

The role of culture in EU Foreign Policy: Between International Cultural Relations and Cultural Diplomacy

Temanummer: Kulturdiplomati

This article offers an analysis of the role of culture in the European Union's external relations. Firstly, it traces the institutional evolution of the cultural policies implemented by the EU in its external relations. It picks up on the distinction between cultural diplomacy and international cultural relations. Secondly, the limits of the EU's strategic approach to culture in external relations are illustrated, with particular attention given to the consequences of changes in the international system and the organisational and legal limits of supranational action in cultural relations. The paper demonstrates how the current

global context is not conducive to the deployment of culture in international relations as envisioned in the EU strategic approach. We argue that without a strengthening of its normative spirit and traditional liberal-cum-internationalist approach, the EU has little chance of achieving international cultural relations based on a participatory and argumentative approach aimed at achieving global solidarity. More likely is a cultural diplomacy understood as a form of public diplomacy and characterised by strategic communication supportive of the EU's increasingly geo-political agenda.

EU foreign policy has been in a state of confusion for some years now. Indeed, the last *Strategic Review* in 2016 (EU, 2016b) went as far as to describe the presence of an existential crisis facing the EU as an international actor. The aim of this paper is to situate the role of culture in the EU's external relations in this wider contemporary context. To do so, our analysis takes a helicopter view and looks at the deployment of culture in the EU diplomacy and how it has evolved overtime. Then, we discuss the main limits of such policy and the implications that changes in international relations might have on it.

We believe that to understand the role of culture in the EU's external relations, it is necessary to go beyond the traditional actor-based approach and introduce a distinction between cultural diplomacy and international cultural relations based on the process subsumed in the deployment of culture in external policies (for an elaboration see Lamonica and Murray, 2021). Thus, for the sake of clarity, we give a brief description in section two of the two traditional definitions of cultural diplomacy and cultural relations. Then, we provide some policy context by illustrating the milestones of the design and implementation of the EU strategic approach to international cultural relations. Finally, we introduce a conceptualization of the process driving international cultural relations that contributes to distinguish it from cultural diplomacy.

In general terms, it is possible to distinguish two different approaches to the role of culture at the European level: cultural diplomacy (CD) and international cultural relations (ICR). However, the dividing line between the two is

RICHARD HIGGOTT

Distinguished Professor of
Diplomacy, Brussels School
of Governance VUB,
richardhiggott0@gmail.com

ALESSANDRO GIOVANNI LAMONICA

Postdoc, Centre for the
Study of Political Change,
University of Siena,
alessandro.lamonica2@unisi.it

blurred and, in the understanding of EU international relations, attempts to create a distinction has often generated more confusion than clarity. We argue that this confusion is generated by the wrong assumption that the dividing line between these two approaches to the role of culture in European external relations is based on the actors involved and the objectives pursued. Conversely, we argue that CD and ICR see the same actors – EU institutions and, to a certain extent, member states (MS) – pursuing the same objectives – stability, security, and prosperity – but with different processes involved. CD relies on the mobilization of culture to activate soft power while ICR tries to foster culture to build consensus and a common knowledge on the international stage based on argumentation. Perhaps one further difference is that CD is always interested in the essentially “political” nature of culture in international relations as actors seek to enhance their standing, reputation, and influence in the global policy process. We will elaborate these distinctions further below and we will discuss how differences between these two approaches make them more or less responsive, effective, and viable in a changing international scenario.



Cultural Diplomacy relies on the mobilization of culture to activate soft power while International Cultural Relations tries to foster culture to build consensus and a common knowledge on the international stage based on argumentation

A Very Brief Contextual Aperçu

The interaction between CD and ICR in EU policy does not take place in a discrete vacuum. It can only be understood in the global context of the first quarter of the 21st century which is proving to be one in which many of the norms that had been established between the end of World War II, through the passing of the Cold War, and into the present day are unraveling. The contemporary order reflects a shift away from the so-called liberal internationalism – under-written by the US as a self-binding hegemon (Martin, 2004) – towards an emerging geo-political “systemically binary” order characterised by increased competition between the USA and China. We say “systemic binary order” to distinguish it from a simpler realist bi-polar understanding of order and to resist the temptation to assume that the end of uni-polarity will axiomatically drift into multi-polarity. In the contemporary era, in longstanding battle between liberalism and internationalism, nationalism, as John Mearsheimer (2021) persuasively argues, presently has the upper hand.

The world is not multi-polar; nor is it tightly bi-polar. A binary division exists but it is not as tightly bound as it was during the Cold War. There is policy leakage across the binary divide and other states hedge between the US and China where they can. In the words of Amitav Acharya (2017) we should see the 21st century more as a *multiplex* world order beset by a range of problems – terrorism, civil war, migration and refugee crises, environmental crises, and now global health pandemics – reflecting the development of a greater hy-

bridity of both theory and practice in contemporary international relations (see Higgott, 2021). EU external relations have been strongly influenced by these exogenous factors, but also organisational and political factors endogenous to the member states – especially the problems generated by the surge of populism and nationalism (see the essays in Carta and Higgott, 2019 and Higgott and Proud, 2017) – and their respective EU foreign policy communities be they in Brussels or the national capitals of the member states.

It is in this complex and hybrid context that the EU is grappling to carve out a global niche for itself. In combination, these factors – over the five years of Federica Mogherini's occupancy of the post of High Representative for External Relations and Security Policy and especially since the subsequent appointment of her successor, Josep Borrell in the new Commission of President Ursula Von de Leyen – has seen a re-orientation of thinking in EU international policy. Under the banner of searching for “strategic autonomy” or “strategic sovereignty”, the Commission of President Van de Leyen is adopting a “geo-political” approach to external relations aimed at securing for itself a position of global influence across the policy spectrum – notably in the domains of security, finance, trade, digitalisation, environment, and health – as a pole in its preferred option of a multipolar world (see Higgott and Van Langenhove, 2020 for a discussion).

This approach is not without its own contradictions and weaknesses. A geo-political approach, built on realist strategic assumptions of inter-state tension and competition, sits ill at ease with the EU's long held liberal assumptions of itself as a collaborative actor in an inevitably progressive multilateral cooperative international order. For a discussion of this changing and confused perspective in EU foreign policy thinking see Higgott and Reich (2021) and Judy Dempsey (2021).

This point is salient not only for the discussion of EU international relations overall but for the focus of this paper on attempts by the EU between 2014-2020 to enhance its external standing in global affairs by the development of a strategy along the spectrum from international cultural relations and cultural diplomacy. In contrast to a liberal internationalist approach to international relations, culture does not figure largely in the more realist geo-political approach advocated by the EU in the 2020s.

➤➤ **In contrast to a liberal internationalist approach to international relations, culture does not figure largely in the more realist geo-political approach advocated by the EU in the 2020s**

Thus, flagging the conclusion of this paper in advance, we argue that the attempts made during Mogherini's period as HR for External Affairs to enhance the role of culture in the EU's external relations, can be expected to decline

in salience as part of the EU's contemporary approach to external relations under the Van der Leyen Commission, at least in its purest ICR form. Geopolitical realism now takes on a greater salience in EU external relations than its more longstanding traditional normative approach to liberal internationalism (see Manners, 2003 on EU normative power). Culture – in the form of CD and especially ICR – will have to fight hard to keep a place as partners alongside more traditional material hard power diplomacy in the domains of security and economics.

What's in a Name? Cultural Diplomacy and International Cultural Relations in the EU's External Relations

The preceding discussion begs the question of what we mean by international cultural relations and cultural diplomacy in the context of the EU's external action. As noted above, traditional academic approaches to the conceptualization of culture-related practices in international relations are mostly informed by an actor-based understanding of the phenomenon. The discriminating factor is the presence or absence of the governmental (usually state) actors and action. This dichotomy gives rise to a typology that usually distinguishes cultural diplomacy from cultural relations as follows:

Cultural Diplomacy: Cultural diplomacy is an “essentially interest-driven governmental practice” (Isar et al., 2015: 365) by which “formal diplomats, serving national governments, try to shape and channel” cultural flows to “advance national interests” (Arndt, 2006: xviii). In other words, cultural diplomacy takes place when a public actor relies on culturally infused power to pursue and enhance specific foreign policy objectives in line with preferred, usually soft power, outcomes (Lamonica, 2019: 82). In this regard, it can be seen as part of wider public diplomacy and strategic communications as the key to a state's soft power effort. As is now well understood, it is an instrument that enhances public actors' ability to indirectly influence governments of other countries through their publics (Nye, 2011: 100).

Cultural relations: In contrast to cultural diplomacy, the scholarly literature sees cultural relations as being based on an absence of public actors and no desire to influence public policy in any formal sense. Exponents of cultural relations assume they “(...) grow naturally and organically, without government intervention” (Arndt, 2006). This type of relations is “driven by ideals rather than interests” (Isar et al., 2015: 365) and sees disintermediated transnational cooperation between non-governmental actors, civil society representatives, professionals from the creative and cultural sectors, and ordinary citizens. Cultural relations do not aim to mobilise soft power and do not pursue strategic interests other than those of the internationalisation agendas of the individual stakeholders involved.

The cultural dimension of the EU's public diplomacy

A policy, or at least a set of concerted cultural initiatives in public diplomacy and strategic communication have been present in the “foreign policy” of the European Union at least since the establishment of the European External Action Service back in 2010. Cultural diplomacy has evolved as a component of the EU public diplomacy practiced by the institutions of the EU with a view to increase understanding of EU views, policies, and priorities, promoting EU values and interests, and improving perceptions of the EU abroad. It goes to the core perception of how the EU is shaped in public opinion and what the influencing factors in decision making of this shaping process are. Quoting the European Parliamentary Research Service, Damaso (forthcoming) reminds us that the EU sees its public diplomacy as that process: “... whereby a country (or an entity) seeks to build trust and understanding by engaging with a broader foreign public”. This approach is considered complementary to the EU’s communication strategy, which is meant to foster “(...) a better understanding of [the EU’s] goals, policies and activities (...) [through] (...) “outreach and engagement as a tool [...] to develop positive and effective messages on EU policies” (European Parliamentary Research Service, 2017: 4).

However, in parallel with the development of this traditional component, European institutions have in recent years devised and launched a specific strategic approach for its international cultural relations (ICR). This strategy shows, at least on paper, innovation and a distinctive character leading to the conclusion that it is not simply an elaboration of CD but rather a parallel approach with a life of its own – what we call here ICR.

The launch of an EU strategy for international cultural relations

The EU has invested considerable intellectual capital into creating a strategic approach to culture in its external relations, at least since 2014. There were several milestones in the process:

- The publication in 2014 of the Preparatory Action Report on Culture in EU External Relations, *Engaging the World: Towards Global Cultural Citizenship* (EU, 2014).
- The delivery in June 2016 of the Joint Communication, *Towards a Strategy for International Cultural Relations* (EU, 2016a).
- The inclusion of cultural diplomacy as an instrument of policy in the 2016 *Global Strategy* (EU, 2016b).
- The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the European Commission, the EEAS, and the European Union National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC) to advance the practical administrative arrangements between the EEAS and the stakeholder community to implement the strategy (EU, 2017). The MoU was translated into joint guidelines that have been reiterated and updated in January 2021.
- The 2019 Council conclusions of an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and a framework for action (EU, 2019).

The recommendations of the Joint Communication and the provisions of the Council's Framework for Action constitute the foundational pillars of the European Union's approach to international cultural relations. The Joint Communication recommended that the EU approach to cultural diplomacy should "go beyond projecting the diversity of European Cultures", which is the *modus operandi* of public diplomacy, and "aim at generating a new spirit of dialogue, mutual listening and learning, joint capacity building and global solidarity" (EU, 2016a: 4). To do so, it was suggested the EU "adopt an approach to culture in external relations driven by the values of mutuality and reciprocity, primarily concerned with 'people-to-people' relations rather than State-to-people ones, with a long-term perspective, a wide and deep definition of culture" (Lamonica and Murray, 2021: 7). This theme has been picked up, rhetorically at least, by the Council of the EU arguing for strengthened "joint actions in third countries based on a common strategic vision developed at local level by the member states, their diplomatic and consular representations, their cultural institutes, EUNIC, EU delegations and local stakeholders" (EU, 2019: 8) based on the provisions of the Joint Communication.

In summary, the strategic approach aims to create international cultural relations based on dialogue and cooperation, driven not only by interests but also by values, and aimed at fostering transnational interactions between European and non-European citizens rather than acting strategically on the populations of the target countries alone. The ICR thus emerge as a relational and processual practice that does not exclude functional aspects, since the objective remains to ensure global stability, security, and prosperity.

A tension between soft power and argumentation

So then, what is the difference between European CD and ICR? As an analytical device in the discussion of the interactions between these two dimensions of the EU's external relations and to overcome the resulting ambiguity, it is profitable, we suggest, to refer to the conceptualization developed by Lamonica and Murray (2021). According to them, for a better understanding of the practices of culture in contemporary international relations, it is necessary to add to the distinction based on the actors involved a dimension of differentiation resulting from the process put in place by these actors. Specifically, in recent years culture is leveraged in international relations by adopting two different approaches: a "soft power/strategic communications" approach and an "argumentative/participatory" approach.



In recent years culture is leveraged in international relations by adopting two different approaches: a "soft power/strategic communications" approach and an "argumentative/participatory" approach.

The first approach sees culture as a functional resource for the mobilisation of soft power through the activation of public diplomacy dynamics; this is a

traditional mode that characterises most expressions of cultural diplomacy, including, as we have seen, that of the EU. On the contrary, the analysis of practices emerged in the last decades in Europe – in for example the activities of the British Council in the UK and of the Goethe Institut in Germany and transited in the recent EU's strategic approach to ICR – seems to indicate the consolidation of an argumentative and participatory approach which “looks at culture not as a fixed resource (...) [rather than] (...) considers the practice of international cultural cooperation as a non-zero-sum game” (Lamonica and Murray, 2021: 10). This approach seems to find its natural systematisation in the application of Habermas' theory of communicative action to international relations, as outlined by Risse (2000). A reasoned consensus among actors in the international arena should lead to mutual understanding and trust and, through processes of argumentation and deliberation, to the development of a common normative framework to solving transnational and global problems. This would result in lasting and stable cooperation based on common rules and institutions and capable of influencing the behaviour of the actors involved.

While the EU's CD seems to be based on a soft power/strategic communications approach, ICR, as it is imagined in EU policy, is a practice of state-driven cultural relations apparently driven by an argumentative/participatory process. In principle, the coexistence of the two approaches in the external actions of the European Union is not problematic. Soft power and deliberative argumentation are not mutually exclusive and can be part of a variable geometry strategy in a multilateral cooperative international order. The question is whether this strategy is effective and viable in the current international context.

The limits of the EU strategic approach to culture in external relations

The EU has always been excessively aspirational in the faith it placed in the role of culture in contemporary international politics, either as an instrument of external projection in the shape of soft power (CD) (see Nye, 2004), or as a framework on which to build a shared understanding with partner countries (ICR). We argue that this is true for several reasons:

Firstly, changes in the international system. Perhaps most importantly, at the level of practice identified in the introduction to this paper, the prospects for success of a strategy to grow EU external influence or fruitful cooperation through culture is poorly tuned to both the structures and practices of the global order at the beginning of the third decade of the 21st century. The long held cosmopolitan, essentially liberal belief that culture is inherently beneficial in foreign policy, and that this is the way of the future, has been too easily assumed, especially in an era of growing nationalism and realist pessimism captured most powerfully by John Mearsheimer (2019 and 2021).



The long held cosmopolitan, essentially liberal belief that culture is inherently beneficial in foreign policy, and that this is the way of the future, has been too easily assumed, especially in an era of growing nationalism and realist pessimism

The strategy and tactics of populist nationalist actors in contemporary international relations in recent years have tested the cosmopolitan argument to its limits. Also, EU strategy over-estimates changes in diplomacy in the 21st century. The so-called *new* diplomacy in which non-traditional agents, including cultural agents play a greater role than in the past has always been overstated.¹ The principles of diplomacy – state communication *under constraints of force and power* – remain at the core of diplomatic practice and success. Attempts to set up soft diplomacy as an independent category of action separate from traditional politico-military material domains of diplomatic practice remain challenging.

Secondly, a clash of competences and limited resources. Notwithstanding aspirations in Brussels, culture remains an exclusive competence of Member States, with EU institutions having a supporting role only. Moreover, the external relations of the EU are heavily influenced by the foreign policies of its Member States. Indeed, the special competence on common foreign and security policy of the EU institutions is limited and the policy is defined and implemented by the European Council and the Council of the European Union. One of the consequences of this narrow field of action is that meaningful financial support to implement the approaches identified in the 2016 Joint Communication and to run cultural diplomacy activities has to this date been limited. Moreover, while public diplomacy – and consequently its pillar, cultural diplomacy – is somehow embedded in the running costs of the EEAS, ICR have so far relied on a disjointed and fragmented flow of resources, mostly from instruments created for other purposes (such as *Creative Europe*) or from programmes of different directorates-general of the Commission. Endeavours to secure adequate substantial funding always represent the perennial triumph of hope over experience.

However, some steps towards strengthening and optimising the resources dedicated to culture in EU external relations have been taken. As far as *Creative Europe* is concerned, the multiannual financial framework 2021-2027 provides for a 50 pct. increase in the budget compared to the previous seven-year period (EUR 2.44 billion) and the programme will strengthen its contribution to ICR (EU, 2021b). Furthermore, 2021 will see the launch of the first integrated and unique instrument for financing the European Union's external actions, the Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI). With a budget of EUR 79.5 billion, this instrument will operate along geographical and thematic lines. The NDICI does not currently provide for specific allocations for international cultural relations or cultural diplomacy, but negotiations between the European Parliament, the Commis-

sion and the Council are still ongoing, as are advocacy activities in favour of an explicit integration of culture in the instrument's mandate (EU, 2021a).

Thirdly, a clash between narrative and perception. There is a risk that the received reading of the strategy beyond the borders of the EU is that its real aim is to promote EU culture and values vis-à-vis the influences of those other great players in the contemporary global search for influence: the USA and China. There is nothing improper with such a strategy, but it carries its own risks, especially if framed as part of what we might call a forward-leaning narrative. Mogherini's assertion, made on more than one occasion, that the EU was a "cultural superpower" (EU News, 2016) always seemed tone deaf to the fact that the EU's perception of itself might seem aggressive, neo-colonial even, in would-be recipient countries. Any success of the strategy must be measured through the eyes of the target audience. When it comes to the deployment of culture in foreign policy, influence and *reciprocal* knowledge-sharing is not assured. This kind of endeavour is 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 used to promote it. Without re-mapping, old legacies of resentment will remain, and new resentments will develop. This is a particularly important issue for the EU in the current age, especially in its relationships with its African partners.

Fourthly, organizational constraints. Beyond the risks inherent in the interaction between the normative aspirations of the EU's cultural action in external relations and practice, as with much in the implementation of EU policy, there is a coordination problem due to the multilevel governance the EU is required to ensure. This is so given the volume and diversity of the main participating agents – from the Commission, the EEAS, the member states, individually and under the umbrella of EUNIC, and the principal non-governmental stakeholders in cultural relations – whose interests do not always coincide and will remain difficult to manage for as long as culture is principally a member state competence. Indeed, as even the 2016 *Global Strategy* noted: "Putting our diverse national cultures at the service of our shared interests is a challenge" (discussed in Higgott and Proud, 2017).

The balance in the relationship between policy makers, civil society organisations and practitioners, both at national and supranational level, given the different priorities and motivations of their respective endeavours, is always a delicate one that will inevitably influence the effectiveness and viability of a truly European strategic approach. This relationship reflects an ambiguity emanating from EU dysfunctionality on the one hand through to a degree of conceptual and policy ambiguity on the other. This ambiguity is both structural and deliberate. It is symptomatic of the EU's institutional architecture. But it is also related to the need to organise cultural diversity between member states and third parties. To overcome disagreements among EU member states, policymakers in Brussels must practice constructive ambiguity relying on differentiated diversity management in shaping EU's approaches to culture

within and beyond its borders (see Damaso and Murray, 2021) with attendant negative consequences for the potential efficacy of the deployment of culture in the EU's contemporary external relations.

➤➤ **To overcome disagreements among EU member states, policymakers in Brussels must practice constructive ambiguity relying on differentiated diversity management in shaping EU's approaches to culture within and beyond its borders with attendant negative consequences for the potential efficacy of the deployment of culture in the EU's contemporary external relations**

Moreover, institutional agents bridging states, the EU, and society *via* international cultural relations – e.g., actors such as *More Europe*, the *Cultural Relations Platform*, and especially the *European Union National Institutes for Culture* (EUNIC), somehow resist the idea that they are formally engaged in the implementation of public-driven policies. But – in terms of their similar normative agendas, practical objectives, processes, and the overlap of the actors involved – what separate cultural diplomacy as a component of European public diplomacy and international cultural relations is not the presence or the absence of public actors or the lack of strategic objectives. Indeed, the claim that ICR is non-governmental rests on the polite fiction that it is institutionally decentralized and operationally independent, conveniently ignoring the often-significant government funding for its activities, which makes ICR an interest-driven approach as much as CD is. Indeed, as soon as funding comes from the member states or the EU or the EU itself, the notion of autonomous cultural relations has to cede ground to a murkier relationship suggesting a role for them, in part at least, as instruments of diplomacy.

Conclusion

The behaviour of major players, China, Russia, and of course the USA – notwithstanding the replacement of the transactional Donald Trump by the more rhetorically restrained Joe Biden – suggests that any notion that non-material softer approaches to diplomacy – CD through ICR included – would progressively share equal billing with more traditional material and security approaches on the international stage is problematic. To say this is not to discount the salience of culture when compared with economics and force in contemporary international relations. Events since 2016, especially the growing influence of the so-called civilisational states (see Coker, 2019) have dispelled that myth.

The growing assertiveness of “civilisational states” – such as India, China, Turkey, Russia and the Trumpian, and indeed post-Trumpian, USA – is at the heart of the internationalisation of cultural politics. The possibility of a

real “clash of civilisations” is stronger than any time in nearly 30 years since Samuel Huntington (1993) first suggested it as a possibility. Populist cultural wars – the *reductio ad absurdum* of cultural relations – are playing a critical role (with a sense of foreboding for some and elation for others) in globalisation’s erosion. The effect of this erosion is the emergence of deep fault-lines in the civil communities of the advanced countries – especially the USA and some European states. Elections seem to divide rather than unite. Splits are no longer just horizontal along a left-right party spectrum; rather they are vertical elite-mass cleavages (see Kriesi 2014, and Kriesi and Papas, 2015). Liberal assumptions that cosmopolitan elites spoke for their national populations no longer pertain.

American global strength for the last 75 years has been rooted in its ideational attractiveness – especially its cultural soft power. It is widely argued across the political spectrum this is coming undone (see Luce, 2017, and Nye, 2018). At the heart of the populist nationalist zeitgeist is a view that culture and identity are *local* and *national*, not international. European activity along the ICR-CD spectrum attract the suspicion and distrust of populists. For the European populist, culture – especially cultural politics – must be defended against the diluting power of Brussels and that of the wider global and cosmopolitan liberal elites.

Try as they might, pro-EU ICR and CD boosters invariably fail to address these symptoms of current nationalist populist angst. International cultural dialogues are usually about norms (the prescriptive manner in which actors behave). Such norms are adaptive (Crowe, 2011), and it is the evolving nature of norms that makes the ICR-CD spectrum a difficult and at times unpredictable instrument as but one element of the pursuit of a truly European foreign policy. At this time of growing nationalist sentiment, the EU’s message to the peoples and states beyond its borders – that failure to adopt European culture (read liberal universalist values) will impede the smooth functioning of international society in the modern era – are out of tune with the more populist, civilisational temper of the times.

European international cultural relations and cultural diplomacy may at the margins still informally influence others, but they can never formally direct their courses of action. Indeed, the contemporary global context is not conducive to the ability of the EU to enhance the role of culture in its external relations. For different reasons, both the soft power approach of CD and the argumentative approach of ICR may come up against obstacles that are difficult to overcome.

The approach underlying CD, resting on the assumption that attraction and cooption are as effective as coercion and inducement, is more aligned with contemporary realist trends than ICR and therefore has a better chance of surviving. If the shift away from liberal internationalism towards an emerging geo-political “systemically binary” order characterised by increased competi-

tion between the USA and China continues, this is probably the approach that will prevail. Indeed, here a shift from a cultural diplomacy – as a pillar of public diplomacy – towards a purely strategic communication approach – aimed at countering the disinformation and propaganda practices of other – appears to be gaining ground in Brussels (see Damaso, forthcoming).

➤➤ **Indeed, the contemporary global context is not conducive to the ability of the EU to enhance the role of culture in its external relations. A shift from a cultural diplomacy – as a pillar of public diplomacy – towards a purely strategic communication approach – aimed at countering the disinformation and propaganda practices of other – appears to be gaining ground in Brussels**

In contrast to CD, ICR's argumentative and participatory approach is normative and designed to work in a multilateral cooperative international order based on EU liberal assumptions of collaborative action. However, EU External policy under Josep Borrell has taken its foot off the pedal of ICR that was pressed in Federica Mogherini's period as High Representative. To the extent that he is sensitive to it all, Borrell seems to privilege a traditional understanding of culture as but a resource of public diplomacy to mobilize soft power, therefore closer to CD. This is unsurprising. Changes in hierarchy and leadership can and invariably do cause change of tone, emphasis, and priorities in policy focus. It follows that ICR is less likely to survive under current circumstances than CD unless the EU revives its normative spirit and its traditional liberal internationalist approach.

In this climate of increasingly aggressive nationalism, lack of trust in dialogue and tensions over power, it is hard to make the case that the optimism of "liberal will" might prevail over the "pessimism of realism".

Noter

- 1 Much has been written on the "new diplomacy". For a taster, see Cooper, Heine and Thakur (2013) and Kerr and Wiseman (2018). For an example of governmental belief in the utility of soft power and cultural diplomacy, see Singh and MacDonald (2017). For analysis see Higgott and Tercovitch (2021).

References

- Acharya, Amitav (2017), "After Liberal Hegemony: The Advent of a Multiplex World Order", *Ethics & International Affairs*, 31(3): 271-85.
- Arndt, Richard T. (2005), *The first resort of kings: American cultural diplomacy in the twentieth century*, Dulles, Va: Potomac Books.
- Carta, Caterina and Richard Higgott, eds. (2019), *Cultural Diplomacy in Europe: Between the Domestic and the International*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Coker, Christopher (2019), *The Rise of the Civilisational State*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Cooper, Andrew F., Heine Jorge and Thakur Ramesh, eds. (2013), *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Crowe, Alexis (2011), "Cultural Dialogues in International Security: New Thinking for Europe and America," *International Security Programme Policy Paper*, 6, London: Chatham House.
- Dâmaso, Mafalda and Andrew Murray (2021), "The EU's Dualistic Regime of Cultural Diversity Management. The Concept of Culture in the Creative Europe Program (2014–2019; 2021–2027) and in the Strategy for International Cultural Relations (2016–)," *Journal of Cultural Management and Cultural Policy*/Zeitschrift für Kulturmanagement und Kulturpolitik, 7(1): 153-84.
- Dâmaso, Mafalda (forthcoming), "Implementing the EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations – Towards a New Paradigm", Center on Public Diplomacy (CPD Perspectives on Public Policy), Los Angeles, California: University of Southern California.
- Dempsey, Judy (2021), "Why the European Union Cannot Do Foreign Policy", Carnegie Europe, <https://carnegie-eeurope.eu/strategieurope/83841>
- EU (2014), "Engaging the World: Towards Global Cultural Citizenship", Preparatory Action Report on Culture in EU External Relations, http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/culture/library/publications/global-cultural-citizenship_en.pdf
- EU (2016a), "Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations", Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council, https://ec.europa.eu/culture/policies/strategic-framework/strategy-international-cultural-relations_en
- EU (2016b), "From Shared Vision to Common Action: The EU's Global Strategic Vision", <https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/global-strategy-foreign-and-security-policy-european-union>
- EU (2017), "Administrative arrangements developed by the European Union National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) in partnership with the European Commission Services and the European External Action Service", 16 May, <https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/>
- EU (2019), "Council conclusions on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations and a framework for action", Council of the European Union (2019/C 192/04), June, <https://op.europa.eu/it/publication-detail/-/publication/da766854-8907-11e9-9369-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-HTML/source-106512600>
- EU (2021a), "European Commission welcomes the endorsement of the new €79.5 billion NDICI-Global Europe instrument to support EU's external action", 19 March, European Commission https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/pt/ip_21_1267
- EU (2021b), "Creative Europe programme 2021-2027", 17 June, [www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI\(2018\)628229](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI(2018)628229)
- EUnews (2016), "Mogherini: Europe is a cultural superpower. We need to use its force", 10 June, www.eunews.it/2016/06/10/mogherini-europe-cultural-superpower-need-use-force/61145
- European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS) (2017), "Communicating Europe in third countries", Briefing to the European Parliament, www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2017/599340/EPRS_BRI%282017%29599340_EN.pdf
- Higgott, Richard (2021), *States, Civilisations and the Resetting of World Order*, London: Routledge.
- Higgott, Richard and Virginia Proud (2017), *Populist-Nationalism and Foreign Policy Cultural Diplomacy, International Interaction and Resilience*, Stuttgart: Institute für Auslandsbeziehungen, <https://publikationen.ifa.de/en/Periodicals/ifa-Edition-Culture-and-Foreign-Policy/Populist-Nationalism-and-Foreign-Policy.html>
- Higgott, Richard and Luk Vanlangenhove (2020), "The EU and the Unravelling of the World Order in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic", blog post: <http://cris.unu.edu/eu-covid19-unravelling-world-order>.
- Higgott, Richard and Simon Reich (2021), "Hedging by Default: EU "Strategic Autonomy" in Binary World Order", report, www.lse.ac.uk/ideas/publications/reports/hedging-by-default,
- Higgott, Richard and Giulia Tercovitch (2021), "A New Diplomacy in the Age of the Global Binary? Digitalisation and Pandemics and the Search for a Global Reset", report, Brussels School of Governance and LSE IDEA
- Huntington, Samuel (1993), "The Clash of Civilisations", *Foreign Affairs*, Summer, www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/1993-06-01/clash-civilizations.
- Ien Ang, Yudhishtir Raj Isar and Phillip Mar (2015), "Cultural diplomacy: beyond the national interest?", *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 21(4): 365-81.
- Kerr, Pauline and Geoffrey Wiseman, eds. (2018), "Diplomacy in a Globalising World", 2nd edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kriesi, Hanspeter (2014), "The Populist Challenge", *West European Politics*, 37(2), 361-78.
- Kriesi, Hanspeter and Takis S. Pappas, eds. (2015), *European Populism in the shadow of the Great Recession*, Colchester, UK: ECPR Press.

- Lamonica, Alessandro Giovanni (2019), "Culture, Diplomacy, and Power: The French and British Models of Cultural Diplomacy in the Early Twenty-First Century", PhD thesis, Sant'Anna School for Advanced Studies, Pisa, Italy. Retrieved from: <https://dta.santannapisa.it/t/etd-07312018-163320/>
- Lamonica, Alessandro Giovanni and Andrew Murray (2021), "From practice to concept: paving the way to a theoretical approach to international cultural relations", *Working Paper Series in Public and Cultural Diplomacy*, University of Siena, no.2: February, https://www.dispoc.unisi.it/sites/st10/files/allegatiparagrafo/07-06-2021/murray_and_lamonica_wpspcd_2.2021_1.pdf
- Luce, Edward (2017), *The Retreat of Western Liberalism*, Boston: Little Brown.
- Manners, Ian (2003), "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?" SSRN, papers, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=316064
- Martin, Lisa (2004), "Self-Binding: How America Benefitted from Multilateralism", *Harvard Magazine*, Sept-October, harvardmagazine.com/2004/0-/self-binding.html
- Mearsheimer, John (2019), "Realism and Restraint", *Horizons*, Summer, no.14, www.mearsheimer.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Horizons-2019-John-J.-Mearsheimer_K1.pdf
- Mearsheimer, John (2021), "Liberalism and Nationalism in Contemporary America", *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 54(1): 1-8.
- Nye, Joseph (2004), *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, New York: Public Affairs.
- Nye, Joseph (2011), *The Future of Power*, New York: Public Affairs.
- Nye, Joseph (2018), "Donald Trump and the Decline of US Soft Power", 12 February, www.aspistrategist.org.au/donald-trump-decline-us-soft-power/
- Risse, Thomas (2000), "Let's Argue! Communicative Action in World Politics", *International Organization*, 54(1): 1-39.
- Singh, J.P. and Stuart MacDonald (2017), "Soft Power Today. Measuring the Influences and Effects", A study commissioned by the British Council from the University of Edinburgh, www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/3418_bc_edinburgh_university_soft_power_report_03b.pdf