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Communicating Europe to the world: what public diplomacy for the EU?

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Dov Lynch

Foreword by Antonio Missiroli

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THE FUTURE OF CFSP

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About the author

Dov Lynch is Senior Research Fellow at the EU Institute for Security Studies in Paris.

FOREWORD

Stand and deliver: the European 'message' abroad

by *Antonio Missiroli*

The most famous episode in this domain was, in all likelihood, the official inauguration of the new airport in Sarajevo in the mid-1990s, almost entirely financed by the European Union. A combination of lack of substantial interest in Brussels and lack of agreement over who should represent Europe on the occasion ended with the ribbon being cut by the then US Secretary of State Warren Christopher. As Dov Lynch argues so well in this paper, Europe has had – and is still having – trouble 'communicating' properly what it does best in the foreign policy arena.

This may well be part of a broader problem: in fact, the shocking results of the French and Dutch referenda on the EU 'Constitution' have highlighted a similar, and arguably graver, problem that the Union is having with its own citizens.

Whatever the specific reasons for the rejection of the treaty in either country (with the written text being overshadowed and eventually run over by the broader context), the campaign and its aftermath have clearly shown a growing popular disaffection with what the EU is, and does, today. As a result, the Union has launched a period of 'reflection'. The European Commission, for its part, has embarked on what it calls 'Plan D' – for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate – and is preparing a White Paper on 'communicating Europe' to its citizens, to be published by the end of 2005.

All this is welcome and is, perhaps, also long overdue. But does the problem lie mainly with the delivery – fragmented, inconsistent, even absent – or with the message itself? And who exactly should be at the receiving end?

Dov Lynch's paper, virtually situated at the juncture between several European Policy Centre Integrated Work Programmes (Political Europe, The Future of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), Enlargement and Neighbourhood Europe, and Global Governance), concentrates on the external dimension of EU policy. This is an accessible point of departure, as there is much more consensus, however superficial, on what Europe can or should do in the world than on the domestic policy dimension.

Dov Lynch's analysis encompasses the many different facets of the Union's foreign policy, well beyond the specific domain of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as defined in the EU Treaty. It offers a broad and critical overview of the current debate – primarily American – on 'public diplomacy', as well as a balanced assessment of the Union's potential, its assets and its liabilities in this realm. It also comes up with some proposals – the elaboration of a specific strategy and a dedicated cross-pillar agency for European public diplomacy¹ – to feed into the EU debate and fill the gap created by the impasse over the Constitutional Treaty.

This brilliant analysis, however, cannot ultimately solve the question regarding the message or its delivery – and no doubt rightly so. If part of the problem lies with the Union's delivery, as this paper illustrates very clearly, another part certainly lies with its message.

Paradoxically, the EU as such has a relatively good 'image' in the wider world, often even better than the sum of its parts (the Member States). Expectations are high and perceptions positive, in particular regarding the Union's record of regional integration and its alleged 'soft power'. On the other hand, while the EU has an increasing number of good individual messages to convey to the world, it still lacks focus, consistency and, most importantly, an agreed 'core' message to spread and communicate.

Over the past few years, in particular, European foreign policy has undergone a triple development.² Firstly – to resort to the classic vocabulary of European integration – it has deepened, maybe not so much institutionally, but certainly on the doctrinal front. In this respect, the European Security Strategy (ESS) of December 2003 was a major turning point, in that it also represented a serious attempt to form a 'message'. Insofar as the Union is (and wants to be seen as) a 'soft power', the ESS has offered a credible platform. And the fact that the strategy has proven difficult to operationalise – that is, to translate into specific lines of action – has much in common with the structural difficulties of operationalising 'soft power' in general.

Secondly, European foreign policy has widened, both functionally and geographically. Functionally, because the spectrum of its external actions is becoming ever broader, covering such diverse missions as peace enforcement, police training, administrative and judicial assistance, security sector reform and border monitoring. But, of course, geographically too, because it has stretched from the Western Balkans to sub-Saharan Africa, and from the Southern Caucasus to Indonesia. Nothing like this was

foreseen or planned when, first, the CFSP and, then, the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) were originally launched.

Thirdly, and finally, European foreign policy has also hardened, so to speak. It first incorporated a military dimension in its own right, overcoming decades of divisions and hesitations. Then it made it ever more ambitious: in fact, the shift from the first to the second Headline Goal – i.e. from a corps-sized European force to be deployed ‘in and around Europe’ for peace-keeping purposes, to the so-called ‘battlegroups’ (battalion-sized, quickly deployable anywhere in the world and ready to sustain combat operations in a hostile environment) – marks a transition to a completely different ball game whose rules and implications may not have been fully digested yet, and even less ‘communicated’ to the various publics concerned.

These diverse developments are not immediately consistent with each other nor, probably, have their implications been entirely thought through. The EU has, to a certain extent, become the victim of its own success. The net result is that it is an increasingly relevant international actor working with a constantly changing script, reacting and adapting to unexpected contingencies, priority shifts, emerging opportunities and constraints, but without an easily identifiable and ‘communicable’ plot.

In part, this is a fact of life: foreign policy is by nature and tradition an exercise in adaptation, in coping with ‘events’ by trying to shape the environment while projecting one’s values and interests. In part, however, this also reflects a lingering disagreement over the *finalité stratégique* of the EU, which contributes to the fragmentation and overall fuzziness of the ‘message’. The lack of a single coherent vector for its delivery is also a consequence of this state of affairs.

Furthermore, a clear ‘core’ message requires a certain amount of consistency between words and deeds, between the official rhetoric and actual behaviour. In its external policies at large (that is, beyond the realm of foreign policy proper), the Union is not always capable of achieving that.

Examples include the way in which it pushes (or not) for the respect of human rights in those third countries that are recipients of significant EU aid and assistance (Euromed), or important trade and economic partners (China, Russia); or the way in which certain aspects of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) – for example, export subsidies – may clash with the European claim to be the biggest aid donor in the world. When this

happens, of course, there is no single, clear and consistent ‘message’ for the EU to deliver abroad, much to the detriment of its overall ‘image’.

The political impasse on the EU ‘Constitution’ is not helping either. It is widely assumed that the provisions on foreign, security and defence policy are perhaps the most promising and least contentious in the entire treaty. Unfortunately, they are now stuck in the ratification tunnel and unlikely to emerge from it any time soon.

This may not necessarily have serious consequences for certain policies: the non-enforcement of the ‘enabling’ provisions related to crisis management and defence policy did not prevent the Union from setting up a European Defence Agency, for instance, and does not prevent it from implementing joint actions in small groups or enacting the solidarity clause. Even if the ‘Constitution’ is half-dead (or rather un-dead, coming back to haunt us at night), it is entirely possible to proceed along these lines within the framework of the existing treaties.

The constitutional impasse is, however, certainly preventing (or at least seriously delaying) the creation of an EU Minister for Foreign Affairs, thus, indirectly, also stalling the establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) as foreseen in the treaty.

The latter could still be set up through an inter-institutional agreement (or, in the absence of that, through unilateral secondments by the Member States). But would it make sense to build it in the absence of the ‘Minister’; that is to say, without the pivotal element of the entire foreign policy system enshrined in the Constitutional Treaty? It would only do so if (and it is a big if) certain collateral conditions are met. Accordingly, the Council of Ministers, the Commission and the EU Presidency (especially the Presidency) would have to agree on a sort of ‘code of conduct’ or inter-institutional etiquette whereby they do not compete with each other, do not step on each other’s toes, and make the most of their respective assets and capabilities.

As the record of the past decades clearly shows, the influence of the EU in the world and its ability to be heard are inversely proportional to the number of people and bodies claiming to represent and speak for it. At this stage, failing an overarching ‘design’, a bottom-up and message-centred approach – although admittedly in part a ‘default’ option, given the impasse on the ‘Ministry’ – may help to improve the overall performance (and perception) of the Union’s foreign policy.

Dov Lynch's proposals on 'public diplomacy', therefore, not only deserve to be discussed but also, hopefully, taken into serious consideration. There is no purely institutional or PR-driven panacea for structural problems of 'image' and 'message'. Yet reasonable solutions at the 'low politics' level such as those presented in this Working Paper can help focus and mainstream common European 'public diplomacy', and ultimately pave the way for broader strategic arrangements at the 'high politics' level.

Such solutions are badly needed in the short term in order to increase the effectiveness of most EU external policies – from trade to aid and from neighbourhood strategies to peace-building – that require adequate 'communication' to meet their goals. Focusing the policy and focusing the message are often two sides of the same coin, in that winning the hearts and minds of the recipients is a precondition for success.³ This is all the more important in dealing with the new 'neighbours', especially if the enlargement process – that is, by far the most successful and effective foreign policy ever carried out by the Union – slows down or comes to a temporary halt.

Finally, it cannot be ignored that such solutions may well enshrine an underlying potential even in terms of 'public affairs' proper – to follow the distinction used also in this paper – thus usefully feeding back into the 'Plan D' exercise and the drive to add legitimacy to EU policies in general.

After all, today, foreign policy is the area that – at least according to most opinion polls – enjoys the highest support among European citizens. Making it work and communicating it better matters. It can show how our shared values and interests can make a difference in the wider world; can come to provide (irrespective of its possible *finalité stratégique*) a sort of 'public good' for the international community; and can therefore reinforce the EU's 'image' both outside and inside Europe.

Stand and Deliver was the title of a very popular movie from the late 1980s telling the (true) story of a dedicated maths teacher in a Latino high school in East Los Angeles who succeeded in inspiring his students to learn calculus to build up their self-esteem as individuals and as a group. They did so well, even triumphing in national maths tests, that they were unjustly accused of cheating.

The European Union has no need to cheat (or spin) about its international actions. The messages it sends around are sufficiently good and sufficiently



clear, much as their packaging can be improved. But, as Dov Lynch's paper shows, they may not always be heard, or may not always reach the right audience at the right time. Because of this, the EU needs to stand – and not balk – and it also needs to deliver promptly, consistently and rapidly.

Antonio Missiroli is Chief Policy Analyst at the European Policy Centre

Endnotes

1. To underline its growing centrality, the University of Southern California in Los Angeles recently set up a Center on Public Diplomacy at the Annenberg School of Communication, a specialised review and a proper Master's degree: see <http://uscpublicdiplomacy.com>.
2. For a recent academic overview and critical analysis see Christopher Hill and Michael Smith (eds.), *International Relations and the European Union* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005). I am indebted notably to Michael Smith for a rich panel discussion that helped me develop some of the views expressed here.
3. See the remarks made by Andrew Moravcsik and Kalypso Nicolaidis, Urgent: How to Fix Europe's Image Problem, *Foreign Policy*, May/June 2005, pp.66-70; and Richard Whitman, Winning Hearts and Minds for Europe, in Richard Youngs (ed.), *Global Europe – Report 2: New Terms of Engagement*, The Foreign Policy Centre and the British Council Brussels (2005); pp.30-37.

Communicating Europe to the world: what public diplomacy for the EU?

By Dov Lynch

Introduction

The European Union is failing to communicate with the world. More precisely, the EU tries to communicate but the world does not understand what it is saying. Worse, the world is not certain that it should care.

One Middle Eastern diplomat put the problem neatly: “The US makes offers we cannot refuse; the EU makes offers we do not understand!” People may not like US policy, but at least its message is clear. The challenge facing the EU is different: people outside Europe are not certain what the Union stands for or whether it matters.

At best, the EU voice is garbled; at worst, it is not heard at all. As the Union develops as a strategic player, with operations in Aceh, Georgia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, this abject failure to communicate cannot continue. The EU must speak to the world clearly, and it must start listening to what the world thinks about it.

The Constitutional Treaty would have done a lot. It would have strengthened the Union’s foreign policy by creating an EU Minister for Foreign Affairs and a European External Action Service. Bolstered by a dedicated service, the new Minister would have presented a single face to the world and conveyed a single voice for EU foreign policy. The failure (or impasse) of the ratification process has left the Union showing multiple faces and speaking in disparate voices at a time of increasing involvement and growing ambitions. What can be done?

For a start, even without the Constitution in place, the EU should build a dedicated public diplomacy. Its ambitions, declared in the European Security Strategy, leave it with little choice but to develop public diplomacy measures to accompany its external actions.¹ The EU already has a global role. It also already has at its disposal a range of tools related to public diplomacy. However, they lack coordination, focus mainly on the provision of information and not diplomacy, are poorly funded and are not given priority.²

In order to capitalise on existing resources and craft new opportunities, the Union and its Member States should build public diplomacy into the office of the current High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), Javier Solana. In this matter, Member States should not – and need not – wait until it is possible (if ever) to establish an EU Minister for Foreign Affairs and the European External Action Service.

Public diplomacy is an immediate need for the Union, and the first steps should be taken now. Today, the EU conducts a number of ‘information’ activities that are usually bolted on at the tail end of the policy process, with little attention paid to them, insufficient staffing and limited money. Public diplomacy is about far more than simply providing information, and it cannot be bolted onto the policy process. In the words of the former director of the United States Information Agency, Edward R. Murrow, public diplomacy should be “present at the take-off, as well as the crash landing” of foreign policy.³ It must be built into EU foreign policy thinking and the policy-making process.

This paper is divided into three parts. It starts with an examination of the notion of public diplomacy at the general level. This discussion seeks to clarify a concept that is often poorly understood. The second part explores the current debate on the desirable shape of public diplomacy in an environment characterised by the threat of international terrorism. The focus here falls mainly on the United States, where this issue has received the most attention. The final section examines the Union’s public diplomacy activities and their problems. In conclusion, the paper defines the first steps required for the development of EU public diplomacy.⁴

1. What is public diplomacy?

Definitions of public diplomacy vary by country and by approach.⁵ However, Harvard University Professor Joseph S. Nye’s definition of ‘soft power’ captures the essence of the matter: “The ability to get what you want by attracting and persuading others to adopt your goals.”⁶

For Nye, the advantages of soft power are clear: “When you can get others to admire your ideals and to want what you want, you do not have to spend so much on sticks and carrots to move them in your direction. Seduction is always more effective than coercion, and many values like democracy, human rights and individual opportunities are deeply seductive.”⁷

Getting others to want what you want is the goal of all diplomacy; “seduction” is not normally considered part of the repertoire of traditional practice. This is where public diplomacy comes in.

Traditional diplomacy seeks to persuade foreign governments’ representatives to advance an advocate country’s strategic interests and concerns over specific issues.⁸ In Nye’s words, it uses sticks and carrots, and the familiar array of tools in the kit of every foreign ministry across the world.

Public diplomacy is a different kind of animal. It has different objectives, uses different means and has different targets. Public diplomacy seeks to promote the “ideals” and “wants”, as Nye puts it, of an advocate country through engagement with society and non-governmental parties in another country. It seeks to understand how the advocate country is perceived there and, thereby, how to influence those perceptions. Above all, it is about what foreigners see and hear.

It is worth stating what public diplomacy is not. Amongst the media and general public, three misunderstandings loom. First, public diplomacy is not public affairs, which are geared towards a domestic audience. Margot Wallström’s job as Vice-President of the European Commission consists of public affairs – that is, the pursuit of greater communication inside the EU about what the Union is and does, and more listening to how European citizens see the EU and what they want from it. By contrast, public diplomacy is directed towards a foreign audience. It may have a domestic impact, but the basic orientation is foreign.

Second, public diplomacy is not a politically correct way of engaging in either propaganda or psychological operations, both of which draw on false information and engage in mis/dis-information. Media discussions of public diplomacy are especially jaundiced in this way – journalists naturally tend to distrust stories and messages that are ‘fed’ to them from official sources.

Finally, public diplomacy entails much more than information; it is not simply an information strategy targeted at a foreign public.

So what is it? Defined by one practitioner, public diplomacy is “the strategic planning and execution of informational, cultural and educational programming by an advocate country to create a public opinion

environment in a target country or countries that will enable target country political leaders to make decisions that are supportive of the advocate country's foreign policy objectives".⁹

Put more simply, public diplomacy seeks to create a supportive foreign environment for a country's foreign policy by understanding, informing and influencing an external audience.¹⁰ In other words, it seeks to make not only foreign governments want what the advocate country wants but their societies as well.

The targets of public diplomacy lie within the society of a foreign country, and may include the media and opinion-makers, youth groups, business leaders, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Official representatives of a foreign state – such as members of parliament, regional and local officials – can also be targeted, but they are not the main targets.

Public diplomacy employs tools ranging from traditional diplomatic to unofficial means. It is about sending non-official messengers to a foreign country, designating cultural ambassadors, exchanging and training youth representatives, supporting foreign NGOs, conducting vast educational exchange programmes, and listening carefully to how you are perceived in another country by analysing its population's attitudes.

Why bother? Because foreign societies and world opinion matter. In the words of the prominent British commentator Mark Leonard: "Ironically, it is the end of the Cold war which has made public diplomacy more important: the spread of democracy, the media explosion and the rise of global NGOs and protest movements have changed the nature of power and put ever greater constraints on the freedom of action of national governments... There are many examples of issues where the attitude of overseas publics plays a determining role in the government's ability to pursue its foreign policy objectives."¹¹

The view from abroad can cut both ways. As much as foreign perceptions can constrain a country's foreign policy, they can also act as a support. Herein lies the central challenge of public diplomacy: to influence negative foreign perceptions and bolster positive views. The foreign 'public square' (rather than just the 'man in the street') can either enable or disable your policies and objectives, and cannot be ignored.

In general, public diplomacy entails three kinds of activities:

- 1) **Information activities:** These include daily news dissemination and management as well as the strategic communication of messages and images.¹²
- 2) **Research and analysis activities:** Public diplomacy requires excellent knowledge of the attitudes of the target audience, based on research and analysis of foreign perceptions and those of specific groups.
- 3) **Cultural and educational activities:** Cultural and educational engagement seeks to build a relationship between two societies in order to achieve greater familiarity, better mutual understanding and more positive perceptions.

In some respects, public diplomacy is similar to commercial branding. The Dutch analyst Peter van Ham has explored this line of thinking in his discussion on the rise of the 'Brand State'.¹³ In his words: "These days, individuals, firms, cities, regions, countries, and continents all market themselves professionally, often through aggressive sales techniques. Indeed, having a bad reputation or none at all is a serious handicap for a state seeking to remain competitive in the international arena...We talk about a state's personality in the same way we discuss the products we consume, describing it as 'friendly' (i.e., Western-oriented) or 'credible' (all), or 'aggressive' (expansionist) and 'unreliable' (rogue)."¹⁴

Van Ham argues that states should become what the advertising world calls 'lovetemarks' – brands that generate "loyalty beyond reason" in their domestic and foreign publics.¹⁵ One can disagree with the conceptual stretching involved in associating a state with a brand.¹⁶ Are private and public goods so similar? Can a country really create 'mystery' and 'sensuality' around its name? How, if at all, would this impact on its foreign policy in specific cases? After all, the American neo-conservative Richard Perle has a holiday home in the south of France (he loves the 'brand'), but did nothing to advance French concerns during George W. Bush's first administration. Perle loves 'France', but he is hardly "loyal beyond reason".

Despite these difficulties, the brand notion does evoke the challenge facing public diplomacy, which seeks to capture not only the foreign public's mind but also its imagination – i.e. how a foreign public perceives and feels about another country.

Conducting public diplomacy is not easy. In many areas, it goes against the grain of traditional diplomacy and raises several questions. The first of these for an advocate country is how to ensure that its foreign policy *per se*

and its public diplomacy are in sync with each other. A country's public diplomacy will not be effective if its foreign policy does not follow similar objectives. For example, a country cannot be credible if it talks about promoting democracy throughout the world while supporting authoritarian leaders. It cannot convince foreign publics that it values democracy if its actions go in the opposite direction.

A second problem concerns time management. An advocate country must manage the short-term and the long-term time element in sending messages to foreign publics. This is particularly relevant for crisis situations, where singular crises/events may throw a long-term strategy off track. For example, a country's overall message of countering the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction may be weakened if it strikes short-term deals for pragmatic reasons with countries that have shady activities in this area.

Public diplomacy also raises an institutional problem. How should it be integrated into the foreign policy process? What should be its institutional setting? Here, international practice provides a range of models:

- Having an autonomous public diplomacy agency, as the United States had during the Cold War and the UK and Germany now have in part;
- Building public diplomacy into the foreign ministry itself, similar to US practice since the late 1990s and current French practice;
- Creating a cabinet-level public diplomacy position in the executive, as the United States now has in part.

An advocate country must also consider how best to link public diplomacy to other policies beyond foreign ministry activities. Public diplomacy can include the full gamut of activities undertaken by one country that may affect its image in another country. These must be integrated to ensure that messages are understood within the framework of the desired 'big picture'.

Finally, there is the question of measuring the impact of public diplomacy activities on foreign publics' perceptions. Given their diffuse nature, it is difficult to establish criteria for measuring performance and success. However, without such an effort, public diplomacy activities occur in a vacuum. It is not enough to conduct such activities; you have to know if they are effective. Public diplomacy should not be about simply saying things, but also about listening to how others hear what is being said.

From this brief discussion, six tentative general rules for public diplomacy can be underlined:

- 1) What matters is not what you say but what the target hears.
- 2) Public diplomacy is more than simply the dissemination of information; it is about engagement – more information is not the solution.
- 3) Each activity, and the messenger used, should be tailored to specific targets – there is no ‘one-size-fits-all’.
- 4) Public diplomacy is not about winning an argument, with ‘my information’ defeating ‘your information,’ but about building a relationship.
- 5) Public diplomacy must be given the priority it deserves in the foreign policy-making process – it cannot be bolted on.
- 6) Public diplomacy requires a strategy to determine its main messages, directions of coordination and priorities for attention. Without an overarching strategy, a country may send lots of different, sometimes contradictory, messages.

2. The current (American) debate

The current debate on public diplomacy involves a wide range of officials and experts, government agencies and private research institutes.¹⁷ Prominent European voices have participated, such as Peter van Ham and Mark Leonard, who have called for EU public diplomacy, but the focus has been mainly American.¹⁸ American thinking and practice are (and should be) far removed from the EU, but there are areas of relevance.

US public diplomacy was born in the Cold War, when President Dwight Eisenhower created the US Information Agency to lead US public diplomacy activities. In time, these included cultural and educational exchange programmes with foreign nationals, information dissemination activities and widespread broadcasting.

The thawing of the Cold War seemed to call into question the need for such efforts. Starting in 1989, the budget allocated by the US government to such activities entered a downward trend. In 1999, major institutional changes were introduced that incorporated the US Information Agency within the State Department and cut broadcasting loose to be run by a broadcasting board.¹⁹

It is generally believed that these changes weakened US public diplomacy, by diluting it within another agency with a different 'culture' and by downgrading its importance overall. In the words of senior US Foreign Service Officer Helena K. Finn: "The general sentiment in Washington was the US could afford to get out of the business of person-to-person interaction; in the age of mass electronic communication, so the thinking went, technology could do it all."²⁰

September 11th 2001 brought renewed attention to public diplomacy. As a result of the terrorist attacks, US commentators and officials argue that a new 'war of ideas' has been launched to which the US must respond.²¹ Public diplomacy emerged quickly as a key front in the US-led global war on terrorism and, since the attacks, the US government has introduced numerous changes to improve America's image abroad.²²

Budget allocations to public diplomacy activities increased by 9% in real terms between 2001 and 2003 (from US\$ 544 million to US\$ 594 million).²³ Institutional changes have also been introduced. In September 2002, the National Security Council created a Strategic Communications Policy Coordinating Committee to support interagency public diplomacy activities (disbanded in 2003). In July 2004, the National Security Council created a Muslim World Outreach Policy Coordinating Committee. At the highest level, within the White House, the Office of Global Communication was created in January 2003 to coordinate strategic messages to foreign audiences.

Within the State Department, the position of Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs has been created. The State Department has also launched a number of new programmes, mainly focusing on youths in the Arab and Muslim world (for example, the School Internet Connectivity Programme, Partnerships for Learning and the Shared Values Initiative). In addition, the State Department has sought to diversify the US presence abroad by opening greater numbers of American Corners, Virtual Consulates, and having so-called American Presence Posts outside capital cities. Two new broadcasting services, Radio Sawa and TV Alhurra, have been created to address young people in the Arab and Muslim world.

These changes have been driven by recognition of several trends. First, anti-Americanism is on the rise globally and poses constraints on US foreign policy. Second, it is clear that, before September 11th, public diplomacy had become little more than an after-thought in foreign policy,

and that this could no longer stand. Finally, most observers have argued that the US approach had become too 'push-down' and information-driven without enough attention to relationship-building.²⁴

But how should the US seek to improve its image abroad? The debate in the US has included independent expert voices, former officials from the US Information Agency, a number of prominent foundations and government departments.²⁵ The focus has fallen on three questions. First, how to reach out to the Arab and Muslim world. Second, how to create the most fitting institutional mechanism in government. Finally, how and where to increase funding for public diplomacy. The intricacy of the debate is less interesting for the EU than the points on which there are consensus.

Four areas of agreement have emerged:

- 1) Most agree that public diplomacy should be attributed more priority in funding and high-level attention;
- 2) Public diplomacy activities should become more 'reflexive' and focused on building long-term relationships with foreign publics, through exchange programmes as well as more research and analysis of foreign perceptions;
- 3) The focus of efforts should fall on the Arab and Muslim world and, in particular, on young people;
- 4) Most agree that the US must diversify its approach by using non-official messengers, such as cultural ambassadors, youth representatives, the business sector and NGOs. In most cases, the less visible the US government stamp the better.

Problems

Despite renewed attention, US efforts have remained troubled. A report by the Government Accounting Office (GAO) of September 2003 was damning.²⁶ The GAO stated that the government still lacked an "integrating public diplomacy strategy" to coordinate all of its efforts. As a result, US public diplomacy remained fragmented and inconsistent. Moreover, the US government was failing to increase public diplomacy training for Foreign Service officers.

According to surveys of such officers, very little time was in fact allocated to public diplomacy tasks in missions abroad. The GAO also criticised the government for failing to develop a review mechanism for its activities. In August 2004, in the wake of the Congressional Report on the September

11th attacks which stated that the US public diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim world was failing, Condoleezza Rice, who was then National Security Advisor, admitted: “We are obviously not very well-organised from the side of public diplomacy. Yes, there is more that the government should do.”²⁷

The situation had not improved eight months later, with another equally critical GAO report²⁸ published in April 2005 highlighting the absence of an overall strategy to guide US activities.

Evidence of problems has also emerged. During the Cold War, student exchanges were a key aspect of US public diplomacy. In the last few years, the lure of the US as a place for foreigners to study – once a key part of its image-enhancing efforts – has fallen.²⁹ The decline in 2005 was less sharp than in 2004, but the overall trend is negative. A key factor contributing to this fall, according to the US Council of Graduate Schools, was “diminished perceptions of the US abroad”.³⁰

More fundamentally, US public diplomacy faces four problems. First, American efforts are not credible because US foreign policy has alienated large sections of the Arab and Muslim world, to whom the US appears aggressive, unreliable and committed to double standards. In these circumstances, no matter what official public diplomacy activities seek to achieve, US troops have become the main ‘messengers’ – and in a most negative way – for projecting the US image abroad.

Second, public diplomacy has been cast in the US as part of a ‘war.’ In US thinking, the emphasis falls heavily on aggressive information battles, which, by definition, are difficult to ‘win’. The assumption behind much of the US effort – that foreign publics would sympathise with the US position if they had better information – is simply false. The problem is not information but engagement.

Third, the style of US public diplomacy is culturally biased – it is very direct (and thus often comes across as being arrogant) and information-laden. These features provide the US with little persuasive power in societies where personal contacts and rumours heavily influence public opinion. Direct approaches may be appropriate in Europe, but they tend to fall short in the Middle East and Arab world.

Finally, thinking on public diplomacy in the US tends to be led by the image of the marketplace and corporate brands fighting for allegiance

from consumers. For example, the analyst Anthony Blinken states that: “Winning the war of ideas will require a long-term effort to reshape the market-place of ideas around the world.”³¹ It is not for nothing that the first person appointed to the new post of Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy came from a high-level position in New York’s advertising world.

While the notion of branding is helpful in highlighting the emotive and imaginative side of public diplomacy, to adopt the image of market competition wholesale is misleading. Public diplomacy should seek relationships of familiarity and understanding, not consumer allegiance.³²

The second administration of George W. Bush has sought to respond,³³ with Ms. Rice, newly appointed as Secretary of State, acknowledging the depth of the challenge: “The challenges of today are much different than the challenges of yesterday and when it comes to our public diplomacy we simply must do better...Our interaction with the rest of the world must not be a monologue. It must be a conversation. And as we engage in this conversation, America must remain open to visitors and workers and students from around the world.”³⁴

The appointment of Karen Hughes as Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, and the Egyptian-born, Arabic-speaking Dina Powell as Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, mark Ms. Rice’s first attempts to bolster US efforts.

Can the EU learn from the US experience?

The relevance of the US debate for the EU is mixed. The Union has a different starting point when considering its public diplomacy needs. There is no reservoir of hostility towards the Union as such around the world. On the contrary, there would seem to be an untapped reservoir of positive sentiment.

The challenge for the EU is therefore different: it must struggle with world opinion that is often ignorant (or selectively informed) or dismissive (or just puzzled) – and sometimes all at once – of the Union. At the same time, the call for the EU to play a role in the world is becoming ever greater.³⁵ From Operation Artemis onwards, the pressure for EU security engagement in Africa has grown – the Union’s first operation in Asia, in Indonesia, signals increasing engagement in theatres distant

from EU borders. The Union as a security actor has never been so much in demand.

Compared to the US, the EU faces less tension between its external policies and its public diplomacy. For one, it does not declare itself a champion of democracy and then intervene in countries without the sanction of the United Nations. While EU Member States are deployed in Iraq, there is no EU flag there *per se*.³⁶ Compared to the US, EU troops in European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) operations in the Western Balkans and Africa are usually seen as positive messengers of the Union.

There are also fundamental differences between the EU and the US as international actors. The point is simple, but worth repeating. The US is a single and unified state with coherent political institutions, a clear sense of national interests and an array of tools designed to advance these abroad. The EU is neither unified nor coherent as an institution; it has a nascent sense of its common interest in the foreign policy realm, and a new and barely complete toolkit in foreign policy.

The Union is an association of 25 Member States, each of which has its own reputation abroad, often even its own public diplomacy. EU public diplomacy must somehow combine Member State and Union efforts harmoniously to ensure their complementarity. It is difficult enough for a single state to design effective public diplomacy; the challenge for a union of 25 states is daunting.

Finally, the EU does not approach public diplomacy in terms of 'wars that must be won.' Member States have long traditions of public diplomacy that are different from those in the US (notably, but not only, France, the UK and Germany).³⁷ The activities of the British Council and the *Alliance Française* are not framed in war-like terms, but rather have long experience in educational and cultural exchanges.³⁸

At the same time, elements of US thinking and practice are relevant for the EU:

1) **Ideas matter:** First, as the US has done, the EU must now acknowledge that ideas and perceptions can matter in creating an enabling or disabling climate for European foreign policy. As an emerging strategic actor, the Union cannot afford to ignore this dimension of its image in the world. In military parlance, public diplomacy should be seen as a force

multiplier – that is, as a single policy that has positive impact at multiple levels. The US has understood this, but has difficulties applying it. The EU has not yet understood it.

2) **Need for priority:** Another lesson from the flailing US efforts is that public diplomacy must be given priority in institutional terms, funding and attention. To be effective, it cannot be bolted on as an afterthought to the foreign policy process. Quite the contrary. Public diplomacy should permeate the process, with a degree of influence over the tone and direction of policy. Certainly, it should not be led by concerns over image, but this dimension cannot be ignored.

3) **Need for strategy:** US experience shows that a strategy is required to provide a coordinating framework for the conduct and content of public diplomacy activities. Such a strategy should define guiding principles and objectives for a country's efforts. It is not enough to create a high-level institutional position for public diplomacy if there is no wider strategy that all stakeholders contribute to and agree upon. This strategy should be inclusive in terms of those consulted at the drafting stage; simple in its ability to focus on essential aims; and wide enough to encompass an array of actors and activities – no easy task, but of vital importance.

3. Towards an EU public diplomacy

Why does the EU need public diplomacy?

The EU should develop public diplomacy for several reasons. First, the development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and a more active external profile necessitates public diplomacy. It is a question of efficiency of policy as well as effectiveness. Public diplomacy can act as a force-multiplier for more traditional EU foreign policy activities.

Second, trends in international relations require the EU to conduct public diplomacy, as the power of society and public perceptions in other countries have an increasing impact on the ability of the Union to promote its interests abroad. The foreign 'public square' must be addressed by the EU in seeking to promote its interests and values abroad. Individual states have recognised this, as have international organisations.³⁹

Even the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) has responded to the public diplomacy challenge it faced during the Kosovo crisis in 1999 by creating a Public Diplomacy Division from the former Office of Information and Press, and by drafting a Public Diplomacy Strategy.⁴⁰ This division comprises an Academic Affairs Unit that runs NATO fellowship programmes, television and radio broadcasting, a network of liaison officers in partner countries and the information offices in Kiev and Moscow. Given its more wide-ranging role on the world stage, it is strange that the EU has fallen behind NATO in this area.

Third, the Union has a fantastic story to tell. EU and Member State Official Development Assistance (ODA) totals some 55% of global ODA, representing some €30 billion annually.⁴¹ The Union plays a vital role in supporting the activities of the United Nations and regional organisations like the African Union and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It has also become a model for other regional formations in Asia and Latin America. The CFSP has developed at a rapid pace since 1999, with the deployment of more than ten civil and military operations in the Western Balkans, Africa, Asia and the South Caucasus.

In Europe itself, EU enlargement has transformed the continent through a peaceful revolution that has strengthened prosperity and supported democracy. The Union has become key to the stability of the continent in a way it never was during the Cold War or immediately after it. Certainly, too, the EU has become a central economic, trade and financial player in the world – and it has a place in the world's imagination as a continent of stability and prosperity where old hatreds have been put aside and frontiers brought down.

The EU thus has vast untapped reserves to exploit in terms of promoting its image across the world. The problem is that few foreigners know the story it has to tell and the Union does not do enough to bring all this to the attention of its foreign interlocutors.

Many foreigners have a positive image of the Union, but most still confuse the European Council, the Council of Europe and the European Commission, and still others see the EU as being perennially in crisis.⁴²

Public diplomacy is vital to clarify what the Union is and sell what it already does. For example, the EU has provided more than €1 billion

in assistance to the three South Caucasus states since 1992, but very few people know this and even fewer consider it significant.

What is more, as the terrorist attacks in Spain (2003) and Great Britain (2005) demonstrated, EU Member States are not insulated from the rise of new threats, such as international terrorism, which carry an important ideological element. The Union has no choice but to engage in the international debate of ideas in order to promote its views, dispel misunderstandings and increase familiarity.

Finally, public diplomacy can be a way for the EU to exit what might be called its 'conditionality dilemma'. In the 1990s, the Union used conditionality with candidate states to advance EU interests abroad. The prospect of Union membership offered a way to promote democracy and the rule of law with countries on the EU's borders and to promote stability throughout the continent.

The last wave of enlargement in 2004 and planned adhesion of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007 leave the EU with the task of digesting 12 new members; further enlargement is off the cards for now. Clearly, the Union cannot ignore countries on its borders, but it can no longer use its most successful tools – conditionality and enlargement – to advance its interests there. In these circumstances, the EU must reinvent itself as a foreign policy actor that can think and act outside the logic of enlargement. EU interests must now be advanced abroad by means other than conditionality.

Public diplomacy is part of the answer. If the Union could do more to publicise what it does abroad, especially with neighbouring states, and demonstrate credibly that it is deeply committed to stability and prosperity in those countries, this could help convince their populations that they are not excluded from Europe or ignored by Brussels. As enlargement slows down, public diplomacy must become a key part of EU foreign policy in states with which it cannot exploit conditionality.

The Constitutional Treaty presented an opportunity to push for dedicated EU public diplomacy inside the office of the EU Minister for Foreign Affairs and the External Action Service.⁴³ The failed referenda in France and the Netherlands killed both of these off for the moment, but not public diplomacy. The lack of the Constitutional Treaty does not lessen the EU need – on the contrary, without the Constitution, public diplomacy becomes all the more important.

The EU in practice

Before exploring what the Union might do in future, it is useful to review what it already does. Although far from exhaustive, the following discussion highlights the range of activities and actors in Union policy (see annex for more details).

One should note from the outset that the EU does not use the term “public diplomacy” to describe its communication activities. Instead, it talks about “information activities”. European Commission officials argue that it is best not to describe EU efforts as public diplomacy, as the media often mistakes this for propaganda – something which is anathema to the Union.⁴⁴

And, indeed, “information activities” is the correct term to describe the EU's current efforts, which consist mostly of the dissemination of information. Information is given out to foreign publics through both passive measures (Internet portals, publications, etc.) and active ones (speaking tours, exhibitions, etc.). The Union has a glossy ‘facts and figures’ approach to public diplomacy. There is relatively little emphasis on long-term relationship-building or analysis of third-party perceptions of the EU.

A wide range of actors is involved. The Council of Ministers’ activities in public diplomacy are limited. The Council’s Directorate-General for Communication, Information Policy and Protocol was reformed in 2002 to lead in this area within the General Secretariat. In addition, the High Representative for CFSP Javier Solana has his own spokesperson and himself plays an important role through visits abroad, statements and speeches.⁴⁵

EU Special Representatives designated by the Council also play a public diplomacy role for the Union in their designated regions, as focal points for local media.⁴⁶ Concerning ESDP operations, the Political and Security Committee (PSC) drafts ‘Master Messages’ to underpin a public information campaign for every operation it undertakes. For example, the Althea operation in Bosnia Herzegovina has a Public Information Office on the ground with four officers, a newsletter and a website. The Council also has become efficient in producing fact sheets for the media and the general public on EU involvement in various crisis zones (such as EU responses to the crisis in Darfur, Sudan).⁴⁷

The European Commission undertakes the bulk of activities in this area, holding and managing almost all the relevant financial and human

resources. The Directorate-General (DG) for External Relations (Relex) has a dual function: as an operational DG in Brussels and as base for EC delegations abroad, each of which have their own Press and Information offices. Other DGs in the Relex *famille* also have their own press and information units.

Outside the Relex *famille*, other DGs have programmes with an important public diplomacy dimension. For example, DG Education and Training launched the Erasmus Mundus programme to develop student/scholar exchanges between EU Member States and third countries in early 2005, with the stated aim “to enhance quality in European higher education and to promote intercultural understanding through co-operation with third countries”.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the television channel Euronews, partly funded by the Commission, has acquired an important role providing information about EU affairs, reaching some 151 million households in seven languages.

EU Member States also have well-developed public diplomacy strategies, which often include the aim of enhancing the Union’s profile and voice in the world. In their written strategies at least, enhancing the profile of the EU is an objective of the public diplomacy activities of France and the UK. Many Member States also have a significant cultural presence abroad to serve the purposes of *rayonnement* (influence).

The EU has mechanisms to coordinate these different activities. The Relex Information Committee (RIC) meets on a monthly basis and brings together the heads of information units from across the Relex *famille*. The RIC allows for the exchange of ideas and experience. It has also served as a forum for common efforts, such as building the single website portal *EU in the World*.

There are also ad hoc coordination arrangements on information policy between DG Relex and EuropeAid. According to participants, these have been quite effective in creating more unity of effort between two important areas of policy.⁴⁹ Finally, there are elements of inter-institutional coordination between the Commission and the Council. Notably, the latter planned an information programme on ESDP targeted at EU citizens in 2005 funded to the tune of €1 million from the Commission’s PRINCE programme.

As the Union has become more engaged in foreign affairs, it has developed a wide range of practices related to public diplomacy. The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP) is a positive example of public diplomacy. A key objective of the so-called Barcelona Process, launched in 1995, is to promote a better



dialogue between cultures and civilisations, and this dimension has arguably been one of the more successful areas of the EMP.⁵⁰

In the EMP, public diplomacy activities are designed to tie the other two pillars of the EMP – the political dialogue and economic cooperation – to wider societal/cultural engagement. The underlying idea is that all pillars will be reinforced, and the EU will become associated with a ‘big picture’ linking interests and values.

The EMP has five notable elements:

- 1) Since 1995, it has fostered partnerships on questions of culture, heritage and the environment which would never have developed without its impulse (consider the Euromed Heritage Programme and the Euromed Audiovisual Programme).
- 2) It has reached out to the research and scientific community among its partners and created a network linking EU and partner institutes. Euromesco and the Euromed Forum of Economic Institutes (FEMIS) are excellent examples of officially supported networking between research communities with the aim of better understanding.
- 3) It also has projects targeting important groups inside partner countries, including, for example, the Euromed Youth Action and the Euromed Economic Networks of Chambers of Commerce.
- 4) It has a training dimension, demonstrated by the Malta Seminars for training diplomats and support for the Euro-Arab Management School.
- 5) It has a purposeful focus on image-crafting at the heart of its mandate. Funds are set aside for public information activities by EC delegations.

Yet the EMP is far from perfect. It has no research and analysis capacities of its own that would allow for a better grasp of partner countries’ views on – and attitudes towards – the EU. Nor does it have the capacity to evaluate the effectiveness of its information activities, which are thus carried out in a vacuum of wishful thinking. The EMP does not have a single dedicated structure or agency to coordinate and integrate all of its various efforts. More widely, the regional and international context has changed since 1995, and the EMP should be reformed to reflect this. The public diplomacy dimension in the third pillar could be developed to a far greater extent.

In the area of good practice, one should note also the processes set up in DG Relex for enhancing the EC delegations' role on the ground in information activities, local media reporting and project evaluation. The Press and Information Unit in Brussels has developed coordinating practices to guide and keep delegations 'on message' and monitor their activities through regular reporting. It also provides specific funds for local and regional information activities. All EC delegations have budgets and staff dedicated to press and information activities. This is a positive point, even if the money is limited and officials have little time for ambitious efforts.

Educational exchanges and scholarships are important elements of public diplomacy. The EU has enhanced its profile in this area with the launch of the Erasmus Mundus programme. Opened in January 2005, the Union has allocated €230 million for four types of activities:

- 1) Creating Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses in the EU and in third countries;
- 2) Supporting scholarships for EU and third-country students;
- 3) Building partnerships between EU and third-country higher educational departments;
- 4) Conducting activities to enhance the attractiveness of EU higher education.

One of the stated objectives of the programme is to contribute to enhancing "Europe's legitimate aspirations as a major player on the international scene".⁵¹ The programme will also seek to dispel misunderstandings about Europe and improve mutual understanding by targeting young people in particular.

By contrast, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), launched in 2003 as the Wider Europe Initiative, has fared poorly in terms of public diplomacy.⁵² Especially for neighbouring states that have aspirations to join the Union, EU policy has not risen to the public diplomacy challenge it faces.

That challenge is three-fold:

- 1) The EU must convince societies in neighbouring countries (Moldova and Ukraine, in particular) that the ENP is not about exclusion but rather about greater commitment. A handful of elites in these countries may understand that the ENP Action Plans offer greater engagement than previously, but the great majority of people view the ENP as Brussels saying 'no' to them forever.

2) The way in which the ENP was presented to neighbours exacerbated these poor perceptions. Initially at least, there were few high-level visits from EU officials, little in the way of local information campaigns, and no timely translations into local languages.

3) The ENP started very badly. Most fundamentally, it does not contain a dedicated public diplomacy dimension. Becoming more informed about neighbouring countries' perceptions – and more engaged in influencing them – should lie at the heart of the ENP. For now, they are not.

EU failings

EU public diplomacy suffers from deep weaknesses.

First, EU activities are fragmented. In the Commission, the multiple budget lines for each Directorate-General, coupled with different standards and chains of command, make the task of coordination impossible without a dedicated structure.⁵³ The current situation makes for duplication of efforts and wasted time.

Ad hoc mechanisms of coordination are not enough to ensure coherence of the overall message. ECHO acts quite independently from all other members of the Relex *famille*, arguably to the detriment of the Union's ability to carry a clear message. The EU has no horizontal structure to coordinate public diplomacy activities across three points: a) between the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament; b) among the DGs within the Commission; c) between Brussels and the EC delegations.

Second, there is a fundamental problem in the division of resources and competences between the Commission and the Council. Council structures which have competence for ESDP and CFSP do not have the resources necessary to undertake effective public diplomacy. The Commission has the wherewithal, but lacks the competence and thus the drive to do so.

Third, EU 'information activity' lacks a coordinating strategy that would unify efforts, establish common messages and identify targets. The Union does establish a number of strategic priorities and individual units have information strategies, but an overall strategy is lacking. This means that foreign publics receive many discrete messages from the Union, but no 'big picture' that would allow them to understand this information in a significant manner.

Fourth, relative to the scale of its external engagement, EU ‘information activities’ receive little financing.⁵⁴ Nor are they given priority in the decision-making process. They are tagged on at the end, with little influence over the initial discussion of options.⁵⁵ The efficiency of Union messages suffers as a result. What is more, the EU does not have research and analysis capabilities to understand how foreign publics, and specific target groups, view it. In addition, the Union has a low profile in broadcasting (and none whatsoever in radio).

Fundamentally, the EU does not conduct public diplomacy. Its overall philosophy is that of information dissemination. This means that Union activities are information-led and passive. The focus falls heavily on ‘what we say’ rather than ‘what they hear’.

The result? A global player with increasing responsibilities and capabilities that focuses on telling the world what it should think about it, but quite deaf to what the world actually thinks.

What is to be done?

In seeking to conduct public diplomacy, the EU faces four challenges. These are:

- 1) **Integrate:** To highlight to foreign audiences what the Union already does and to integrate each policy into the wider context of EU interests and values – to show the ‘policy mix’ behind a particular activity.
- 2) **Build relations:** To develop the relationship-building dimension of public diplomacy through wider and more targeted educational and exchange programmes.
- 3) **Know your targets:** To build a research and analysis capacity to ‘listen’ to foreign societies, to understand them better, and to evaluate the efficiency of EU public diplomacy activities.
- 4) **Coordinate:** To create a horizontal strategy and an institutional mechanism devoted to integrating disparate strands of Union activities.

In addition, the EU – as the EU – faces the challenge of ensuring that it coordinates its efforts with the public diplomacy activities already undertaken by Member States. For those states without dedicated budgets for these activities, a EU-level response might be very useful. For those with

existing programmes, coordination and consultation should ensure that the EU level and Member-State level work together.

For now, of course, one could imagine ways of strengthening the coordination mechanisms inside the Commission as initial measures to improve EU efforts, but these would only be palliative and stopgap. The Union must start thinking more ambitiously about its public diplomacy needs. In the absence of a Constitutional Treaty, it must consider ways of launching genuine public diplomacy without running into legal difficulties and in a fashion that works with current reality (and not against it). Two initial steps should be considered:

1) EU public diplomacy strategy

The EU should draft a public diplomacy strategy to clarify its strategic objectives, its core messages, the key audiences, geographic and country priorities, and important themes. Several services in the EU already perform this task on a limited or sectoral basis, but this is not enough. It is vital that all public diplomacy activities be integrated within a common strategic framework.

EU Member States should designate a drafting board that would be mandated to consult widely and to draft a 'EU Public Diplomacy Strategy'. Board members should represent different EU institutions, Member-State officials, experts and people from the commercial world. The aim here would be to draft an inclusive and transparent document after a wide consultation process that would then be approved by the Council.

This process would ensure wide ownership of the Union's efforts across its Member States and the EU institutions. The drafting of a strategy would also catalyse thinking about the Union's needs in this area and enable all stakeholders to start singing from the same hymn sheet.

2) EU public diplomacy agency

Member States should create an institutional focal point for public diplomacy within the EU. The aim should be to launch an agency that has inter-institutional reach and with a mandate to coordinate Union activities and liaise with Member States.

This horizontal institution should have a high-level director, appointed to serve under the High Representative for CFSP, and should be linked to the Commission and relevant DGs. It should have built-in research and analysis

capacities to study foreign attitudes to the EU, coordinate the application of the public diplomacy strategy through Union activities on the ground abroad, and evaluate the efficiency of EU programmes. It should also provide public diplomacy training to officials working on EU external actions. Last but not least, it should have contact points and liaison officials in the various EC delegations acting as 'feelers' and multipliers.

Neither of these steps *per se* is enough to give birth to fully fledged EU public diplomacy. However, in the absence of an EU Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Action Service, these two measures – neither of which requires treaty change or entails major legal problems – would help to build better institutional coherence and overall coordination.

4. A challenge and an opportunity

The stakes are high. Without a public diplomacy strategy, the external actions of the Union will suffer. The CFSP and ESDP will become increasingly incapacitated if specific policies are not presented as part of a global 'policy mix', and if the EU does not seek to understand and influence the perceptions of third-country societies.

Given the rising power of foreign societies, the Union and its Member States have little choice but to seek to engage, inform and influence the foreign public. The successful projection of EU interests and values throughout the world will depend on this.

The failure so far to ratify the Constitutional Treaty does not pose an obstacle to developing EU public diplomacy. On the contrary, this is an area where Member States can – and should – act despite, and irrespective of, the critical state of the ratification process.

First steps should be taken to craft a dedicated EU strategy and agency. Long neglected, public diplomacy must be recognised as being vital for the success of the CFSP. Current international relations are unforgiving for a strategic actor that fails to engage the hearts and minds of the world that surrounds it – and also, indirectly, those of its own citizens.

Dov Lynch is Senior Research Fellow at the EU Institute for Security Studies.

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51. See the Commission proposal to set up what was initially called the Erasmus World programme,



COM (2002)401, 2002/0165(COD), Brussels, (17 July 2002).

52. For a wide discussion of the European Neighbourhood Policy, see the special edition, “The Challenges of the ENP,” in International Spectator Vol. XL:1 Rome (January-March 2005). For official information, see europa website : http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/enp/index_en.htm

53. The DG Relex paper, L'UE dans le Monde: Strategie d'Information et de Communication de la DG Relex (2003), makes this point quite bluntly.

54. It is exceedingly difficult to tally numbers for all of the various of public information activities undertaken by the EU. By all accounts, interviews in the Council and the Commission point to a varied but small budget.

55. Interviews in Brussels, September-October 2004.

56. This list draws on discussions with officials in the Commission and the DG Relex strategy document entitled: L'UE dans le Monde: Strategie d'Information et de Communication de la DG Relex.

Annex

Overview of DG Relex information and communication activities

It is useful to provide an overview of the range of information and communication activities already undertaken by DG Relex, the most important actor in this area.

The following list⁵⁶ is indicative and thus does not cover the full range of DG Relex activities. However, it shows that the EU already has a complex range of public diplomacy-related activities that may be drawn upon, better exploited and integrated across all of the EU's external policies. Some of the recommendations put forward in this paper are inspired by DG Relex thinking and work.

Video news releases: These are short video clips on topical questions that are presented freely to television companies in the EU and by EC delegations abroad.

Euronews and Europe by Satellite: Part of DG Press, teams are sent to cover major events which are then relayed freely through satellite or the Internet. DG Press provides partial financing to Euronews and DG Relex participates in its monthly editorial board meetings.

Educational videos: DG Relex has, in the past, produced educational videos on EU activities with regard to topical concerns to be distributed to educational establishments abroad.

DG Relex website: The website is visited on average by three million people a month. It contains a Weekly News Digest with some 14,000 subscribers.

EC delegations: One third of EC delegations have their own websites following a prescribed format and providing local and general information on the EU, its internal and external policies. The number of EC delegations with such websites will increase, as will the flexibility of these sites, their use of local languages and ability to target different audiences, such as youth. Thematic portals will also be developed on such questions as the EU and human rights. EC Delegations organise numerous public events, conferences, seminars, exhibitions, with Member States representations on



board. Some delegations also organise conference tours to pass on specific EU messages. In addition, delegations provide numerous DG Relex publications on wide-ranging topics as well as publications with specifically local intent.

Training: DG Relex organises regular training seminars for press and communication officers.

Visitors programmes: DG Relex organises group media visits to Brussels from third countries, as well as a more tailored EU Visitors Programme for selected individuals from third countries for visits of up to 15 days.