The populist challenges to the EU foreign and security policy towards Egypt and Tunisia: A case of de-Europeanisation?

Adrià Rivera Escartin[ab]

Abstract

At a time when populism conquers political agendas in the European Union (EU) and elsewhere, it is pertinent to scrutinize which are the policy implications of such a surge for the EU, not only intra-institutionally, but also for its foreign and security policy in third country contexts. Populist parties in government, such as for example the *Lega* or *Fidesz* have a declared interest in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in Northern Africa. Their main focus centre around the importance they give to migration control, border management and the security sector in these countries. It is thus relevant to investigate to what extent populism is shaping the thinking about the ENP as it is evolving from a normative-based towards a much more "interest-based" policy. This paper will examine the implications of populist pressure on the ENP in third country contexts, using Tunisia and Egypt for in-depth case studies. In the case of Tunisia, Italian demands for more Tunisian efforts on border management have exacerbated inconsistencies in EU-Tunisia liberalization efforts. The case of Egypt has been one of parallel and separate discussions of the European Council/EU Presidency and of the Visegrad group headed by Hungary on matters relating to regional security as well as migration. The ENP's coherence and effectiveness has suffered as a consequence. The paper also aims to contribute conceptually to current debates on de-Europeanisation or not of the EU foreign and security policy. We will reflect on whether Europeanization is still at work in a new context characterized by the surge of populist radical right parties.

Introduction

There are reasons to believe that populist foreign policies might differ from those of mainstream political parties (Balfour et al., 2016a). Still, populism as a category can be applied to a big variety of parties, from radical left parties with a human rights-based approach to foreign policy such as *Podemos*, to radical right parties like *Lega* and *Fidesz*. This paper will focus in the latter since their surge challenges an EU foreign policy that wants to retain a normative agenda in the Mediterranean under the concept of principled pragmatism. What stems from the speeches and political statements of populist radical right parties is that anti-migration concerns and politics of identity inform diplomatic action, which in turn is mediatized and politicized to serve electoral interests at home (Ibid.: 17; Hodson and Puetter, 2019). They construct an antagonistic dichotomy between the people and European elites in order to portrait themselves as the

[a] Predoctoral FPU fellow at Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI)
[b] PhD student at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB)

defenders of the common man inside and outside their home-countries. On the other hand, they accuse a cosmopolitan Brussels-based bureaucracy of having betrayed the so-called European Christian values by letting migrants inside the EU (Falkner and Plattner, 2018; Kriesi, 2014). And yet, the *Lega* and *Fidesz* do not want to emulate the United Kingdom (UK) with an Italexit or Hungarexit respectively (Hodson and Puetter, 2019). In foreign affairs, as well as in other policy fields, populist radical right parties defend "a Europe that does less, but does it well, leaving national governments room to manoeuvre" (Matteo Salvini quoted in Politico, 2018). Similarly, Viktor Orbán declared in an affirming but nuanced way that "we're not willing to do what Brussels dictates, if that is not good for Hungarians" (Government of Hungary, 2019a).

The formation of national governments that include populist radical right parties can thus be seen as an omen that foreign policy is entering a phase of de-Europeanization at both the domestic and EU levels. Nevertheless, Europeanization literature has seldom tackled the effect of Eurosceptical politics into Europeanization, and more rarely conceptualized the opposite process of de-Europeanization and the mechanisms that produce it (Vollaard, 2014). Two exceptions are Hill and Wong (2011: 218) and Alecu de Flers and Müller (2012: 23-4). They admitted the possibility of a reverse phenomenon of renationalization after changes in government if parties that oppose the EU increased their political influence. For example, Hill and Wong (2011: 218) defined de-Europeanization as the process through which national governments attempt to remove any perceived restraints imposed by EU foreign policy. The term is not a synonym for disintegration because it does not presuppose the return to the nation state. De-Europeanization does not challenge the territorial integrity of the EU, it is rather a partial exit given that complete exit or disintegration, with the exception of the UK, is seen as bearing too high costs (Vollaard, 2014).

However, there is also the possibility that the mechanisms of Europeanization can be still at play in Hungarian and Italian foreign policies despite the rhetoric of Matteo Salvini and Viktor Orbán. The utility of resorting to the concept of Europeanization has been contested in the literature for being too descriptive or not consistent in time (Moumoutzis, 2011: 609). The interest in using it again lies in its "ability to raise interesting questions" on the relations of Member States and the EU in the making of

foreign policy (Ibid.). This paper will try to show that Europeanization is still a useful framework in analyzing the relation between domestic and EU foreign policies and present the idea that, although de-Europeanization is a possibility, Europeanization can happen all over again. In a new context characterized by the surge of the populist radical right, challenges to EU foreign policy do not exclusively emerge in the form of de-Europeanization but also as an Europeanization that reinforces inconsistencies in EU foreign policy.

After decades in opposition and extra-parliamentary politics, populist radical right parties are increasingly found in the governments of Member States of the EU (e.g. Italy, Hungary, Poland, Austria…). Political scientists have looked at the surge of this typology of parties from different perspectives such as political cleavages, voting behaviour and European integration (c.f. Kriesi, 2014; Mudde, 2007; Norris, 2005). Nevertheless, European studies have neglected to certain extent the impact in foreign affairs once they come to power. This article wants to contribute to the emerging literature that analyses what occurs in this particular policy domain when populist radical right parties form governments or act as senior coalition partners (Balfour et al., 2016; Falkner and Plattner, 2018; Hodson and Puetter, 2019). By resorting to the Europeanization framework, this paper wants to analyze to what extend populist radical right parties in government shape EU foreign policy.

To do so it compares the cases of Italy-Tunisia relations and Hungary-Egypt relations by resorting to official documents and public statements as well as to secondary sources. Concerning the case selection, Hungary and Italy have governments with populist radical right parties that openly challenge European integration and give a preponderant role to anti-migration and security in their foreign policy agendas (Falkner and Plattner, 2018). Secondly, this article examines Italy and Hungary foreign policies in relation to Tunisia and Egypt respectively because of the importance populist radical right parties attribute to the region in the realization of their international and domestic agendas. This will allow an inside-out perspective –to take into account the consequences of foreign policies on third states and societies-, an approach that Europeanization has usually discarded as a middle range inward-looking theory (Tonra, 2015).

The structure of this article proceeds with a section further elaborating the conceptual framework of Europeanization in foreign policy. The section that follows resorts to this framework to compare Italy-Tunisia and Hungary-Egypt relations. The article ends arguing that the discursive engagement of Italy and Hungary does not necessarily come with de-Europeanization in EU and domestic foreign policy. Europeanization continued to be the pattern in what regards a politically sensitive region such as the Mediterranean or, according to the European Commission (EC), the Southern European Neighborhood. A second finding is that cost-benefit calculations and socialization continued to trigger Europeanization despite Eurosceptical rhetoric. Europeanization is not necessarily in conflict with a process of reassertion of national interest in foreign policy and normative contestation. On the contrary, nationalist discourses of populist radical right parties in office nourish the securitization of EU foreign policy in the Mediterranean. Finally, the expected outcome of Europeanization in this new context is the deterioration of human rights standards in third states and inconsistences in EU foreign policy. This raises a pressing question of normative nature about what kind of foreign policy is Europeanized and what are the human consequences of this process.

Dimensions and mechanisms of Europeanization

In the following section this paper develops the dimensions and mechanisms of Europeanization identified in the literature that are going to be used in the analysis of Italy-Tunisia relations and Hungary-Egypt relations. Europeanization is most usually characterized as a process that comprises three interconnected dimensions: downloading, uploading and crossloading (see e.g. Graziano and Vink, 2013; Tonra 2015; Wong, 2011). Although they emerged in the literature as confronted visions on how to apply the framework of Europeanization, they can also be viewed as complementing each other (Börzel, 2005). A comprehensive theory of Europeanization integrates the three of them as a multifaceted process (Hill and Wong, 2011: 218).

Downloading, also referred to as national adaptation, was the first dimension scholarship identified in an early stage of the development of this literature. Ladrech (1994: 17) defined it as "an incremental process reorienting the direction and shape of

politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making". From this perspective, Europeanization is a domestic adjustment of Member States to European integration (Graziano and Vink, 2013). It encompasses the multi-layered consequences of the expansion of the competences of the EU in Member States, which can either impact national polity, policy and politics (Bulmer and Lesquene, 2013: 17). Europeanization understood as downloading is thus a top-down process translating change from EU level to the national level in the decision-making process. Following this perspective Brussels-based institutions become increasingly a reference for the actors at the level of the Member States who react to European integration adjusting and adapting their courses of action accordingly (Wong 2011; 136). In the field of foreign policy this means that what is collectively agreed as an EU position over time becomes part of "the warp and weave" of a given domestic foreign policy (Tonra, 2015; 183).

Uploading is also referred to as national projection because, instead of depicting a reactive state that changes its policy-making processes, Member States are pro-active in trying to shape and influence actors at the EU level (Wong, 2011: 137). Europeanization occurs when they manage to generalize domestic priorities and European institutions assume the previously national agendas as theirs (Alecu de Flers and Müller, 2012). National projection or uploading can thus be described as a bottom-up process (Wong, 2011). According to Tonra (2015: 183), the aim of this school of Europeanization is to assess "how, when and to what end national foreign-policy preferences are brought to the European table and pursued using the EU as a means of amplifying national foreign policy – standing on the shoulders, as it were, of European partners."

Early theorists of Europeanization such as Ladrech (1994) presented uploading and downloading as self-excluding frameworks. Later, other authors like Moumoutzis (2011: 608) suggested that Europeanization can only make reference to the incorporation of EU norms and practices into the domestic level, whereas Europeanization as uploading cannot be differentiated from the concept of integration. However, these analyses did not prevent scholarship to affirm their complementarity (see for e.g. Börzel, 2005; Radaelli, 2004). The two vertical dimensions are interconnected as far as Europeanization can be understood as a circular process. When

states with an ideational or material interest in uploading a given policy issue succeed in doing so EU institutions can have a bigger impact at the domestic level triggering Europeanization as downloading (Graziano and Vink, 2013). Following Goetz (2002:4 in Bulmer and Lequesne, 2013: 20), Europeanization is "circular rather than unidirectional and cyclical rather than one off". This is why Graziano and Vink (2013: 47) defend that a bottom-up-down research design is the best way to capture the importance of the European factor among other potential explanations of change at the domestic or EU level.

Major (2005) completed this framework with a horizontal dimension or crossloading. Besides national adaptation and national projection, Europeanization also results from cross-border contacts between relevant actors, which induce change by policy learning and diffusion (Graziano and Vink, 2013: 47). Crossloading occurs in the form of policy-exchange between Member States within Europe, independently of EU actors (Major, 2005). Instead of denying the existence of the vertical dimensions, crossloading adds another layer of complexity to the Europeanization framework by capturing how, in the making of their domestic foreign policy, Member States have as reference other Member States and not only Brussels-based institutions (Aggestam and Bicchi, 2019: 4). For example Europeanization can occur when states organise themselves in informal groupings that seek to gain traction for change at the European level in a given foreign policy issue (Ibid.).

Downloading and uploading are the product of two different mechanisms. The first one is rational-choice. EU Member States chose to adapt to an EU foreign policy when it is in their benefit in terms of a cost-benefit calculation. By doing so, states can reduce the cost of carrying a foreign policy by their own and at the same time retain an influence at the European level (Alecu de Flers and Müller, 2012). Similarly, they can project their agenda at the EU level in order to manage effectively specific issue areas by pooling resources and creating economies of scale (Bulmer and Lequesne, 2013: 7; Wong, 2011: 135). Europeanization as uploading is particularly attractive for small Member States. They can increase their international influence by trying to make EU foreign policy follow their agenda taking advantage of politics of scale (Tonra, 2001). Big states can also benefit from Europeanization as it allows them to reduce the risks and costs of their

foreign domestic policy, for example when adopting sanctions, or achieve objectives that cannot be attained by their own (Alecu de Flers and Müller, 2012; Tonra, 2015).

The other mechanism that triggers Europeanization is socialisation: the construction, diffusion and institutionalisation of shared beliefs and norms (Radaelli, 2004: 3). Member States adapt to the priorities of EU foreign policy as European identity makes Europeanization an objective in its own right (Moumoutzis, 2011; Tonra, 2015: 187). Socialisation can trigger uploading too. Normative considerations are important in this dimension as they affect the strategies that Member States follow to Europeanise their foreign policy, for example when arguing the legitimacy of the Europeanization of a national position on a foreign policy issue (Alecu de Flers and Müller, 2012: 27). Moreover, the existence of shared values is what allows the forge of common positions in highly normative areas such as human rights (Tonra, 2015: 186). Concerning crossloading, Tonra (2015) and Wong (2011) associated this dimension with the construction of a European identity that frames the inter-subjective meanings of appropriate action, preferences and expectations in the domestic foreign policy of Member States. If in the case of downloading and uploading the processes of socialisation occur between EU institutions and Member States, in the case of crossloading they happen between Member States in parallel of EU-level meetings (Aggestam and Bicchi, 2019).

Theoretically, Europeanization can still be at work when ideational motivations are absent if Member States retain a material interest in uploading and/or downloading. A given Member State with a Eurosceptical government can seek to Europeanize a domestic foreign policy by the means of adaptation or projection if it has a rational interest in benefiting from economies of scale. This can be particularly relevant when Member States, especially small and middle ones, are confronted with regional problematics that affect their security, such as instability in the Southern Neighborhood, but cannot tackle them in an efficient and effective way by their own. Consequently, Europeanization can take place when Member States need common goods such as security or stability but need other Member States and the EU to deliver them, for example, through the ENP.

In addition, not all kind of dissent can be automatically associated with de-Europeanization. In the foreign affairs dimension, it is usual that Member States act autonomously and with diverging views and this does not necessarily imply partial exits (Müller, 2016). Member States seek to influence other Member States in order to change domestic or EU foreign policies through crossloading and socialization, but within a Europeanized framework (Aggestam and Bicchi, 2019: 4). Hence, it is necessary to differentiate de-Europeanization from process of normative contestation and politicization of EU foreign policy (Costa, 2018). When populist radical right parties come to power, if they do not bear an interest in exiting the EU, they might seek to shape EU foreign policy Europeanizing their own norms and values, which might differ from those of Governments formed by mainstream political parties. This implies that contestation and Europeanization can work hand in hand. In the following section we analyze the cases of Italy-Tunisia relations and Hungary-Egypt relations in order to assess to what extend Europeanization is compatible with the come to power of populist radical right parties and what is the effect of this process on EU foreign policy.

Italy-Tunisia relations: Europeanization as a bottom-up-down process

Two political parties usually labeled as populist, the *5 Stelle* and the *Lega* (see for e.g. Falkner and Plattner, 2018), compose the Italian Government that assumed office on 1 June 2018. The *Lega,* a populist radical right party, controls the key Ministry of the Interior with Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini at the front of it. Despite being the smaller coalition partner, it has profited from the salience of the migration debate in society to gain more visibility than *5 Stelle*. In a clear example of the increasingly blur distinction between domestic and foreign affairs domain, Salvini has also great influence in the international agenda of the Conte Cabinet, particularly in the Mediterranean, where the external dimensions of security and migration are central. In contrast, the Ministry of Foreign affairs, Enzo Moavero, is an independent technocratic figure with little media resonance.

Right after the new Government formation, Italy-Tunisia relations were tackled by the rhetoric of the *Lega* leader. On 4 June Salvini infuriated Tunisian public opinion when affirmed in a speech that 40.000 Tunisians irregularly staying in Italy had to be

repatriated and that the majority of Tunisian migrants that arrive to Italy are not refugees fleeing from war but usually criminals and ex-convicts (Matteo Salvini quoted in Jeune Afrique, 2018). The Minister of Interior also wanted to break away from the former government's foreign policy and EU leadership at the discursive level. For example, on 3 August, Salvini announced in his personal Twitter account the preparation of a North African tour, first asserting the intertwining of the anti-migration agenda with foreign policy and secondly, reproaching to the former government of the *Partito Democratico* its alleged inaction in the Mediterranean (Salvini, 2018a). In what regards the EU, Salvini repeatedly criticized Brussels for having put at risk "Judeo-Christian roots" and "betrayed" the spirit of the union for leaving Italy alone in the management of the migration crisis (Italian Ministry of Interior, 2018). On August 24, for example, Salvini menaced with cutting Italian funds to the EU if the EC did not relocate to other Member States the 150 migrants of the Diciotti boat blocked in the port of Catania by coast guards.

However, there is a big contrast between Salvini's disruptive and Eurosceptical discourse and Italian foreign policy. In what regards Tunisia, the Conte Cabinet has mirrored the strategy proposed by the EC and has opted by continuing the policies of center-left and center-right governments: increase the number of repatriations and enhance border control in exchange of cooperation aid and technical assistance for the Tunisian security sector. The Italian foreign policy has described a process of bottom-up-down Europeanization. The phase of national projection was started at the end of the 90's with the signature of bilateral agreements with Tunisia and the uploading of Italian priorities in the Mediterranean agenda at the EU level. In turn, the Conte Government has adapted to existent solutions to curb migration in order to take advantage of economies of scale in the form of the ENP and EU funds.

The fist Italian-Tunisian agreement on migration was signed on 1998 by the Prodi Cabinet and it allowed for collective expulsions of Tunisians and the repatriation of third state nationals except for Arab Maghreb Union citizens in exchange of cooperation aid and technical assistance in border control (Boubakri, 2013). In 2002, another agreement on similar terms was signed by the Second Berlusconi Government, which had the presence of the *Lega Nord*. Moreover, it established a quota of 3.000 Tunisian

workers in exchange of enhanced control of borders (Bel Hadj, 2011, 6). The Fourth Berlusconi Government concluded a third bilateral agreement on 2009 after an increase of arrivals the year before. It followed a similar strategy than previous agreements with technical assistance for border control and repatriation as the main elements (Boubakri, 2013).

In parallel to the signature of bilateral agreements, Italy and other southern Member States such as France and Spain uploaded their migration priorities at the EU level. According to Bel Hadj (2011, 3) in the Sevilla Summit of 2002 and then after in the 2000's Member States subordinated cooperation policies to the introduction of new legislation in Maghreb countries that would counter illegal immigration with a logic of externalization of EU border control in the context of the expansion of the Schengen Area. Since 2005, the EU's Global Approach to Migration and Mobility linked development aid to the strengthening of border control and repatriation (Cassarino, 2014). These priorities were integrated in the ENP and development aid was made conditional to Member States' priorities in migration. For example, in the case of the negotiations on the Advanced Status of Tunisia, the EC put a big emphasis in the contention of migration flows through reinforced border control and the cooperation on deportation (Ibid.). From the point of view of Member States, the first phase of bottom-up Europeanization followed two logics. First, the creation of economies of scale since the ENP budget could complement the efforts of Southern Member States with low spending in development like Italy; and secondly, politics of scale, in order to increase the power of negotiation of Member States vis-à-vis North African countries.

In the context of the Arab Spring, the Tunisian security apparatus collapsed and around 25.000 young Tunisians profited the opportunity to reach Italian shores. The Berlusconi Government, which again included the *Lega Nord*, pledged to give humanitarian visas to Tunisians that arrived to Italy before 5 April and speed up the deportation of migrants arriving after that date (Cassarino, 2014). In the following years, all Italian Governments without exceptions sought to create more efficient readmission mechanisms in exchange of enhanced cooperation in border control and long-term support for Tunisia in sectors such as democracy assistance and civil society support (Cassarino, 2018; Suber, 2017). The 2015 migration crisis had the effect to reinforce the

approach followed until then and to strengthen conditionality in migration. From 2015 to 2018, center-left governments provided the Tunisian Coast Guard with new ships and additional training opportunities (Cassarino, 2018). In what regards aid cooperation, on February 2017, the Gentiloni Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding covering 2017 to 2020 in which Italy pledged €165M in cooperation aid with the condition to stem irregular migration. From 2015 to 2016, the deportations of Tunisians from Italy augmented by 43% (Suber, 2017) and in 2017, Gentiloni's Interior Minister Marco Minitti managed to augment the quota of weekly repatriations from one to two charters per week, each one carrying 40 migrants (Arci, 2018).

At the European level, in 2014 the EC signed a Mobility Partnership with Tunisia where both parties declared their willingness to increase cooperation in the field of migration control (European Commission, 2014). Tunisia also opened the door to negotiate a repatriation agreement with the EU in exchange of further aid through the ENP and the signature of a visa facilitation agreement (Ibid.) After 2015, EU conditionality also tightened and in country reports migration control appears as one of the strategic priorities of the EU. This has had bad consequences for the country in terms of the social and economic situation. For example, the EU is not willing to sign the visa facilitation agreement if Tunisia does not accept the repatriation of third nationals (European Commission, 2018a). Also, the EU position on migration is hindering the negotiations on the Deep and Comprehensive Trade Agreement (DCFTA) (Government of Tunisia, 2018). In parallel, cooperation aid linked to curbing migration exponentially increased with the creation of the Trust Fund for Africa in November 2015 at the Valletta Summit and the expansion of the powers of FRONTEX. In the future, the EU budget for migration policies will be of €11,3 billion for the period 2021-2027 compared to €7,3 billion for 2014-2020 (European Commission, 2018b) and 40% of it will be dedicated to fund repatriations operated by Member States (Ibid.).

The Conte Government has so far adapted to EU foreign policy in the ENP framework and EU initiatives such as the Africa Trust Fund, which link cooperation aid to repatriations and border control. This was made evident at the end of September 2018, when Salvini visited Tunis as Interior Minister. In a press conference next to his Tunisian homologue reproduced the same logic followed by Berlusconi and *Partido*

Democratico Governments as well as the EU: cooperation is conditional to curbing migration (Salvini, 2018b). Salvini's visit to Tunisia sought to augment the number of repatriation charters. In that occasion, Tunisian authorities did not accept to increase the quota but pledged to increase their cooperation with Italian authorities and, in turn, Italy responded with more aid. For example, in December 2018, Italy conceded a €57M grant to Tunisia for cooperation aid in the south of the country (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018). In March 2019, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that Italy had given 50 vehicles to Tunisian border control forces in the framework of the Italian Africa Trust Fund, an initiative of Gentiloni Government that mirrors the European Trust Fund (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019b).

Europeanization occurred in parallel with the discursive nationalist reassertion of the Conte Cabinet. By adapting to EU foreign policy in the Mediterranean, Italy was able to use economies of scale in order to increase the effectiveness and the efficiency of its domestic foreign policy. For example, whereas the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa serves the Italian strategy of migration control, of a total budget of €4,2 billion, the Italian contribution is €112M (European Commission, 2018c, European Commission, 2018d). Moreover, EU foreign policy in the form of the ENP, which was influenced by former Italian Governments, is in line with the agenda of the Conte Cabinet in Tunisia, including stopping migration flows through enhanced assistance to the security sector, cooperation aid and repatriation of irregular migrants. For Tunisian civil society, the continuation and reinforcement of these policies is accentuating asymmetries in EU-Tunisia relations in the domains of trade and mobility and negatively affecting the human rights of migrants (see for e.g. FTDES et al, 2018; EuroMed Rights, 2018).

Hungary-Egypt relations: Europeanization as crossloading

The anti-democratic turn in Hungary has been concomitant with the escalation of Eurosceptic rhetoric. The establishment of quotas for the relocation of refugees to Member States by the EC is at the core of Orbán's political quarrel with the EU. The Hungarian Government presents the Junker Commission as an agent of a broader cosmopolitan agenda that seeks to undermine Christian values by failing to stop "the

Muslim influx coming into Europe" (Government of Hungary, 2019b). According to this ethno-racial political line of though, there is an existential demographic threat to Europe, "a population explosion" in the south that will overshadow the EU, and bureaucrats in Brussels misunderstood this because they "view their own nations' history over a time horizon of two days" (Ibid.). Similar to Salvini, Hungarian prime minister seems to be willing to change or influence EU's current political order so as to advance its political agenda rather than seeking to leave the Union (Hodson and Puetter, 2019: 11-2). For example, he presents 2019 European Parliament elections as an opportunity for "active Hungarian involvement in the building of a new Europe" with less influence of Brussels-based institutions (Government of Hungary, 2019a).

In the foreign policy domain, Viktor Orbán's Hungary has been characterized as a Trojan horse: a Member State that divides the Union and undermines its institutions in foreign and security policy from within and it is not reluctant to align with third state, notably Russia (Orenstein and Kelemen, 2017: 88). The rhetoric of the Orbán Government is that Hungarian foreign policy is based on national interest and that EU foreign policy is in contradiction with it: "I've been working to build a foreign policy based on our national interests, … but there's one piece of the puzzle that's not yet in the place: it's called Brussels" (Government of Hungary, 2017a). Whereas de-Europeanization might seem the expectable outcome given the tone of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, it is not accurate to generalize this pattern in all dimensions of Hungarian foreign policy. In what regards Hungary-Egypt relations, Hungary tried to Europeanize its position towards Sisi Government. In this case, Hungary crossloaded and socialized an agenda that explicitly contests the human rights dimension of EU foreign policy but does not contradict EU engagement with Egypt's regime.

Since the military coup of 2013 that ousted democratically elected President Mursi, the EU has characterized a U-turn in its relations with Egypt for the sake of regional stability and at the expenses of normative considerations (Dandashly, 2018: 73-4). After the fall of President Mubarak in 2011, it had supported the democratic transition through the ENP. The budget for the European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI) allocated to Egypt increased at that time, also as the country became eligible to the SPRING fund designed to accompany institutional change. When the military regained

power in July 2013, the EU froze SPRING funds, which was perceived as a form of negative conditionality against the new regime. However, in 2014 ENI budget returned to pre-2013 levels (Balfour et al., 2016b: 6). At the discursive level, the EU progressively gave signs of accepting the new order despite increasing repression of political dissidence (Dandashly, 2018: 73-4). In January 2014 the EU took positive note of the ratification of a new Constitution. In May 2014, the European External Action Service sent an EU Election Observation Mission to Egypt to monitor the presidential elections giving them considerable external legitimation. Former Defense Minister Abdel Fattah el-Sisi won 96,1% of that vote thanks to a massive crack-down on the Islamist opposition. Yet, the EU congratulated Sisi for the victory (Council of the EU, 2014a).

Individual Member States were more hesitant to show an image of normality in regards Egypt after the coup and in the context of intense political repression. This dubitative approach was reflected in the adoption of an arms embargo in 2013, which was ratified in 2014 but was never implemented because the Council did not issue a decision or regulation (Council of the EU, 2013; Council of the EU, 2014b). The Hungarian Government was one of the firsts, if not the first one, to advocate for the normalization of relations with Egypt. Whereas human rights organizations such as EuroMed Rights pushed for the inclusion of human rights in the agenda, the Hungarian government explicitly called for a "practical approach". For example, on November 2013, the Hungarian Ambassador in Cairo met with the Egyptian Minister for Tourism in order to promote Hungarian tourism at a time when the rest of European Embassies were discouraging their citizens to visit the country. The Ambassador was reported to affirm that "our country is following up with full understanding Egypt's democratic transitional process" (Daily News Hungary, 2013.). Also in November 2013, the Ambassador met the Minister of Transportation in order to discuss a joint venture to manufacture trains for the Egyptian railway system (Daily News Egypt, 2013). In 2014, Hungary gave a one billion euros loan to Egypt for the purchase of railway cars (Index, 2014).

In late 2014, other Member States reconsidered its position towards Egypt as migration in connection to instability in the Middle East gained salience. In 2015, in the context of

the migration crisis, France, Germany and the UK normalized its relations with Egypt and the three capitals received President Sisi for the first time. European political leaders advanced their economic and security interests but tried to maintain a position within the limits of "principled pragmatism" or liberal realpolitik (Tocci, 2016). For example, Chancellor Merkel expressed the existence of differences in what regards death penalty. In the case of President Hollande, it handled Sisi a list of human rights defenders in jail who the French Government considered unfairly imprisoned. Concerning Prime Minister Cameron, he did not accede to Egypt's demand to ban the Muslim Brotherhood in the UK. Nevertheless, these and other meetings in the following years focused on regional stability, security and migration and delivered the signature of important economic and military agreements involving companies such as Siemens and Lafarge.

Whereas the UK, France and Germany practiced "principled pragmatism", Hungary explicitly advocated for an illiberal realpolitik, omitting any human rights issues with the exception of the rights of Coptic Christians. When Sisi visited Budapest in 2015, Prime minister Orbán affirmed that "there is no guarantee that adopting the western forms would produce any result elsewhere. So we should better not act as teachers of the world, we should better not lecture on human rights and democracy" (Government of Hungary, 2015). In turn, Sisi acknowledged the role of Hungary in advocating for the normalisation and intensification of relations with the EU. In that occasion, the President thanked Hungary for "its positive support to Egypt during the transition to democracy", saying that other countries have "totally ignored" the challenges Egypt faced, and called Hungary to convey a real image of Egypt to the EU (Sisi quoted in Ahram Online, 2015). In June 2016, Orbán was the first European prime minister to visit Egypt after the discovery of the dead body of young Italian researcher Giulio Regeni on 3 February and only two months after Italy recalled its ambassador to Egypt. In this context, Orbán affirmed that instead of promoting democracy, "Europe should be concentrating on its own interests, which is a stable neighbourhood" and connected demography with insecurity: "Egypt is a country of 90 million," so a stable Egypt serves the "interests of Hungary and the European Union as well" (Government of Hungary, 2016).

In 2017, Sisi visited Budapest as well as London and Paris. Then, besides bilateral meetings between the Egyptian and the Hungarian government, Orbán invited the prime ministers of the Visegrad Group (V4) to join their discussions. Acting as rotatory President of the V4, he strengthened the message that Egypt is a strategic partner in combating the root causes of migration and advocated again for a "pragmatic approach" in EU-Egypt relations (Government of Hungary, 2017b). The V4 echoed the Hungarian perspective. It declared its "full support to the Arab Republic of Egypt to strengthen its ties with the EU" and called to "draw upon the EU-Egypt relations in the current geopolitical regional context" (Visegrad Group, 2017). During the V4 meeting, Sisi recognized and thanked the role of Hungary in promoting a "balanced stance" towards Egypt within the EU (Government of Egypt, 2017).

Although the activity of the V4 can be seen as an example of de-Europeanization, in this case it reinforced the strategy of EU foreign policy in Egypt after 2014. It is by the means of bilateral meetings and an informal group such as the V4 that Hungary wanted to socialize the idea that Egypt needed to be reintegrated in the security and migration strategies of the Member States despite a worsening human rights situation in the country. The celebration of the EU-Arab League summit in Cairo in February 2019 marked the full external legitimisation of Egypt by the EU and its Member States. In its address, President Sisi made a defence of the use of death penalty saying that the two regions have "different cultures" (Sisi quoted in Reuters, 2019) and in what concerns Hungary, Orbán supported this view by saying that "we must respect the cultural, religious and political traditions of our peoples" (Government of Hungary, 2019c).

Rhetoric differences between liberal and illiberal realpolitik were not relevant in the long term. Neither the murder of Giulio Regeni nor the extensive use of death penalty against political dissidence discouraged the normalization of diplomatic relations with Member States promoted by Hungary. As a consequence, this gradual shift in the position of Member States, including UK, France and Germany regarding Egypt, has deepened inconsistencies of EU foreign policy, what Dandashly (2018) referred to as the democracy-stability dilemma. Human rights issues have been erased from the bilateral agendas in order to gain the support of a key geopolitical ally such as Egypt in the context of the destabilisation of the Middle East and migration fears in Europe.

Conclusion: Europeanization all over again

Populist radical right parties in government use a different rhetoric compared to mainstream political parties (see for e.g. Balfour et al., 2016). However, their foreign policies might not radically differ from those of the EU. Italy-Tunisia relations and Hungary-Egypt relations exemplified that, paradoxically, Member States with populist radical right parties in government might seek to Europeanize their foreign policies. In the case of Italy, a bottom-up-down process of Europeanization started with national projection during center-right and the center-left governments and continued with national adaptation during the Conte Government. In what regards Hungary, the Government of Viktor Orbán tried to Europeanize its position regarding Egypt, which in turn, reinforced the approach followed by EU foreign policy after 2014.

In both cases, there were processes of Europeanization despite differences in domestic politics in what regards the debate around migration. This is important as national politics strongly influence the foreign affairs agenda of the Hungarian and the Italian governments. On the one hand, in Italy, migration from Arab countries has been a salient issue in the political debate due to historical ties with Northern Africa. Moreover, there is a relative strong presence of Arab migration in the country. On the other hand, Hungary has very low migration rates and migration from Northern African countries was not an important political issue until *Fidesz* introduced the subject in the context of the migration crisis. These differences might explain why in the case of Italy there was a longer process of bottom-up-down Europeanization and in the case of Hungary it was a more recent phenomenon of Europeanization as crossloading. Nevertheless, Europeanization of domestic foreign policies was influenced in both cases by anti-migration and securitization agendas.

Cost-benefit calculations and socialization can trigger Europeanization when populist radical right parties govern. In the case of Italy-Tunisia relations, the Conte Cabinet adapted to EU foreign policy in order to take advantage of economies of scale produced by the ENP and EU's funds. When ideational motivations cease to be at work, economies of scale might gain salience in the Europeanization of domestic foreign policies. In the case of Hungary, Orbán tried to Europeanize its "practical approach" or

illiberal realpolitik vision of the Middle East by the means of socialization of ideas and values in bilateral meetings and within the V4. Euroscepticism did not take the form of a partial exit or de-Europeanization, but of crossloading of an alternative illiberal vision of EU foreign policy.

Europeanization does not necessarily conflict with a process of reassertion of national foreign policy at the discursive level. As argued by Hodson and Puetter (2019), the EU has an adaptive capacity in what regards the policies proposed by populist radical right parties in what regards migration and security in the Mediterranean. Nationalist discourses of populist radical right parties in office can nourish the securitization of EU foreign policy. In the Mediterranean, domestic foreign policy such as Italy's and EU foreign policy do not necessarily differ in material terms as they apply the same old formulas to curb migration flows. In addition, as "principled pragmatism" or liberal realpolitik becomes increasingly disengaged from a human rights agenda, the differences with Orbán's "pragmatic approach" appear to be of rhetoric nature.

Bearing in mind the research question -to what extend populist radical right parties in government shape EU foreign policy-, it appears that Italy and Hungary did not contradict the strategy followed by the EU in the framework of the ENP. However, the influence of the *Lega* and *Fidesz* amplifies existent inconsistencies in the ENP regarding human rights (Dandashly, 2018). In the case of Tunisia, Italy reinforces conditionality in migration further frustrating the expectations to sign an acceptable visa facilitation agreement and the conclusion of new trade agreement with the EU. Regarding Egypt, Hungary has advocated for the erasing of human rights issues from the European agenda despite unprecedented repression of political dissidence after the military *coup* of 2013.

Finally, as Balfour et al. (2016a) identified, the surge of the populist radical right can have different impacts in foreign affairs at the domestic and EU levels depending on the areas and issues under study. As this article wanted to show, the Europeanization of foreign policies is a possible outcome in the Mediterranean. However, when governments with populist radical right parties do not have ideational and material interests in Europeanization, de-Europeanization seems the expectable outcome.

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