

# 1 Introduction

## The challenges and opportunities of EU membership for small states

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### 1.1 Introduction

The European Union (EU) has faced numerous crises and policy challenges throughout its existence (Schimmelfennig, 2018). Indeed, the large number of crises and a seemingly never-ending continuation of challenges in different policy areas have inspired observers to even talk about a ‘polycrisis’ (Zeitlin et al., 2019). These crises have often had an asymmetric impact on member states, resulting in noticeable divisions within the Union.

The evidence of the two recent decades is illustrative. The Eurozone crisis divided the richer northern member states and the poorer southern member states (Verdun, 2015). This division was further exacerbated by the impact of the refugee crisis on Southern Europe, which additionally alienated many Central and Eastern European countries. These were reluctant to accept any larger numbers of refugees (Zaun, 2018) and even came up with an idea of a ‘flexible solidarity’ to reject the Commission’s proposal to help the frontline countries via ‘burden sharing’ (Visegrad Group, 2016). The recent COVID-19 crisis highlighted differences between member states as it hit Southern Europe particularly hard (Ferrera et al., 2021). In addition, important policy divergences on climate change emerged between the green states (e.g. the Nordic countries) and the not-so-green ones (e.g. Poland, Czechia, the Netherlands) to mention just a few of the dividing lines. Most recently, the Russian invasion of Ukraine united most member states; however, at the same time it highlighted different allegiances on the part of some members (e.g. Hungary), an ambivalent position of others (e.g. Germany) and the specific geopolitical concerns of other member countries (e.g. Greece), for which the Russian Federation is not the main or only security risk. These are just the most visible dividing lines emerging within the EU since the mid-2000s on top of which a whole complex socio-economic system of division exists within the Union, manifesting itself to a certain degree during negotiations and voting in the Council of the EU (Finke, 2017; Hosli et al., 2011; Mattila, 2008; Naurin and Lindahl, 2008).

EU politics in general and the above-mentioned crises in particular have been the focus of a large and diverse literature. However, one of the key traits of the existing literature is that it either deals with institutional (i.e. polity) and policy issues from an overarching perspective (Frieden and Walter, 2017; Harteveld et al., 2018; Kratochvíl and Sychra, 2019) or it zooms in on ‘important’ cases, i.e., the large

member states, that is, Germany, France, Italy and the UK pre-Brexit (Bulmer, 2014; Fontan and Saurugger, 2019), or ‘problematic’ cases, such as Greece (and the threat of Grexit), Italy or Ireland for the Eurozone crisis (Bull, 2018; Clements et al., 2014), Hungary for the refugee crisis (Kallius et al., 2016) and Poland for climate policy issues (Marcinkiewicz and Tosun, 2015).

However, other member states are not studied that much and we know relatively little about the preferences, motivations, strategies and struggles of many EU member states, especially the small ones. This is problematic, as the EU has changed in ways that have increased the weight of the non-large states. When the European Coal and Steel Community and later the European Economic Community were founded in the 1950s, large states represented 50 per cent of all member states. However, successive enlargements – especially since the mid-1990s – and the departure of the United Kingdom have drastically changed the composition of the EU (Sedelmeier, 2014; Brusenbauch Meislova, 2019) – at least when viewed through the prism of size of countries operationalized in terms of number of inhabitants.

Today, the EU has 27 member states, but only five of those can be considered large. Among those, the fifth largest state, Poland, is – population wise – only half the size of the largest state, Germany. Then there is a substantial gap, with the sixth and seventh largest states (Romania and the Netherlands) are only one-quarter the size of German population. The eighth largest state, Belgium, is slightly more than one-eighth the size of Germany with a population of 11.5 million. From there, the size of member states gradually decreases down to Malta, with a population of 0.5 million. Thus, the group of small-to-medium-sized states makes up over 80 per cent of the member states, while the five biggest states represent over 60 per cent of the EU’s population. Moreover, since the first ‘round’ of eastern enlargement of the EU of 2004 (Toshkov, 2017) the composition of the European Commission was changed with each member state having its ‘own’ Commissioner. This means an improved position of small- and medium-sized member states compared to the previous system in which biggest members had two Commissioners. In addition to the enlargements, the Lisbon Treaty significantly changed voting rules in the Council of the EU since 2014 (with a transition period until 2017 when old rules could have been used if requested by member states during the negotiations). This change shifted the voting weight away from negotiation capacity of member states – since until 2014 the number of votes was determined by mutual agreement – to size as number of inhabitants became one of the components of voting weight.

Moreover, the deepening of integration over the years resulted in an increase of the number of areas under qualified majority voting, and the culture of consensus further strengthened the position of small member countries (Hosli et al., 2013; Heisenberg, 2005). Such development brought further changes to the mutual dynamics between the big and small members. As a result, Nasra argued already in 2011 that ‘the relevance of small states is set to increase considerably,’ especially in areas where consensus needs to be achieved due to the different positions of member states (p. 177). Indeed, the position of small member states in the EU has steadily become more important as the changes in EU’s composition and

decision-making mechanism as well as development of new policies and reshaping of the existing ones increased their visibility and role.

Despite such developments, Grimaud claims that ‘small state governmental influence in the shaping and taking of EU decisions has been overlooked’ (2018: 24). Small EU member states have been on the margin of academic research since the 1990s as the liberal intergovernmental approach – the dominant theoretical framework explaining European integration represented especially by the writings of Andrew Moravcsik (1993) – has put the biggest members under the spotlight and basically ignored the other member countries. This has changed thanks to pioneering work by Baldur Thorhallsson (2000), David Arter (2000) and others (Bunse, 2009; Larsen, 2005; Panke, 2010). However, by the 2010s, we have witnessed a decrease of interest in this research agenda in book-length publications. Discussion moved mostly from books to journals (however, see Mišík, 2019, as an exception), with the latter focusing on particular countries, issues or policies in the last decade (e.g. Blockmans, 2017; Nasra, 2011; Panke, 2011; Panke and Gurol, 2018). Thus, the significance of the changing dynamics for small states has not yet been fully explored.

In addition, small states may have specific needs and face different challenges in EU politics. While small- and medium-sized states are in a large majority, individual states from this group may struggle to get their voices heard in an EU of almost 450 million inhabitants, especially in processes where decisions are taken mostly by qualified majority in the Council of the EU (as this is considered to be a part of an ordinary legislative procedure). At the same time, they may be particularly dependent on the EU for support, or so-called ‘shelter.’ Shelter theory, developed in a volume edited by Baldur Thorhallsson, argues that ‘small states need external shelter in order to survive and prosper’ (2019: 1). Such shelter can be provided by larger states or regional and international organizations. While this volume examined small states – or precisely Iceland – in the international arena, Baldacchino and Wivel (2021) looked at this issue from a theoretical perspective. They argue that small states are more exposed to external pressure, at a higher risk of losing national independence and more dependent on other actors. In light of small internal markets, they are economically dependent on international trade. Their small armies mean that they have a limited ability to defend themselves, especially in the face of threats from substantially larger states, and therefore they support alliances and defence organizations. Moreover, small states’ ability to shape international politics is limited by their size and weight.

In the current context, these risks become increasingly salient and stakes for small states visibly higher. The COVID-19 crisis led to a decrease in multilateralism and disrupted the global economy (cf. Dookeran, 2021; Högenauer et al., 2021). Therefore, small member states supported common solutions to pandemic in different forms as they have been supportive of EU action in the area of health policy in the long term (Brooks et al., 2020). Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the tensions between the West on the one hand and the Russian Federation and China on the other are rising. The impact on energy and cybersecurity is severe, and, for the first time in decades, a major war involving multiple states is not inconceivable.

In light of these dynamics, the proposed edited volume aims to analyze – in the first section – the strategies of small states in the main decision-making bodies of the EU. The section is looking for an answer, through a series of comparative chapters, to the first and second research question of this edited volume: How can small states overcome the challenge of size and influence EU decision-making in the context of different EU institutions and their specific composition and procedures? How effective are the strategies that member states employ to overcome these challenges? The role of experience, cooperation and prioritization in building up capacity is at the centre of this analysis. In the second section, this edited volume seeks to explore these dynamics further in specific policy case studies to find answers to the third and fourth research questions: How do small members influence individual policies? How does the EU respond (or fail to respond) to the needs of small states? These case studies focus on foreign and security policy, where small states are often particularly dependent on the shelter function of other states or international organizations. These cases allow us to understand not only the strategies of small states but also their specific interests and motivations in these policy areas and the extent to which these policies meet their expectations. By examining both institutional and policy dynamics of small member states' membership in the European Union, this edited volume aims to develop a complex picture of their membership experience and thus contribute to our knowledge about their place and impact in the European Union.

## 1.2 'Smallness' in the EU context

One of the main challenges when studying small states is how to define them (Long, 2017). Authors have applied a wide range of conceptual definitions, but some have assumed a different approach: for instance, Björkdahl (2008), Blockmans (2017) and Jakobsen (2009) do not provide any explicit definition of 'smallness' and only list member states they consider to be small. This approach, together with a wide variety of explicit but diverse definitions by other scholars, creates a situation when the concept of the small state is used vaguely within studies of both European integration and international relations (Jazbec, 2001; Pace, 2000). As a consequence, the academic discussion is 'plagued by a lack of cumulative insights' (Thorhallsson and Wivel, 2006: 652) as findings from different studies are difficult to compare since they consider a different set of states to be 'small.' On the other hand, Maass (2009) claims that such a situation provides us with conceptual flexibility enabling the deployment of different research designs; and Long (2017) calls for focusing on empirical examination of individual cases instead of trying to find an ideal (and ever elusive) definition of small states.

In the existing academic literature, there are several types of small state definitions. These can be grouped into three main categories. The first type corresponds to a constructivist logic and sees size as a construct that depends on a perception of smallness rather than some kind of material (i.e. physical) characteristic. Whether a state considers itself small or large thus depends on the self-perception of the state; in turn, its position in the international arena depends on the perception of others

(Tiilikainen, 2006: 73). The advantage of such an approach is that (self) perception may provide a better explanation of how states act and of how other states react to their behaviour than objective criteria. A good example might be the foreign policy ambitions of (smaller) France, which pursues the ideal of a ‘grande nation,’ compared to (larger) Germany, which has actively avoided casting itself as a major military power following the Second World War. However, this approach neglects the fact that material factors such as the size of the population, economy and territory create objective opportunities and constraints, for example, on the size of the military and the public administration (Wivel and Baldacchino, 2022).

Secondly, some studies have resorted to absolute definitions by defining smallness in terms of a certain quantity of a specific factor. In the EU context, political size, usually operationalized as the number of votes in the Council of the EU, was used before the Lisbon Treaty changed the voting mechanism (Mattila, 2004; Schure and Verdun, 2008). Votes in this system were distributed based on an agreement between member states, thus reflecting member states’ ability to negotiate as high number of votes as possible, i.e., their position vis-à-vis other member states. However, this definition is questionable, as it zooms in on a single institution and neglects other major parts of European polity, such as the European Parliament (EP) (that directly co-decides on majority of issues) and the European Commission where decision-making follows a different logic. In addition, after the Lisbon Treaty, voting in the Council of the EU now relies on a double majority of states and of population. Beyond the EU context, studies have used physical size (in terms of a state’s territory or its GDP) to provide an absolute definition of smallness (Nasra, 2011; Panke and Gurol, 2018) or the size of population (Grimaud, 2018; Jazbec, 2001; Manners, 2000). The most common cut-off point is 1 million inhabitants. However, these cut-off points are most useful when there is a clear break in the data. In the EU context, for example, it is relatively easy to argue that there are five large and relatively large states, because the fifth member state is twice the size of the sixth. On the other hand, it is difficult to draw a line between medium-sized and small member states, because there are no major gaps (except perhaps between the two largest medium-sized states and the remaining 20 states). Any attempt to draw a line and declare it an authoritative cut-off point will inevitably raise the question of whether the next state above the line is really substantially different and whether the cut-off decision is arbitrary. For that reason, the small- and medium-sized states are frequently treated as one single category, although they may still be differentiated by name (Mišík, 2016). Officials also talk about the small-to-medium-sized states as a group in practice, which shows that they treat all of these states as a group, while acknowledging that – within the group – there is a spectrum.

Thirdly, these definitions based on concrete indicators can be tempered by acknowledging that size is a relative concept. This is particularly important in a security context, where it makes sense to take into account the size of the opponent (Wivel and Baldacchino, 2022). Thus, a country of 20 million inhabitants can be considered large in a conflict with a country of 1 million, but it is small in the context of an opponent with a population of 300 million.

For the purpose of this book, we define country size by population size, as this now influences the weight of a member state in the two main legislative bodies of the EU: the Council of the EU and the European Parliament. Moreover, it is also an appropriate measure from policy perspective: for example, in foreign and security policy population size influences the size of various domestic markets (goods, energy, etc.), administrations and armies. This can be considered a relative definition, which considers the size of the state in this specific context. As noted previously, it is difficult to draw a clear line between small- and medium-sized states in the EU, as there is no substantial gap between any two states that would support such a distinction. Therefore, we focus on member states below 7 million inhabitants, i.e., the smaller half of the member states. This is a relatively conservative definition in comparison to major studies like Panke's (2010), which defined 19 states as small based on the number of votes they held in the Council of the EU. We also acknowledge that there is a need for flexibility as context matters, as the above-mentioned perceptions of vulnerability may be context specific. Especially in the context of Central and Eastern Europe, the proximity to the Russian Federation as a historic (and increasingly current) threat influences perceptions of vulnerability, preferences and policies. Besides, this provides an additional external point of reference that needs to be taken into account in the definition of smallness. In the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it is noticeable that Gazprom (that is, however, intertwined with the Russian government) first cut off the gas supply to several Central and Eastern European (Bulgaria, Lithuania) and small Nordic states before it interrupted its supply to Germany and other Western European states. This may be part of a strategy to divide the EU, but it is also indicative of the specific perception of vulnerability of small member states by the Russian government. Added to this, factors such as the level of energy dependency on Russia and the ability to switch to other sources further influence the political size of the country.

### **1.3 Navigating EU decision-making: How to compensate for smallness**

Small states face structural disadvantages in EU decision-making, in that population size influences the weight of countries in a number of processes. For example, while a majority of member states is necessary to take a decision under ordinary legislative procedure in the Council of the EU, these members must represent also at least 65 per cent of EU's population. This is supposed to protect several countries with relatively large populations from being outvoted by a large number of small- and medium-sized countries. In addition, small states tend to have fewer administrative, specialist and financial resources (Panke, 2010). Overall, this means that small states face a double challenge: the decision-making rules tend to reduce the weight of their voice and they have a limited ability to threaten others with blockages, at least in those policy areas where majority voting is required. Today, this is the case for most EU policies, and – in addition – in the European Parliament majority voting is of course the rule. If a state cannot push other members to support compromises, then the ability to argue effectively and convince others becomes particularly relevant.



However, the size of small member countries' public administrations and resources limits the amount of expertise they can produce, which risks jeopardizing their ability to influence others effectively in negotiations (cf. Soetendorp and Hanf, 1998, on the importance of well-staffed ministries; Laffan, 2006). As a result, small member states 'are likely to face disadvantages in uploading national policies to the EU-level since they lack the political power to shape EU directives or regulations in the same manner than their larger counterparts' (Panke, 2010). Thorhallsson and Wivel (2006) also see a dilemma in the fact that, while small states tend to depend more on international organizations (as they see them as an appropriate arena to increase their visibility and present their cases), they have limited influence due to their size. If a state is relegated too often to the role of policy-taker and feels that its own priorities and preferences are neglected, then it may feel the loss of independence stemming from membership in an international organization more strongly and the perceived advantages of membership may be reduced.

In light of these structural disadvantages of small countries, authors like Thorhallsson and Wivel (2006), Björkdahl (2008), Haughton (2010) or Panke (2010, 2011) have taken an interest in these states' strategies to overcome these hurdles. However, while the literature on how small states navigate EU decision-making is growing, it focuses almost exclusively on the Council of the European Union and on the Council Presidency. Within this context, the literature argues that the limited bargaining capacities can be mitigated through institutionalized regional coordination (e.g. the Benelux, the Baltic States or the Visegrad Group) or through strategic partnerships on a case-by-case basis (Thorhallsson and Wivel, 2006; Panke, 2010). In addition, disadvantages in argumentative power due to limited staff resources can to some extent be compensated through prioritization of a small number of key issues and through good contacts with the European Commission, which might allow the state to obtain more information and at an earlier stage (Thorhallsson and Wivel, 2006; Panke, 2010). Finally, while limited voting power may reduce small states' ability to carry out threats (e.g. to block a decision), they can build up credibility by other means (Panke, 2010). For example, they can focus on the role of neutral mediator and thus discretely nudge the decision in the right direction. Luxembourg, for example, likes to adopt the role of 'honest broker' (Harmsen and Högenauer, 2021). Overall, Panke (2010) argues that small states can 'punch above their weight' as long as they make active use of these strategies.

Panke (2010) finds that some small states, like Denmark, Luxembourg, Belgium and Ireland, are far more active in deploying 'shaping strategies' than, for example, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece and Bulgaria. She identifies several factors that explain these differences: firstly, a long membership allows member states (including the small ones) to learn how to act, which facilitates the use of shaping strategies. Secondly, the Council Presidency plays a crucial role in inducing learning. Haughton (2010) confirms that there was an important domestic 'Presidency effect' in the case of the first Presidencies of Czechia (2009) and Slovenia (2008), in that the preparations were taken very seriously, the profile of EU politics was raised, institutional change led to a reinforcement of the EU-related capacity of the

state and some mildly Eurosceptic politicians embraced more positive positions. Moreover, the preparation of presidencies is usually done in collaboration with other member states (what was formally established as ‘troika’ presidency in the Lisbon Treaty; Batory and Puetter, 2013) which then had further impact in terms of learning especially on those member states that hold their first presidency. Besides, it has been argued that a presidency opens up special opportunities to push through the interests of small member states especially when these align with the interests of other actors (Svetličič and Cerjak, 2015).

Thirdly, states that have highly motivated bureaucrats with a sense of ownership are better at developing effective and sufficiently precise positions on policy at an early stage, where it is still possible to influence the direction of policies. The level of experience of individual staff members is indeed highly relevant, in that Panke (2011) shows that small member states can be as active in Council negotiations as larger states, provided that they have sufficient experience.

The Council Presidency itself is seen not just as a catalyst that helps states acquire expertise and experience in EU politics but also as a rare chance for small states to set the agenda (e.g. Björkdahl, 2008). On the other hand, the limited resources of small states also impact on the massive task of the Council Presidency, which requires the member state to chair the Council meetings and thus to be on top of a wide range of issues. Bengtsson (2002) questions the ability of small states to use the Presidency to shape the agenda, as most of the agenda is predetermined by ongoing business. Of course the same can be said for large states: part of the agenda will always be occupied by major events, such as the COVID-19 crisis, the refugee crisis, Brexit or the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Thus, the preferences of the state holding the Presidency will only ever make up part of the agenda. Panke and Gurol’s (2018) study of the Maltese and Estonian Presidencies not only confirms Björkdahl’s findings but also underlines certain limitations: small states can use the Presidency to pursue national interests, but they are most likely to be successful if they prioritize and focus on a smaller number of key issues. For example, the Estonian strategy of making digitalization the main priority of the Presidency and of incorporating it even into other priorities worked particularly well.

#### **1.4 Content of the book**

Considering the above-mentioned findings of the existing literature, this edited volume presents a twofold aim. The first, being examined in the first section of this book, is to deepen the existing knowledge on the extent to which small member states can compensate for the disadvantage of size in EU policy-making and to analyze the strategies that they employ in the current institutional context. The academic literature examining these issues is mostly dated – as shown in previous sections – and thus cannot fully cover the position of small member states in EU policy characterized by fast development. The first section is guided by the overarching research questions as to (1) how small member states try to overcome the challenge of size in the context of different institutions and (2) how effective these different strategies are. The chapters focus on the role of experience, cooperation and (where



applicable) prioritization as three factors that have been deemed particularly relevant by the literature. In addition, the section goes beyond the existing literature, moving beyond the Council of the EU and the Council Presidency, and also covers the other major legislative institutions, namely the European Commission, which plays a crucial role in the drafting of policies, and the European Parliament, which is after all a co-legislator in the EU's decision-making process. This allows us to better understand to what extent the strategies that were identified in the context of the Council can usefully be applied in other institutional contexts.

Thus, in the second chapter, Hamřík focuses on the European Commission, an institution that has been almost entirely neglected by the literature on small states. The reason for this gap in the literature might be that the potential challenges to small states are less obvious in this case: nowadays every state has one Commissioner, which suggests that all states are equal. In addition, the Commissioners are formally neutral, i.e., they are not supposed to represent a state. However, the acrimonious negotiations over the size of the Commission during past Treaty negotiations and the refusal of many states to move towards a system of rotation where not every state would have a Commissioner at all times show that, in practice, states attach great importance to their representation in this European body. Hamřík therefore analyzes first the vision of the Commission that different states hold, in order to then dissect their nomination strategies and finally compare the importance of their portfolios to those of larger states. This allows us to understand to what extent a clear prioritization of target portfolios, coalition building and the selection of an experienced candidate can impact the success of the member state.

In the third chapter, Högenauer studies the position of small states in the European Parliament (EP) through the cases of Luxembourg and Malta. This institution is also relatively under-researched in the literature on small states, despite the fact that the majoritarian logic of this assembly makes the structural disadvantage of small states particularly visible. Indeed, many member states have fewer members of European Parliament (MEPs) than the EP has committees. Högenauer analyzes to what extent this structural disadvantage requires the prioritization of a small range of policy areas and whether they can be compensated by experience, which was previously identified by the literature as an important factor in Council negotiations. Experience in the context of the European Parliament can come from having held previous political offices or from serving as an MEP for several terms. In addition, she looks at the cooperation patterns of the MEPs from small states and at whether they are more prone to form cross-party alliances on issues of national interest.

The fourth chapter focuses on the Council as one of the main legislative institutions. Grumbinaite takes a closer look at the role of the six-month rotating Council Presidency through a comparison of six small member states. Since the literature argues that the Presidency is an important opportunity for small states to build capacity and learn, she analyzes through what strategies small states cope with the administrative and organizational challenges of the Presidency and whether this does indeed have a lasting effect on their capacity to engage in EU affairs. She argues that holding the rotating EU Presidency leads to at least a temporary

Europeanization of national administrations and to an improvement of national EU policy coordination practices, mostly from a sociological institutionalist perspective, through changes of attitudes, skill development and networking. She also looks at the ability of small states to use the Presidency to push their preferences onto the agenda, especially in the context of the new Trio Presidencies where three states have to coordinate an 18-month program.

In the fifth and sixth chapters, the authors zoom in on coalitions as a key tool to increase the weight of small states through collective action. Informed by theoretical and conceptual approaches towards small states and coalition building Etzold takes an analytical look at various examples of formal and informal groupings with Nordic and/or Baltic participation, establishing the type of coalition and examining their effectiveness in pursuing Nordic and Baltic interests in EU policy-making. In the process, he analyses which type of coalition is most effective for the pursuit of different types of goals. Stefanova focuses on several small states in Central and Eastern Europe and their attempt to build coalitions that can act as veto players. She analyzes both the strategies themselves and whether they have been successful in achieving their goals. In addition, she looks at whether these strategies have gained wider relevance in terms of creating more autonomy for the EU member states.

The second aim of the book, studied in its second section, is to examine the impact of small EU member states on different common policies. Similarly to the first section of the book, this one also wants to extend our knowledge about the place of small members in the EU and their ability to influence the decision-making process by examining various policies that are being constantly revised in a changing Union. Thus, the contributions of this section are based on the need to learn more about the development of these policies at the EU level – and the contribution of small members to this process. This section is thus looking for answers to the following research questions: How do small members influence individual policies? How does the EU respond (or fail to respond) to the needs of small states? Small member states face challenges especially in policies connected to foreign and security policy, and therefore the second section is looking closely at these policies.

The seventh chapter by Kavvadia examines economic diplomacy of small states using the case of Luxembourg. The chapter argues that small states seek participation in multilateral frameworks and/or cluster around regional unions and asks how do European small states use economic diplomacy within this context. Despite its small size, Luxembourg has developed into the EU's wealthiest country per capita. This has been achieved through an evolving successful economic model, supported through agile and skilled economic diplomacy. Grounded on a long-term strategy that is characterized by vision and policy consistency, Luxembourg has developed effective economic diplomacy to promote its political and economic priorities, especially within the EU governance constellation. Using a structural realist perspective, the chapter posits that Luxembourg has actively and increasingly pursued its economic diplomacy to boost not only its economic perspectives but also its soft power in the European and international contexts.

Focusing on foreign and security policy, Foster and Mosser investigate the effects of unilateralism in Chapter 8. They analyze the EU's 2017 agreement on advancing Permanent Structured Cooperation (PeSCo) as an example of 'embedded concert' and juxtapose it to case studies of unilateral coalitions that have formed around subregional threat perceptions and security concerns. This chapter argues that small member states can use subregional unilateralism to effectively advocate for their security priorities, including for strategies that enhance cooperation and European integration on foreign policy. However, such coalitions may also contribute to tensions over policy priorities. The impact of subregional coalitions on European integration in the field of foreign and security policy is thus indeterminate in its essence and is shaped significantly by pressures from the international security environment and member states' domestic politics.

The following (ninth) chapter by Dominici, Lewis and Steingass continues the security discussion by analyzing the security preferences of several small EU member states in both defence and border control cooperation. The chapter examines how EU small member states pursue their preferences in these areas and evaluates the degree to which these states succeed in their endeavours. By comparing in pairs a group of similar states and controlling for intervening factors (e.g. population, economy, neutrality, geography, threat perception), the chapter focuses on the significance of lobbying, persuasion, compromise and coalitions as determinants of small state influence in EU decision-making. The findings help us to better understand the circumstances under which small states have leverage at the EU level.

The last chapter of the second section by Gao (Chapter 10) investigates cybersecurity in relation to small states. The chapter argues that the traditional notion of small states playing a marginal role when shaping the EU's security policy does not apply to non-traditional security issues such as cybersecurity. Using Estonia's significant role in the development of EU cybersecurity strategy as a case study, this chapter argues that non-traditional security issues allow small states to avoid marginalization in the process of EU policy-making. In doing so, it demonstrates empirically that small states exert influence in the field of security. The chapter develops a conceptual framework based on the literature on policy entrepreneur and small state foreign policy. Under this framework, the analysis is conducted based on data derived from secondary academic literature, primary EU documents and interviews.

The book comes to the conclusion that small states face different challenges in different institutions. They are relatively well represented in the European Commission but are in a weaker position in the Council, where they risk being outvoted and where vetoes annoy other states more than they hinder policy-making. And they are in a difficult position in the European Parliament, where the limited number of MEPs does not allow small states to cover every policy area. In addition, it is difficult to obtain certain posts without the backing of a large national delegation.

The strategies thus also diverge across institutions. Whereas prioritization and coalition building are seen to work well in the context of the Council, small-state MEPs tend to be active in a wider range of committees and are thus more generalist

than those from large states. Many of them also benefit from previous expertise in politics or with EU affairs. In the case of the Commission, the strategies of small states when nominating Commissioners are similar to those of large states, but their Commissioners are far more gender balanced. This may be an opportunity at a time when the goal is to create a gender balanced Commission.

When it comes to the second section, the chapters in this volume claim that small EU member states are able to exercise influence also in security and foreign policy if they use suitable strategies. These can be utilizing critical junctures to develop domestic expertise that they are able to upload to the EU level (Kavaadia, Gao) or join (or lead) minilateral coalitions that amplify their voice (Foster and Mosser). However, if initiatives are backed by big countries, small members have very limited manoeuvring options. They can only use the development at the EU level to persuade the domestic audience (Foster and Mosser). In practice, small member states are found to be rather active members that are trying to proactively shape the EU and its policies so that their national priorities are as close to EU rules as possible and are not waiting for the EU to respond (or not) to their needs. This section thus confirms the findings of the first section, that small states can navigate the EU's institutions and decision-making processes successfully, even if this may require a little more effort than in the case of large states.

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