

# EUROPEAN UNION'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ANALYSIS: THE EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE CHAPTER

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**Abstract:** This essay aims to outline a policy analysis directed at the European Union (EU), as a highly advanced diplomatic actor. In doing so, this paper seeks to provide an in-depth overview of cyber diplomacy. This knowledge would further be exploited to briefly describe the main characteristics of the EU from a cyber diplomacy point of view. Additionally, the case study of the European External Action Service (EEAS) will be taken into consideration, in order to evaluate its cyber diplomacy strategy in January 2022. Thus, EEAS' Twitter page (@eu\_eeas) will be analysed through cyber diplomacy lenses. Both quantitative and qualitative data encompassing the author's informed observations of EEAS' interactions on the social media platform will be contained as part of the analysis. To conclude, this academic paper formulates a series of policy recommendations targeted at the EEAS' digital policy strategy.

**Keywords:** Cyber diplomacy, Digital diplomacy, EU Cyber diplomacy, European External Action Service, Public diplomacy, Public policy, Twipolicy.

## INTRODUCTION

Public diplomacy directed at external audiences is not a recently developed practice in global affairs. Ever since the earlier civilizations, the sovereigns concerned with their own esteem and their emissaries rarely totally disregarded the opportunities and perils of international public sentiment (Melissen, 2005). Furthermore, later on, WWI marked the creation of expert reflection development beyond domestic limits, and it was paramount that foreign politics scholars would grasp the relevance of 'soft power' once the military conflict has finished (Nye, 1990). Soft power, as defined by Joseph S. Nye, represents a contemporary strain of influence on perception that is becoming more relevant in the interconnected digital world. The absence of soft power may be detrimental to hard power in an ecosystem with various international links (Melissen, 2005).

Several issues with regard to the power attraction in foreign politics remain unsolved (Melissen, 2005). Nations, who aid with framing the challenges, whose traditions and beliefs are comparable to existing global standards, and whose legitimacy overseas is enhanced by their principles and strategies are believed to be more enticing in contemporary world politics (Nye, 1990). Foreign relations, according to traditionalists, represent a stratagem in which the duties and functions of participants in world affairs are firmly established (Melissen, 2005). A comprehensive understanding of diplomacy as the system of participation, dialogue, and bargaining nonetheless indicates a tidy global setting (Melissen, 1999). Nevertheless, the dilemma of how diplomats could employ soft power is throwing their ambassadors into the ultimate challenge (Melissen, 2005; Abratis, 2021).

Postmodern diplomacy has been characterised by a far more dynamic representation of the public and the players, with many of these players not projecting as much authority as they

would like. Public diplomacy represents an essential element of participatory diplomacy, but its ambitions overlap with long-established diplomatic etiquette. Hence, public diplomacy should be regarded as a component of global affairs, and its emergence indicates that the growth of diplomatic presence has entered a novel phase (Melissen, 2005).

This essay aims to outline a policy analysis directed at the European Union (EU), as a highly advanced diplomatic actor. In doing so, this paper seeks to provide a more in-depth overview of cyber diplomacy. This knowledge would further be exploited to briefly describe the main characteristics of the EU from a cyber diplomacy point of view. Additionally, the case study of the European External Action Service (EEAS) will be taken into consideration, in order to evaluate its cyber diplomacy strategy in January 2022. Thus, EEAS' Twitter page (@eu\_eas) will be analysed through cyber diplomacy lenses. Both quantitative and qualitative data encompassing the author's informed observations of EEAS' interactions on the social media platform will be contained as part of the analysis. To conclude, this academic paper formulates a series of policy recommendations targeted at the EEAS' digital policy strategy.

## **DEFINITIONS: CYBER DIPLOMACY, PUBLIC POLICY, TWIPOLICY**

Diplomacy is divided into three categories that define who does what and how things are done. The modern meaning of diplomacy appears to also refer to the bargaining procedure between officials of nations or international bodies or non-state entities (Kasper, Osula & Molnar, 2021).

In the past few years, diplomacy has been redesigned almost completely, most prominently by stretching out its range to incorporate novel policy challenges, the diminishing contrast between national and international strategies, and the rise of contemporary, non-traditional actors such as regional and global bodies or NGOs (Bátora and Spence, 2015). The classical understanding of diplomacy, that primarily alludes to the direct involvement of a state actor with another state actor, is progressively being supplemented with an additional element referred to as public diplomacy. Public diplomacy transcends beyond official relationships to also include straightforward and reciprocal interaction with the public of a foreign nation in order to shape opinions and develop a positive perception within the hosting country (Roberts, 2007). Thus, power projection is strongly linked to the idea of public diplomacy, considering that power takes place when a state actor persuades other governments to embrace its desires (Nye, 1990).

Cyber diplomacy refers to a specific strategy for handling distinct challenges that emerge in the digital realm (European Union, 2019). They encompass issues such as internet governance, combating cybercrime and cyberespionage, as well as any unethical etiquette in the virtual world. Whilst analysing the EU's cyber diplomacy, one must acknowledge that fundamental transgressions from the Westphalian paradigm of national hegemony are conspicuous in EU's functioning (Bendiek & Kettemann, 2021). Therefore, the apparent absence of frontiers online presents several obstacles to conceptualizing collective sovereignty (Melissen, 2005).

The EU has always been regarded as a relatively novel player on the global scene. Hence, the EU has established a digital diplomacy toolkit and structure, as well as an intricate network of interconnected strategies impacting technological transformation and digital security (Melissen, 2005). Through its 2017 Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox, the EU established a civilian cybersecurity program (Moret & Pawlak, 2017), whereas cyber defence resents a condition of the 2020 EU Cybersecurity Strategy (European Commission, 2020). The Cyber Diplomacy toolbox accommodates the framework for additional initiatives on the EU's cyber deterrent approach, with a straightforward connection to the digital single market and its associated strategies (Melissen, 2005).

Since there is no universally accepted interpretation of public diplomacy, Ambassador Kishan Rana examined well over 100 public diplomacy conceptual principles and thus, public diplomacy could be located somewhere between the broad and limited interpretations of the term. On one hand, the broad interpretation sees public diplomacy as nothing more than a reflection of soft power and that it encompasses the process of interacting with others to exchange information and develop professional or social contacts as well as additional key functions. Thus, this perspective highlights how public diplomacy merges various soft influences, yet it is ineffective for practical reasons considering these strategies require their own environment and objectives. On the other hand, the constricted interpretation limits the aim of public diplomacy to persuading national and international audiences on international relations matters. As such, this point of view emphasizes the practical decisions that public diplomacy should immediately perform, as well as the precise tactics that will be employed along with other national players (Galvez, n.d.).

According to EU envoys, public diplomacy seems to be about furthering strategies, principles, and objectives [...] throughout a number of methods to put a certain entity (and not only) into the spotlight. Thus, it all narrows down to individuals' assumptions (Abratis, 2021). Nevertheless, the EU's public diplomacy could also represent a tool for enlightening international audiences or authorities on the EU's rules and procedures. Furthermore, according to professionals, public diplomacy incorporates both facets, education whilst highlighting the EU's values. A frequent disagreement is represented by the assertion that public diplomacy is essentially just another term for propaganda. Hence, it could be challenging to make the distinction between public policy and propaganda. Yet, the widespread agreement is that public diplomacy refers to interactions rather than monologues. Furthermore, such straightforward participation has shown its effectiveness. Thus, the above strategy centred on expanding the knowledge of an organization and bilateral cooperation is one of the characteristics that distinguishes public diplomacy from propaganda, in the sense of a *couverte* strategy (Abratis, 2021).

Apart from its rapid development, Twitter equally represents a virtual orientation into the digital diplomacy realm for the majority of diplomats throughout the world. Simply put, 140 letters have altered the direction of international strategies in order to effectively adapt to emerging geopolitical issues. Twiplomacy intends to motivate officials to establish and develop their Twitter pages, as well as everyone to embrace Twitter to effectively communicate and broaden our perspectives. Social media platforms have driven policymakers to reimagine and reinvent statecraft in an unimaginable environment. Somehow these modern technologies have fundamentally transformed interstate relations. To get the most out of the Twitter experience – it is critical to grasp how e-diplomacy can assist the establishment of a stronger international affairs approach, whether bilaterally or multilaterally, and how conventional diplomacy may be supplemented by contemporary means. Although digital transformation provides a strategy to effectively capture data, it is paramount to note that diplomacies throughout the globe are not relinquishing orthodox means; alternatively, they are seeking modern and creative methods to unify their endeavours. Even though, officials may not be technophiles. What seems to be fundamental is to grasp how these innovations might be implanted and fashioned to achieve geopolitical interests. Twitter may represent the first phase toward digital diplomacy, allowing us to engage in a global debate. However, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram as well as the great range of digital networking platforms should not become the norm. Diplomats should appreciate how the potential of concepts may lead to greater benefits and usher conventional diplomacy into a modern generation in which individuals are also participants and governments and policymakers are not insiders anymore (Sandre, 2013).

## CASE STUDY: THE EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE (EEAS) IN GLOBAL POLITICS

This section of the paper aims to present an overview of how the European Union's public diplomacy operates through its EEAS in order to represent a guidepost for the future debate on major weaknesses and solutions. Thus, this work will provide a concise illustration of EU professionals' grasp of public diplomacy, and also communications delivered, instruments employed, objective audiences, and interaction with EU member states in the host communities (Abratis, 2021).

Upon the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the EU Delegations were mandated to advocate the Union to foreign nations and international entities. Their primary responsibility is to engage in public diplomacy, which is an important practice in moulding opinions worldwide (Abratis, 2021).

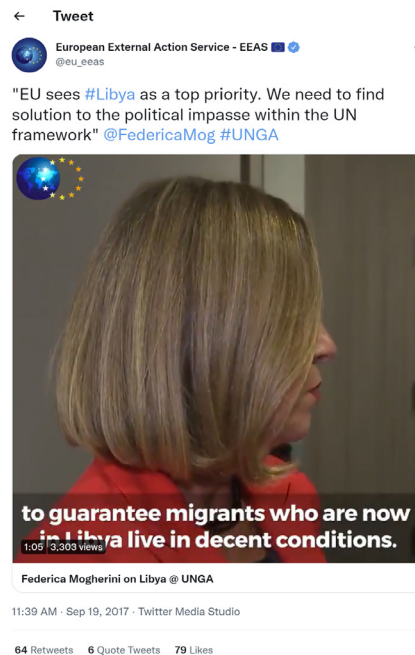
Despite the fact that several factors were consistently addressed by many EU representatives, the EEAS' digital communications transmitted are heavily reliant on geopolitics. Most often these communications are an attempt to describe the European Union's framework, since in certain states, not only the citizens but also state representatives, lack a thorough understanding of the EU. This primarily informational element applies both to distant territories and to those that are near the EU (Abratis, 2021). This can be for example messages and promotions of sessions of EU - organised conferences on the benefits of a 'shared strategic culture', as it is promoted in the following tweet (European External Action Service, 2021).



(source: [https://twitter.com/eu\\_eeas/status/1479392374107242502](https://twitter.com/eu_eeas/status/1479392374107242502))

Furthermore, EEAS public diplomacy represents the propagation of the EU's positive culture. Hence, it is strongly related to the notions of soft power. Throughout this perspective, the EU regularly employs public strategies to wield soft power and create an attractive climate for its international policy by presenting itself as a trustworthy and necessary collaborator (Borg Psaila, 2021). Nonetheless, in relation to other actors where the EU is not a key player and other international forces are far more noticeable, the soft power element seems to be less robust. Representatives stationed in emerging regions focus on advertising the economic capacity-building initiatives that are being conducted regionally and emphasizing their immediate value to

the community (Abratis, 2021). This attitude towards developing nations is greatly exemplified in EEAS' tweet from January 29th, pictured below (European External Action Service, 2017).



(source: [https://twitter.com/eu\\_eas/status/910060807198793728](https://twitter.com/eu_eas/status/910060807198793728))

Ultimately, in complement to all of these nation-specific communications, which are largely focused on emphasizing the strong relationship between the EU and the hosting society, the much more effective statements are those which provide tangible benefits to the beneficiaries (Abratis, 2021). This standpoint is thoroughly exemplified by EEAS' tweets from the month of January with regard to the escalating situation between Russia and Ukraine. As such, on the 4th of January, VP Joseph Borrell's tweet stated that the EU supports 'Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and [...] sustained reform efforts that are key for resilience' (Borrell, 2022).



(source: <https://twitter.com/JosepBorrellF/status/1478465540347899904>)

These facts well illustrate that “actions matter more than words, and public diplomacy that is just a charade is likely to fail” (Nye, 2005).

### **Characteristics of The European External Action Service Online Behaviour**

Shortly after its establishment, the European External Action Service’s digital diplomacy has evolved to play a critical role in the EU’s communication strategy and, as a result, the EU’s day-to-day involvement online. During the term of the EU High Representative and Vice President of the Commission, Federica Mogherini, the EEAS’ Twitter profile grew dramatically in 2015. Ms Mogherini highlighted the need for cooperation in effective Digital Diplomacy, the need to dissolve barriers, and urged that all personnel provide resources rather than interaction being something extra. Additionally, during her tenure, the EEAS has been able to make a significant breakthrough, bolstering its Digital Diplomacy Policy for Headquarters and EU Envoys, offering pre-posting instruction for all incoming Diplomats, and liaising with other EU organisations, which was not previously the case. Because of the architecture of the platform, as well as the VP’s active interference on Twitter, this network serves as a hub for the EEAS Digital Diplomacy Policy. The results are highlighted in a transparent manner by themselves: during Ms Mogherini’s mandate in 2015, her personal account attained 123K followers, a rise of over sixty percent in about six months, and the core profile of the EEAS reached over 94K followers between the same period. Currently, EEAS has around 384.8K followers, while VP Joseph Borrel has 247.6K followers (Mann, 2015).

There is a built-in dichotomy in digital diplomacy: on one hand, digital networks are about openness, quickness, and information exchange. Conventional diplomacy is mostly about privacy, lengthy preparation, modest actions, and restraint. Moreover, tweets are limited, while negotiators have a habit of using more words than necessary. The EEAS supports representatives to experiment and operate freely while also ensuring that the essential concepts generated at Brussels are appropriately delivered in the field. There is no alternative for extensive capacity building about how to utilize such instruments, which are extremely effective but may overlook their goal if the format’s intrinsic power is not recognized. Vocabulary, for example, has shown to be crucial to effective digital diplomacy approaches. It is pointless to communicate with the Middle East in other languages other than their native tongue.’ EEAS accounts gained a lot of fresh subscribers after tweeting about the Iran discussions in Farsi. Communicating on all platforms in regional dialects has been a successful practice across all EEAS’ Envoys. Using carefully picked tweets and retweets, EEAS accounts maintained the press and audiences updated without incurring the type of intervention that may disrupt the whole operation (Abratis, 2021).

### **Major Weaknesses of The European External Action Service and Recommendations**

The main scope of the EEAS is to enhance the bond among international policies in order to obtain better-unified strategies (Bendiek & Kettemann, 2021). If the European Union is to be a recognized and legitimate participant in the world scene, it must have consistent strategies. A fundamental impediment to a more appealing public diplomacy is that political rhetoric is a weakness owing to a difference of opinion or aspiration on political affairs (Hedling, 2021). Even though the lack of a national agreement seems not to have a significant impact on the Envoys’ community projects, one of the primary weaknesses is what is agreed upon

at the policy level. Unless the member states agree to increase their global reach, a cohesive strategy on critical political issues would surely help a more coordinated public diplomacy. This demonstrates how tightly the inward and exterior aspects are intertwined. Addressing domestic concerns is thus just as vital as defining a strategy for the EU's international relations (Abratis, 2021).

Thus, it is critical to maintain the engagement in bridging the miscommunications among the EU and its members and creating a genuinely EU public arena. The EU must keep evolving away from simply informative operations and advance toward contact and involvement with its people in order for them to have an educated view, hold officials responsible, and encourage additional cohesiveness. Suggestions for this goal include requests for increased public engagement, transparent dialogues with EU citizens, and a tighter relationship with the journalists to improve the exposure of EU difficulties (Abratis, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, public diplomacy represents a key international strategy tool that allows nations and organizations to use soft power by altering opinions between other populations to generate a favourable regulatory climate. To conclude, EEAS is a valuable resource for the EU as it projects a favourable illustration overseas and establishes a strong brand for the EU in foreign lands. As a result, as an international actor, the EU must adopt a coherent public diplomacy policy in order to become dominant on the global scene (Abratis, 2021).

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