

Managing Societal Security in the European Union: policy-makers as securitizing actors *SOURCE Conference*

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“Linking Culture, Diplomacy and Security: A Bridge, or a Bridge Too Far?”

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Caveat Emptor

- Thanks for invitation but two initial caveats:
 - I am a professor of international political economy, not a security specialist (societal or otherwise)
 - I know little about policy making in the European Union
- I am currently working on a H2020 project on *cultural and science diplomacy (EL-CSID)* but I will do my best to speak to the theme of this conference; but again with initial caveats
 - I am not sure I would, or could, call myself a constructivist (the seeming intellectual flavour of this conference)
 - Assumptions about the relationship between cultural diplomacy and security frequently heard from both scholars and practitioners in Brussels seem to me to be over-extended—indeed 'heroic'
 - I am a detached analyst. Not a practitioner. I have no horse in the race!
 - I am by inclination critical, but I hope not unconstructively so

Structure of Presentation

Part 1: A Tale of Two Reports:

- From the 2003 *European Security Strategy* (ESS, 2004) to *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe* (2016)

Part 2: Soft Power and Security

- What has Culture got to do with it?

Part 3: What Can Be Done?

- The Joint Communiqué as a Road Map

PART 1: CONTEXT

THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW

From the *European Security Strategy* (2004)
to *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe* (2016)

Way Back When: The Initial proposition

- Think back to the 2003 EU *Security Strategy* Paper. It was:
 - Optimistic and upbeat about Europe as a security actor
 - A self-congratulatory, smug even, view of 'normative power Europe' in a growing multi/ tri-polar world in which the EU would be one of 3 major players
- Soft power seen as serious tool in the pursuit of external relations
 - The EU would become adept at practicing soft power
 - EU socio-economic-cultural strengths (democratic values, superior economic integration model, enlightenment culture, commitment to rules based international order) were on a roll.
 - All were values for export to make the world a better place and would project a positive external image for the EU

But my, how the world changes

- 2nd sentence of EUGS (8) 'we live in times of existential crisis'.
- *Inter alia* the EU faces:
 - Continuing legacy problems of global financial crisis,
 - Unresolved Euro zone problems
 - Aftermath of failed Arab revolutions, terrorism on its on soil
 - Refugees and migration problems the Mediterranean
 - Increasingly nationalist and aggressive Russia
 - Growth of populism, nationalism and 'illiberal democracy' beyond (but also within) its borders
 - Unpredictable USA, no longer a (self-binding) hegemon but rather threatening the 70 year post WWII liberal international order
 - Brexit and all its implications (known and unknown)
 - Brussels on the defensive over issues of legitimacy and accountability

But my, how the world changes

- EU's member states still find it hard, at times even undesirable, to operate a common policy in the international domain
 - Initiatives involving recourse to traditional instruments of foreign policy including forceful and coordinated diplomacy, often reflect divisions leading to sub-optimal policy outcomes.

Implications of a changing global order

- Let's not panic. It is not the apocalypse (just yet)
- Changes in global distribution of power are real, including:
 - Prospect of an unraveling of both security and economic architectures
 - Skepticism toward the European project
 - Contradictory demands on those who would make/implement EUFP
 - Difficult role of EEAS confronted by nat. desires to retain or claw back nat. controls on policy.
- Issues of enhancing EU 'hard power' in economics and security do (or should) take precedence over policy domains of 'soft power'
- Opportunities of enhanced coordination in cultural and science diplomacy, between the EU, the MS and their extra-European partners become more difficult as they become more important
 - In fact, they takes on a foreign policy significance not normally attributed to either culture or science in general or CSD in particular.

PART 2:

BUT LIFE GOES ON

SOFT POWER AND SECURITY:
WHAT HAS CULTURE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

A Bit of History

- A bit of history—with apologies to historians in the room
- European Attitudes to Non European Culture
 - Pre 18th Century: European cultural borrowings, followed by 'expropriation', from non-European cultures (especially Ottoman Empire) not uncommon
 - 18th and 19th Century on: emergence of a civilisational and teleological discourse of European cultural superiority emerged
 - Corroborated and bolstered by material and technological advances
 - Cultural superiority imposed by European colonialism.
 - Posed as a choice between accepting and rejecting 'progress'
 - Europe has a tradition of telling others when they are not modern enough, not democratic enough or not Christian or secular enough

A Bit of History

- 20th Century: positive and negative residues of enforced 'expropriation' from European culture with modern day implications
- On the negative side, in the post-colonial era, it is not unusual for European culture and ideas to be negatively simply on their source of origin rather than their utility

Linking Culture, Security and Diplomacy

- Limited and ambiguous utility to the notion of 'soft power'
 - Some see it as a euphemism for 'no power' in the area of 'hard power'
 - Even Joe Nye has largely ditched the term. He now favours 'smart power'
- 'Societal security' an equally ambiguous exercise in conceptual stretching
- But societal and cultural dialogue and exchange are serious elements of the transnational and trans-continental diplomatic conversation
 - International cultural interaction and organisation long ago escaped the boundaries of the state.

Linking Culture, Security and Diplomacy

- Successful Culture diplomacy is in the eye of the beholder where:
 - Influence and reciprocal knowledge sharing in cultural diplomacy is not assured
 - In constant need of re-mapping and checking with recipients .
 - Re-mapping implies not only understanding what we mean by culture, but also the language and other mediums we use to promote it
 - Without re-mapping old legacies of resentment will remain and new resentments will develop.
- To the extent that 'soft power' really exists, bad policy choice can quickly dissipate it

PART 3

WHAT CAN BE DONE

THE JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ AS A ROAD MAP

The EU and Cultural Diplomacy

- Two recent documents:
 - (i) Joint Communiqué to EP and EC, Towards an EU Strategy of International Cultural Relations
 - (ii) European Union Global Strategy
- JC prefers “*international cultural relations*” to cultural diplomacy.
 - Candidly this is a semantic argument—a rose by any other name is still a rose and those on the receiving will not be fooled
- Only reference to cultural diplomacy in EUGS comes at page 49

“New fields of our joined-up external action include energy diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and economic diplomacy”

The EU and Cultural Diplomacy

- EUGS says it will nurture:
 - “societal resilience also by deepening work on education, culture and youth to foster pluralism, coexistence and respect”
- But more realistically says:
 - “Putting our diverse national cultures at the service of our shared interests is a challenge” **Indeed, it is!!**
- Yet, even if differences in national cultures could be controlled there will always be a coordination problem (See slide 16)

Towards an EU strategy for international Cultural Relations

- In 2015, the Council called on the Commission to prepare a 'strategic approach to culture in the EU's external relations'.
- The Joint Communiqué is the response. So, the good news: EU has a vision for cultural diplomacy explicitly framed in context of its aspiration to be global actor. Notwithstanding known objections, and my own critique, I judge it a powerful/persuasive document.
- Driven by a desire to:
 - Enhance cultural dialogue between the EU and the rest of the world
 - Enhance Europe's external image and influence
 - Enhance European economic competitiveness in an increasingly important area of international transaction

Towards an EU strategy for International Cultural Relations

- But—relevant for this conference—note what it is not:
 - The JC is not driven principally by concerns of ‘societal securitisation’ although improved societal relations within EU are implicitly present.
 - And international cultural relations while present, would not appear to be at the centre of the new *European Union Global Strategy*.
 - The EUGS talks about societal ‘resilience’ and the role of culture in securing it. But it does so in a ‘catch all’ non-specific and non-policy targeted manner.

Cultural Diplomacy: 'a beautiful but ethereal project'

- In various speeches, HR Mogherini has referred to Europe as:
 - A 'cultural superpower'
 - And cultural diplomacy as an important foreign policy tool
- Both suggestions may indeed be empirically accurate. BUT:
 - The first statement is a diplomatic folly
 - The second statement ignores the inauspicious timing of launch of the communiqué: 2 weeks before Brexit and 3 weeks before EUGS
- EU is a global actor currently beset by crises of confidence and identity that engulf it at a time of unprecedented and diminished global expectation compared with just a decade ago.

Cultural Diplomacy: 'a beautiful but ethereal project'

- EU interest in cultural diplomacy seems to be an attempt to offset a loss of identity and global aspiration.
- But things have moved since the optimistic days of the early the 21st Century.
- Endeavouring to make the best of assets such as Europe's culture becomes a crucial instrument of policy and is indeed rational.
- But assumption that EU cultural diplomacy can mitigate its declining influence vis-a-vis the traditional hegemon, the USA, and the rising global force of East Asia is pietistic rather than analytic.

The Difficulties of Cultural Diplomacy

- Cultural diplomacy, EU-led or MS-led, will always be difficult.
 - Target audiences, especially the Middle East and developing countries will always treat cultural diplomacy with suspicion.
 - At worst, it is a post-imperial/colonial legacy. At best, it is a manifestation of a residual assumption of Western superiority.
- Problem is less the substance, virtue and promulgation of western cultural values *per se* rather than the 'norms-as-practices' that would be necessary for their trans-national delivery.
- Shared cultural values do not necessarily amount to a common '*European cultural persona*' that can be a basis for cultural diplomacy.

The Difficulties of Cultural Diplomacy

- To suggest they can, as some of the more assertive brands of European normative power do, is at best foolhardy, at worst ethnocentrically arrogant.
 - Hence Mogherini's assertion that Europe is a cultural superpower is injudicious and, in my humble judgment, should not be repeated.
 - 'Superpower' is not a notion that lends itself to the improvement of international inter-cultural relations.
 - It is a surprising lapse by an otherwise accomplished diplomatic actor.

Conclusion 1: The Limits of cultural diplomacy

- If the EU's message to other peoples is that European cultural values are pivotal to the peaceful functioning of international society, it is a message that is probably destined to fall on deaf ears in the contemporary era.
- It is asking too much of those European socio-cultural values developed since the Enlightenment—and especially a desire to export liberal economic values, political democratic values and the progressive growth of human rights—to expect that they should be universalisable in the 21st century.
- Indeed, they are no longer axiomatically universalisable. The dominant trend is in the opposite direction—populism, nationalism and illiberal democracy (both inside and outside the Union) and across the Atlantic even.

Conclusion 1: The Limits of cultural diplomacy

- This is not an argument for cultural relativism. Nor a critique of European values.
- While EU strategy's *stated* cultural aim is to promote *diversity*, the most likely reading to be taken beyond the border of the EU, is that its *real* aim is to promote the EU in the contemporary global search for influence—especially vis a vis the USA and China.
- There is nothing wrong with such a strategy. But the EU needs to tread very softly with third countries if it is not to generate a backlash.

Conclusion 2: Opportunity Costs, Crowding Out and Resources

- While rhetoric on enhancing EU cultural relations is strong (at least in Brussels) the likelihood of concrete outcomes—especially in MS with strong traditions of cultural diplomacy—should not be overestimated.
 - EU has only ‘supporting competence’ in cultural diplomacy (Art 6, TFEU). A coordination problem is omni-present in Brussels across the policy spectrum
 - It is reflected in cultural diplomacy in the ambiguity expressed in the Joint Communiqué to EU actions via the EEAS and the separate strategies of the MS.
- **‘Crowding out’** is always a possibility in a packed external relations agenda. Cultural diplomacy, along with economic diplomacy and energy diplomacy are ‘new fields of joined-up external action’ (2016:49) in EUGS. But it is very possible that older, more traditional priorities will remain, and grow, elsewhere.

Conclusion 2: Opportunity Costs, Crowding Out and Resources

- In a Trumpian world we can expect security will become the priority and resource pressures to meet military obligations will become acute.
- It will be interesting to observe over the next few years the degree to which cultural diplomacy can really be, in Mogherini's own words, '... at the core of our foreign policy'. You could say, *faute de mieux*, it has to be.
- I am a fan. I wish her well. But I am not optimistic.