
Workshop Report Two

**The Diplomatic System of the EU – Conceptualizing
and Analyzing Strategic and Structural Diplomacy**

K.U. Leuven

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Workshop Report

Workshop Abstract

The “Diplomatic System of the EU – Evolution, Change and Challenges” - Project (DSEU) held a two-day workshop on “The Diplomatic System of the EU – Conceptualizing and analyzing strategic and structural diplomacy” at the K. U. Leuven on the 7th and 8th of April 2011. The first workshop day was opened by a keynote lecture and a public debate on ‘Supranational and Transnational Diplomacy’. After the opening keynote lecture by Professor Christer Jönsson (Lund University), a public panel debate followed, including critical comments by Professor Brian Hocking (Loughborough University), Professor Jan Wouters (K.U. Leuven) and Stephan Keukeleire (K. U. Leuven). The second day of the workshop included two workshop-panels focusing on strategic and structural diplomacy. Presentations on “Strategic Diplomacy” were delivered by Professor Michael Smith and Professor Dave Allen (both Loughborough University). In the second workshop panel, Professor Stephan Keukeleire (K.U. Leuven), Arnout Justaert (K.U. Leuven) as well as Arben Kalaja and Artan Çollaku (Kosovo Ministry of European Integration) focussed on “Structural Diplomacy”. In both panels, critical remarks were given by Professor Pascal Vennesson (EUI, Florence), Professor Hans Bruyninckx (K.U. Leuven), Professor Giovanni Grevi (FRIDE), Professor Wolfgang Koeth (EIPA, Maastricht) and Dr. Petar Petrov (Maastricht University).

New Developments in the Analysis and Practice of Diplomacy: Concepts and Lessons for the Diplomatic System of the EU (Day 1)

Keynote speech: “Supranational and Transnational Diplomacy: Precedents and Challenges”

Professor Christer **Jönsson** (Lund University) gave a stimulating keynote lecture on ‘Supranational and Transnational Diplomacy: Precedents and Challenges’ which provided a helpful framework for the following in-depth discussions in the workshop. His lecture started off with an overview of supranational diplomacy in the past. The Catholic Church, the Panhellenism of Philip II and Alexander and its Corinthian League, as well as medieval Europe provided examples of supranational diplomacy.

The European Union is but another example. At the same time, **Jönsson** pointed to some specific challenges of supranational diplomacy which are especially applicable to the EU. First of all, the EU’s kind of diplomacy differs from traditional, national diplomacy in that it has no clear referent state, no straightforward foreign policy context, no head of state, nor a ‘real’ foreign minister and no professional diplomatic corps. However, after Lisbon, this is only “half true”, while the EU gains the President of the European Council, the “new” High Representative and the EEAS. Yet, these institutions and accompanying functions still do not fully resemble those of Westphalian nation states. For example, the CFSP still relies on the approval of all the 27 member states, the delineation of powers at the international scene between the President of the European Council, the Commission and the High Representative is not always as clear. The latter does not have the same powers as a foreign minister at state level. However, the EU will, according to **Jönsson**, have its the professional diplomatic corps provided by the new European External Action Service.

A second challenge is the persistence of traditional national diplomacy alongside supranational diplomacy. This day makes diplomacy a complex multi-layered endeavour. A third challenge is the rise of additional regional actors with different sets of competences

compared to the EU. This, for example, has become obvious in the discussions on the EU's future status in the UN General Assembly.

Next to supranational diplomacy, as **Jönsson** argued, transnational diplomacy becomes more and more important. This type of diplomacy also awaits challenges ahead; namely: the complexities of multi-level governance the increasing pressure, the role and prevalence of (I)NGOs, and the increasing prevalence of international organisations (IO) and IO bodies. Jönsson showed that IOs and IO bodies are becoming more and more open to the public and (I)NGOs. The growing importance of transnational actors like Oxfam, Greenpeace, Amnesty, International Chamber of Commerce, etc. is also underlined by the increase of public-private partnerships, subcontracting of these new actors and the consultation of them on many global issues. This, according to **Jönsson**, brings with it certain challenges, for example the question of the accountability and responsibility of (I)NGOs.

Panel Debate

Following the lecture of Professor **Jönsson** a panel debate took place with Prof. Christer **Jönsson**, Prof. Jan **Wouters** (K.U.Leuven), Prof. Brian **Hocking** (Loughborough University) and Prof. Stephan Keukeleire (K.U.Leuven) as moderator. Brian **Hocking** emphasized the discontinuities and non-linear process of the developments in diplomacy. For the moment, there are three interlinking layers of diplomacy: the modern, pre-modern and the post-modern layer.

Concerning the diplomatic system of the European Union (EU), **Hocking** emphasized the 'messiness' of its current state of affairs. **Hocking** observed that the EU has a strong preoccupation with reform over functions and that a diverse range of structures are arranged to define different objectives. At the same time though, there is a tendency to overlook the huge changes going on at the national level in terms of the machinery of diplomacy. These changes sometimes leave the EU in the position of reinventing the wheel. In the future, according to **Hocking**, it will be important for diplomatic systems to integrate disparate components and adhere to networks instead of hierarchical concepts of diplomacy.

Jan **Wouters** focussed on three issues which, according to his view, remain to be tackled: the nature of the EU as a sui generis actor; the conduct of the EU diplomatic service after Lisbon and challenges to EU authority. The lack of essential state characteristics complicates, according to **Wouters**, the EU's actions and efforts as an international actor. Furthermore, the EU has very little with which to reciprocate as international actor (e.g. recognition of a country, protection). However, the EU tries to circumvent this disadvantage by using its member states to reciprocate. Notwithstanding the recent reforms, some questions and challenges still remain: like who is to decide on the actual setting up, opening up and closing down of EU diplomatic actions? Furthermore, **Wouters** argued that it remains a paradox that economic diplomacy is set to remain a national competence, while the EU has been a trading bloc since its inception.

Workshop Panels on Structural and Strategic Diplomacy (Day 2)

Presentations: Conceptualizing and Analyzing Strategic Diplomacy

Michael **Smith** (Loughborough University) opened the panel with a presentation on a case study on strategic diplomacy between the EU and China. At the outset of his talk, he asked following questions: "To what extent is there a set of EU principles with which to meet its strategic purpose? And what is this strategic purpose?"

Smith reiterated that if the EU wants to be a strategic actor it needs to extract resources from the member states. The Lisbon Treaty is in this sense a new stage in the extraction of

resources. In some fields, this resource transfer has been established a long time ago (e.g. trade), in other fields there is still a lot to do (e.g. security issues). Secondly, **Smith** argued that the objectives of the EU fluctuate depending on the level of consensus between member states (MS) and EU institutions. Furthermore, he underlined that the EU needed a 'Grand Strategy' and the EEAS may help to develop this narrative.

Smith also recognised three rationales of EU foreign policy: integrative, positional and relational. He observed that partnerships increase in scope and scale but that an all-encompassing strategy is lacking and that instead there are several smaller strategies in place. The question, according to **Smith**, is whether we can call these strategies diplomacy. The cause of this lacuna is the huge dispersion of interest within the EU on the China partnership. That is also the reason why generalized visions on the relationship prevail. The EU does not adhere to a China that really exists, but to a China as the EU wishes it to be. However, it is the latter that has become the integrative rationale of EU foreign policy towards China.

As in other relations, the US remains a very important factor in the relationship with China. The relationship with China is of very important positional relevance in the multi-polar world, e.g. the EU-US-China diplomatic triangle: a manoeuvring process in which the EU takes a weak part. The third rationale is relational in nature. While it is primarily concerned with "civilising" China, the EU isn't always very successful at it (e.g. the Copenhagen Summit). In total, the rationales behind the relationship are in place, but what do they mean in context and in conduct?

Dave **Allen** (Loughborough University) presented a case study on strategic diplomacy in EU-India relations. He recalled the fact that we live in a changing environment where the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) are important emerging partners. However, in the context of strategic partnerships the EU is not mentioned by India. Concerning the EU, we see that it is doing well at producing strategic papers, but it is not doing well in summitry. Here, the Lisbon Treaty brings some relief by restricting the representatives to only two actors. There is still, however, a lot of work to do: the need for more coherence, the need for better intra-EU relations (e.g. on energy policy), the need for a clear verification of strategic objectives, the need for orientation meetings on upcoming events, etc. It is thus clear that the EU is not yet in a state ready to compete with the US. On the positive side, the emplacement of the elected President of the Council can have a positive impact; the new institution is, according to **Allen**, in any case better than the rotating presidency.

Sophie **Vanhoonacker** (Maastricht University) chaired the two presentations. She stated that the EU is still trying to come to grips with its new role in international affairs and that there are still many hurdles to tackle, e.g. resources, institutional factors, different interests MS, priorities, lack of focus, etc.

Discussion: Conceptualizing and Analyzing Strategic Diplomacy

In a reaction to Smith's paper, Pascal **Vennesson** (EUI, Florence) pointed out that there should be more focus on the EU as an actor than on its strategy. He also reminded the panel that also normative resources like human rights and public opinion needed to be linked, while the EU often only lists instruments and does not look for linkages between them. Vennesson also mentioned that it should be noticed that the ability of an actor to reach its objectives depends on the choices of the other participant(s) in a relationship and, hence, strategic interaction. He also asked whether the EU can be truly identified as different (from its MS) and whether other actors are truly ready to recognize the EU as a great power.

Hans **Bruyninckx** (K.U. Leuven) questioned the assumption that summits and dialogues matter and are the driving force both at the EU level and in the mind-sets of other actors. He also emphasized that the papers had a very institutional approach but doubted that other international actors are aware of intra-EU changes so that they would change their policies accordingly. The fact that China and India have changed more than the EU in the last 20 years, is an argument for paying more attention to changes on the other side and for putting yourself in the perspective of the other. He also underlined that attention is needed for dominant factors that are not diplomatically coded, especially the issue of identity.

Giovanni **Grevi** (**FRIDE, Madrid**) problematized the notion of multipolarity as a non-encompassing term that does not contain all important diplomatic dynamics. He alternatively proposed “inter-polar world” referring to the interdependence between different poles. **Grevi** also commented on the concepts of reciprocity and mutual benefit. He did not think that mutuality, namely the use of power and position to achieve outcomes that serve shared interests, is altruistic. He also questioned what is meant with reciprocity and what mutuality refers to (my interests, mutual interest,...). Furthermore, he stressed that ‘strategic partnership’ puts a premium on statehood, but that the EU still is not a state and thus that the key for strategic partnerships does not lay with the EU institutions, but with the MS. Assessing the rationales behind strategic partnerships and diplomacy, **Grevi** stated that from the EU perspective strategic partnerships are directed towards shaping the milieu of international relations. As conclusion, **Grevi** predicted that after the Lisbon Treaty and the launch of the EEAS, EU action will first get worse before it will get better.

Caterina **Carta** (London School of Economics) voiced her concern that diplomacy can be misleading and that summits contain plenty of rhetoric, but at the same time it is often difficult to retrace the real objectives of diplomatic actors. She also focused on the fact that the EU does not define China as a market economy and that, from a Chinese perspective, the EU is not an equal partner. Manuel **Schmitz** (University of Trier) pointed out that research on EU-China and EU-India relations could benefit from focussing more on security issues. Vsevolod **Samokhvalov** (New Europe College, Bucharest) was not sure whether foreign challenges always create an integrative rationale and pointed to the example of energy security.

In his reply to the comments, Dave **Allen** acknowledged that the EEAS can be a solution to the gap between rhetoric and expectations. He also felt that it is important to separate significant from insignificant actions when we are looking for strategic actions. Finally, he said that for some MS the easiest way to do nothing is to have an EU policy and this ultimately affects overall EU capabilities.

Michael **Smith** added to the discussion that diplomacy is a learning process and that this has not yet been focused on in the context of the EEAS. He also stated that a possible worry might be that the EU created the EEAS for internal purposes, although it needs to work for external purposes. In the conclusion of the debate Sophie **Vanhoonacker** acknowledged that we are still struggling with some conceptualization while applying concepts to the EU is more difficult because of its sui generis character. She also warned that we should not be too inward looking when we are researching EU foreign policy.

Presentations: Conceptualizing and Analyzing Structural Diplomacy:

Two case studies, one on Kosovo and one on the Democratic Republic of Congo, were represented in this second workshop panel. It was conveyed by Arnout **Justaert** (K.U.Leuven) and Stephan **Keukeleire** that the formation of sustainable structures is the main concern for the EU in these countries, but also elsewhere. Hence, according to the two paper givers, it is important that the actions of the EU are comprehensive, adapted to the local context and coordinated with other EU activities and local activities. The big challenge for diplomats is, according to Keukeleire and Justaert, to learn: the local context, traditions,

strategies, etc. The biggest challenge for scholars is the need for interdisciplinary research and for the acknowledgement that differences exist between cultures, and that they matter.

Arben **Kalaja** (Ministry of European Integration, Kosovo) and Arben **Çollaku** (Ministry of European Integration, Kosovo) represented the results of the case study on Kosovo. The central question was to what extent the EULEX mission takes into account the principles of ownership and alignment. A big obstacle to the mission of the EU is the fact that still not all the 27 MS recognise Kosovo. Other obstacles are the different paradigms used by the EU. For example the success paradigm: being such an expensive mission the EU cannot afford to let it fail; this makes it difficult to grant leadership to local authorities (ownership). Another example is the enlargement paradigm: the EU uses a one-size-fits-all policy which does not address the local priorities or the local situation (alignment).

Arnout **Justaert** presented his case study on the DRC with a particular focus on proximity policing (connecting the police with the population at the local and individual level). He revisited the concepts of comprehensiveness, sustainability and alignment. He stated that alignment to Congolese strategies and systems is crucial to meet the needs of the population. Concerning the comprehensiveness it is essential that all the levels (individual, society and political) are involved. The approach of the EU however remains deficient in some ways. For example, sector specific projects in Congo do not add on to a comprehensive approach. There also remains a lack of civil society and a comprehensive Congolese Strategy, while most of the Congolese strategies are namely written by 'experts' from donor countries. The lack of Congolese strategies and priorities is, according to **Justaert**, a political unwillingness or strategy to not formulate these strategies because Congolese government prefers bilateral relations.

Research on alignment presents some methodological and conceptual challenges: do we measure alignment as objective or as activity level, what is the penetration into local cultures, how can we determine causal relationships, etc.? **Justaert** ended his presentation by identifying some implications for diplomats, namely that the role of communication and negotiation is increasingly important and that diplomats also have to explain the local context to Brussels.

Discussion: Conceptualizing and Analyzing Structural Diplomacy

Wolfgang **Koeth** (EIPA, Maastricht) started off by recognizing some similarities between the two case studies but also seeing some disparities. For instance, in the DRC action is obstructed because of a threat to national sovereignty. This, however, is not the case in Kosovo. The biggest challenge in Kosovo seems the coordination of the activities of the MS and the EU. **Koeth** was sceptic about the concepts of alignment and comprehensiveness. As **Vennesson**, he pointed out that the EU does not have all the needed competences to be comprehensive (e.g. the EU does not have competence on employment). He also stated that it is very unrealistic to hand over the full authority to Kosovo authorities. Finally, he pointed out that EU does not have a strategy on Kosovo because MS do not agree on the fundamental definition of what Kosovo is.

Petar **Petrov** (Maastricht University) argued that the time-frame-factor should be taken into consideration because, according to him, it is normal that there are coordination problems over such a period of time. He also questioned whether the EU is engaging in structural diplomacy by design or whether it might be more part of a learning process, a product of experience. Ana **Juncos** (Bristol University), who chaired the panel, asked the presenters how the concept of structural diplomacy relates to foreign policy. She also asked for some examples of a successful structural diplomacy. Furthermore, she questioned whether it is advisable or even possible to align to a practice which you need to change. She also wondered how we can see when something is sustainable and how sustainable

something has to be to be successful. Further, the audience added the following questions to the overall discussion: Can structural diplomacy be strategic? Is it not impossible to align to an autocracy to promote democracy?

Keukeleire answered that diplomacy is an instrument of foreign policy and that the former is about interaction, representation and information. He pointed out that in diplomacy there is a need to change the direction of communication (outside-in-perspective). But he also pointed out that we sometimes want too much alignment and that on certain issues it might be useful to stop having alignment. Concerning the linkage between strategic and structural diplomacy, he mentioned that the emerging powers are de facto structural competitors. **Justaert** claimed he did not believe that the Lisbon Treaty will bring better coordination on the ground in the DRC. EUSEC and EUPOL are for that matter to different with different methodologies and different strategies. He also stated that there is a need to understand local needs in order to deal with corruption issues.

In the concluding discussion, **Koeth** suggested that Kosovo should be treated in the same way as any other developing country, but not as a candidate country. **Keukeleire** replied that, according to him, the problematic issue is that one cannot talk about sophisticated politics without first developing core structures. In the audience the question was raised whether the EU should do even more, or whether such increased action was not a “2.0 version” of neo-colonialism. **Justaert** emphasized that the EU should do less, but in a better way. Finally it was stressed that one of the difficulties of alignment is the reconciliation of conflicting interests in structural diplomacy. Since it is necessary to include the interests of the others, this also implies that an actor like the EU has to align itself to societal structures that are often neglected in the EU.

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