European Public Diplomacy & Crises

Mai’a K. Davis Cross
Edward W. Brooke Professor
Associate Professor of Political Science & International Affairs
Northeastern University
Introduction

- Should not assume EU public diplomacy is in crisis (Duke)
- There are “complex linkages between the internal and external dimensions of EU public diplomacy” and it is a “self-reaffirming process” (Duke)
- Key features of EU PD (Duke):
  - “domestic Union as ‘exemplar’”
  - “attraction of ‘post-modern’ Europe” (peace, stability, prosperity”
  - Focus on infopolitik during crisis
  - Increasing emphasis on civil society
Engaging Civil Society: Cultural Diplomacy

- Enhancing:
  - Human rights
  - Freedom of expression
  - Diversity – shared humanity
  - Mutual understanding – empathy
  - Ultrasociality

- Countering:
  - Authoritarianism
  - Cyber & network propaganda
  - Misinformation & psychological operations
Times of Crisis

EU is particularly vulnerable during times of crisis:

- Bad news sells
- Popularity of Europe-bashing
- Meta-narrative that the EU is hard to understand
- Self-fulfilling prophecies
- Integrational panic
Public Diplomacy during Crises

- Crisis public diplomacy is short term, but rests upon a long-term foundation

- Cultural diplomacy is one of these long term strategies – creating a buffer during unexpected crises
  - Creates **resilience** & **image resilience** for the EU
    - Adaptability
    - Prosocial identity
  - Example: Eurozone crisis
Joint Communication
Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations

- EU has long had soft power through its culture
- Stronger effort than in the past to build resilience
- Key properties:
  - Connection to economic competitiveness
  - Connection to sustainable development
  - Strategic dimension
  - Creating hubs
  - Inter-cultural dialogue
Evaluating Activities
Towards an EU strategy for international cultural relations

- Diverse and important: art, photography, music, film, world heritage, dialogue

- Areas to strengthen:
  - Going beyond “hubs” to impact broader society
  - Being more strategic:
    - Pulse of Europe
    - Culture as friendship
    - Culture & politics
    - EU as symbol
  - Emphasizing idealism:
    - “idealistic aspiration”
    - Big projects
    - Power of possibility
Current Challenges for Cultural Diplomacy

- Crisis in the US leading to rift in transatlantic diplomatic relationship
  - Steve Bannon: waging a “cultural and political war,” “weaponizing” the narrative

- Radicalization & recruitment to terrorism

- Disillusionment and/or lack of understanding of the European project

- Brexit
Conclusion

- Culture is valuable to the human experience itself
- Building on Duke, cultural engagement with external publics plays a dual role
  - other countries try to openly use their own culture in instrumental ways
  - US, China, Russia
- So, preventing culture from being weaponized should be a goal of the EU, through smart power