was issued by populist networks within member states persuading governments to pull out of the agreement. Özlem Terzi (2020) focuses on the European presence in the Arctic, developing a multi-level and multi-issue analysis. By examining the EU's stance regarding environmental protection, indigenous peoples' rights and (sustainable) economic development in the region, the author searches for the sources of contestation both from within and outside the EU and differentiates between political and normative contestation through a discourse-historical approach.

Special Issue findings: Contestation of EU foreign policy – diverse causes, various modes and multiple effects?

The next section sheds light on the findings of the Special Issue articles regarding the varieties of contestation causes, modes and effects on EU foreign policy (see Thevenin, Liedlbauer & Petri 2020). We start by reviewing the diverse causes, internal as well as external factors shaping contestation. Thereafter, we take a closer look at three relevant dimensions (actors, levels, substance) of the modes of contestation. Last, the effects of contestation on EUFP are analyzed.

Causes of contestation

To begin with the articles of this Special Issue bring reflections on the causes of contestation of diverse foreign policy areas. Indeed, both contestation of EUFP formulation and implementation seem to be driven by different factors that can be clustered in two main categories, i.e. the EU's internal and/or external environment.

The lack of EU internal consensus on contemporary foreign policy issues is presented in several articles as the main factor creating and influencing internal and external contestation dynamics within EU foreign policy. On this point, Terzi (2020) demonstrates that the intra-EU contestation is due to the relative lack of an EU voice in the multi-issue and multilevel governance of the Arctic, which leads to EU interinstitutional disagreements. On a similar note, Herrera (2020) studies the diverging preferences of EU Member States regarding nuclear non-proliferation and makes the case that the absence of a common EU agreement alongside contested EU competences in this policy area represents a challenge to the EU's negotiation stance and capacity in non-proliferation policy.

The EU's external environment and external relations with different actors also greatly influence the contestation of EU foreign policy. The external factors shaping EU foreign policy contestation are diverse and range from security challenges, changing economic orders/globalization trends, the emergence of new actors in international politics (e.g. hybrid actors) as well as the behavior of individual third parties (e.g. former United States President Trump) (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni & Hofmann, 2019; Hill & Hurst, 2020; Ikenberry, 2018; Stephen & Zürn, 2019). The various case studies emphasize how this external dimension and especially the external (local) actors' dynamics impact contestation of EUFP. Hasić, Džananović and Ramić Mesihović (2020) demonstrate through their focus on EU norm domestication in Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia that the lack of consideration for local dynamics by the EU causes increased contestation of the EU's attempts to diffuse its enlargement policy norms. The external environment is also important in the case of EU trade policy, analyzed by Eliasson and Garcia-Duran (2020), in which the concern over lowering European standards in trade agreements leads to increased contestation and further involvement in policy formulation of CSOs. According to Lecocq (2020), the increasing importance of hybrid actors in the geopolitics of the MENA region constitutes an external challenge leading to contestation on foreign policy formulation and implementation among EU institutions.

The two categories of internal and external factors leading to contestation are by no means antithetical, and contestation might result from both internal and external stimuli. Indeed, Petri and Biedenkopf (2020) show the impact of the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement on internal EU climate ambitions. While on the one hand, the external contestation stimulus raised ambitions, on the other hand, it also strengthened the more climate skeptic political parties inside the European Parliament. A similar parallel of external and internal factors leading to contestation of EU foreign policy can be observed in the case of migration governance. Badell (2020) shows how the contestation of the United Nations Global Compact on Migration increased both due to external relations with the fierce criticism from the US President on the Global Compact (somewhat parallel to the Paris Agreement's contestation), as well as a lack of internal consensus amongst EU Member States on the issue of migration.

Modes of contestation

When considering modes of contestation of EU foreign policy across articles, we find variance on three dimensions – actors of contestation, levels of contestation and the substance of contestation – which together build the various modes of contestation.

Most articles of this Special Issue focus on actors within the EU's foreign policymaking machinery – namely the European Commission, the Council of the EU (rarely also the European Council), the European Parliament and the European External Action Service (EEAS). Only two article contributions consider actors “outside” to the EU's political system: Hasić, Džananović and Ramić Mesihović (2020) focus on how Western Balkan local stakeholders perceive and respond to EU foreign policy efforts to diffuse the norms of “good neighborly relations”; and Eliasson and Garcia-Duran (2020) analyze the impact of CSOs on EU trade agreement politics. The key difference between these two contributions lies in the latter generating insights into within-EU politics, whereas Hasić, Džananović and Ramić Mesihović (2020) follow an outside-in perspective on EU norms (Keukeleire & Lecocq, 2018; Lecocq & Keukeleire, 2018).

When looking at the various studies of within-EU level actors, what becomes most apparent is the dominance of analyses of configurations of Member States preferences and Council of the EU dynamics (Badell 2020; Herrera 2020; Lecocq 2020; Petri & Biedenkopf 2020; Terzi 2020). While the relevance of the Council of the EU in foreign policy making is uncontested in the clusters of CFSP and CSDP (Herrera 2020; Lecocq 2020), thereby explaining the choice for focusing the analyses on them, the choice for analyzing Member States preferences in areas of internal policies with an external dimension is particularly insightful (Badell 2020; Petri & Biedenkopf 2020; Terzi 2020). It emphasizes the relevance of Member States consensus on what external engagement on these less traditional and inherently more nuanced areas of foreign policy should look like. In contrast, it comes as a comparative surprise that three of the Special Issue's contributions dedicate attention to the EU's parliamentary chamber (Lecocq 2020; Petri & Biedenkopf 2020; Terzi 2020), which in terms of legal competences has been seen as a less influential actor

in EU foreign policy. Yet, this renewed attention speaks to recent trends in academic work on the European Parliament's emerging roles and pathways of influence in foreign policy (Raube, Müftüler-Bac, & Wouters, 2019; Stavridis & Irrera, 2015).

Analyses of the role of the European Commission and its stances are comparatively fewer among the contributions, yet unsurprisingly are most frequent in the supranational clusters of “external action”, namely trade agreements (Eliasson & Garcia-Duran 2020) and enlargement policies (Hasić, Džananović, & Ramić Mesihović 2020), and “internal policies with an external dimension”, such as multi-level Arctic policies (Terzi 2020) or migration (Badell 2020). Little focus has been on the Lisbon Treaty's 2009 innovation: the role of the EEAS (only explicitly mentioned in Herrera 2020 and Terzi 2020). This observation leads to the question of why the EEAS is not considered more prominently for tracing contestation. One explanation for this could be its interstitial character (Bátora, 2013) depending on foreign policy consensus in the Council and Commission policy instruments, therefore rather being affected by contestation rather than being an actor exercising contestation or a forum for contestation of its own.

Another relevant dimension of the modes of contestation (next to actors and levels) are the practices of contestation chosen (e.g. discourse, veto votes, etc.) on a specific aspect or substance of EUFP. A first binary distinction can be drawn between contributions in this Special Issue analyzing the “object” of what is contested, namely the formulation of a certain foreign policy – for example setting up a strategy on how to deal with non-state actors in the MENA region (Lecocq 2020) – and the actual implementation of a certain foreign policy – for example the EU's attempt to diffuse the “good neighborly relations” norm in Western Balkan countries (Hasić, Džananović, & Ramić Mesihović 2020). In most contributions of the Special Issue, the substance of contestation actually lies in the formulation of the policy within the EU and among its various actors (Badell 2020; Eliasson & Garcia-Duran 2020; Herrera 2020; Lecocq 2020; Petri & Biedenkopf 2020; Terzi 2020). Some analyses combine the formulation dimension with its implementation – for example when Badell (2020) analyzes how both the internal policy formulation or consensus-building on the EU's stance of the global compact for migration is contested as well as the EU's policy stances enacted in the international arena (similar in Terzi/Arctic policy (2020) and Herrera/non-proliferation policy (2020)). This hints at the entangled nature of internal and external contestation practices. Nuances can also be drawn in the chosen mode of how contestation is enacted. While most contributions show how contestation is expressed in discursive disagreement (e.g. between EU institutions in Lecocq (2020)), there are also cases of contestation shown in explicit policy decisions – for example in Badell (2020)'s case of EU Member States not just disagreeing on which position the EU should take in negotiations on the Global Compact for Migration, but also individually choosing to not sign the Compact in contrast to the EU's stance.

Effects of contestation

Each of the modes as well as causes of contestation produce specific effects on the EUFP areas studied in this Issue. This contribution reviews the subsequent effects of contestation by policy areas and draws an overarching framework of what this increased contestation in different foreign policy clusters means for EU foreign policy, namely for the EU's capacity to formulate coherent foreign policies, the EU's international presence, external perceptions and international relations.

The vast majority of articles in this Issue demonstrate a rather deleterious effect of contestation on the EU's ability to engage in policy-making (formulation and/or implementation) in the global arena. Indeed, the cases of the Global Compact on Migration or nuclear non-proliferation policy – respectively developed in this Special Issues by Badell (2020) and Herrera (2020) – show that the internal disagreement between EU Member States results in a lack of clarity of the EU's policy position and norm promotion on the international level. Consequently, the absence of cohesion amongst Member States to push forward a common position on the global stage leads to a weakening of norms internationally. If a common position can be found or defended, it is only the lowest common denominator chosen against more ambitious – and thereby open to more potential internal and external contestation – agenda setting. Similar observations can be made regarding the EU's presence in the Arctic, studied

by Terzi (2020), where the EU is lacking the power to push its preferences forward in complex multi-level, multi-actor and multi-issue settings.

As regards the EU's enlargement process (Hasić, Džananović, & Ramić Mesihović (2020)), contestation leads to an unsuccessful norm diffusion and domestication, notably on the account of a weak understanding of local dynamics by EU institutions. The diffusion of EU norms is also important in the case of external trade policy, and one could expect that the increased involvement of CSOs in shaping the process of concluding trade agreements, such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership in the case studied by Eliasson and Garcia-Duran (2020), can positively impact the transparency process and overall standards of EU trade agreements' contents and negotiation processes. Lecocq (2020) argues that the policy emerging from intra-EU contestation regarding how to deal with hybrid actors generates difficulties for the EU to engage – and a fortiori influence the situation – in the MENA region.

An exception stands out in the case of climate contestation, as investigated by Petri and Biedenkopf (2020). Responding to the US announcement to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, EU institutions rhetorically strengthened their foreign climate change ambitions containing external contestation, in spite of small, yet strengthened internal contestation forces in the European Parliament.

Cross-case lessons on EU foreign policy contestation

What can we learn from these insights on causes, modes and effects of contestation dynamics in the various areas of EU foreign policy?

To start with the comparison of the EUFP clusters identified in this Special Issue's introduction, there are a number of lessons that can be drawn from the intergovernmental and supranational dynamics studied. For the intergovernmental foreign policy clusters – the CFSP and CSDP – this Special Issue offered two case studies illustrating how policy-making within the EU and its consequent foreign policy actions are challenged by various and at times diverging perceptions of the EU's external activities (Herrera (2020) and Lecocq (2020)). With contestation of “what” the EU should do towards certain actors (e.g. hybrid actors) and on certain foreign policy issues (e.g. non-proliferation), the EU effectively stands without basis to move actively in the international arena. Considering the strong role of intergovernmental dynamics in these clusters, it comes as little surprise that intra-EU divergences appear to be a root cause of limited EU CFSP/CSDP capacity (Franke & Varma, 2019; Johansson-Nogués, Vlaskamp, & Barbé, 2020; Toje, 2008).

For the supranational foreign policy clusters – external action and internal policies with an external dimension – this Issue offered five case studies at the heart of longstanding EU external policies, i.e. trade and enlargement, as well as growingly externally important policies of climate action, migration and the multiple issues in the EU's engagement towards the Arctic. For the external action cluster, the chosen perspectives on the EU's strong trade and enlargement policies speak to the need to consider “new”, yet relevant actors of potential contestation – namely actors outside the EU's institutional machinery. While much attention has been paid to the role of the Council, Commission and partly the European Parliament in both cases (Garcia-Duran & Eliasson, 2017; Góra, Styczyńska, & Zubek, 2019; Rosén, 2016), focusing on the role of CSOs and local stakeholders as contesting agents takes into account new democratic (Ruzza, 2011; Thiel & Uçarer, 2014) and decentring (Keukeleire & Lecocq, 2018) demands to EU foreign policy-making and implementation. Regarding lessons on the internal policies with external dimensions, we see how contestation dynamics originating from inside the EU (e.g. new party cleavages) and outside the EU (e.g. challengers to EU status and/or to EU norms) intertwine, thereby reflecting the very nature of this paralleled foreign policy cluster (in foro interno, in foro externo). Seeing how only in the case of climate action, consensus between Member States could overcome these various contestation dynamics, puts a question mark behind the EU's ambition to act as a relevant foreign policy actor in priority regions (such as the Arctic) and essential policy areas (such as migration).

There are several lessons that can be drawn from the contributions of the Special Issue for future research on contestation dynamics in EU foreign policy. As highlighted before, the effects of contestation on specific areas of

foreign policy were also dependent on the various actors, their levels and modes of contestation. First and foremost, analyses benefit from an inclusion of a broad range of actors. It may be noted that contestation of EU foreign policy could arise from several actors, i.e. CSOs (Eliasson & Garcia-Duran 2020), local stakeholders in third countries (Hasić, Džananović, & Ramić Mesihović (2020)) and national and EU institutions with their communication on particular policies (e.g. Council of the EU in Badell 2020). Above that, several contributions stressed that internal contestation is often linked to populist actors and parties (e.g. Petri & Biedenkopf 2020). Future research should analyze how the role of these various internal EU and external actors played out in other cases of EUFP and if by analyzing them in parallel, alliances between these actors can be identified.

Moreover, we notice a strong presence of intergovernmental actors in the study of contestation dynamics (i.e. within the EU's Councils and among Member States), whilst the supranational level (European Commission, European Parliament) and interstitial level (the EEAS) are more often excluded from the frame of analysis. This prominence of intergovernmental decision-making in the EU's external relations is not surprising, however it seems to be leading to a diminishing of the EU's norm promotion and negotiating power, due to the lack of internal consensus amongst EU Member States' diverging policy preferences. In other words, the EU's internal limitations driven by internal (and/or external) contestation engender negative external consequences with difficulties for the EU to engage actively and deliberately on the global stage. Hence, the missing unified EU position or the lack of any position at the EU level has a direct effect on the EU's negotiation powers at the global level. Researchers interested in contestation should therefore focus more on those situations where the EU aims to enter the international stage as a unified actor but lacks consensus among its members. Examples for such issue areas – not treated in this Special Issue – could be, human rights standards, rule of law promotion, or sanction politics towards certain actors.

At last, contributions demonstrated that inside and outside contestation dynamics are often intertwined. This was especially the case when the decisions of more powerful non-EU actors contradicted the EU's foreign policy position and resulted in contestation by internal actors. Therefore, the internal and external contestation stimuli should not be analyzed separately. It pays off to consider them both since outside contestation can trigger inside contestation and vice versa.

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