8. Diplomatic practices beyond Brussels: the EU delegations and the coordination of EU foreign and security policy

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BUILDING A EUROPEAN DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY

This chapter explores the role played by the network of European Union (EU) delegations in the implementation of EU foreign policy, and examines the coordination between EU delegations and EU member state diplomatic missions in third countries around the world and the practices that have evolved in this process. The purpose of the coordination is to consolidate European diplomatic performance abroad and make the European diplomatic community more visible. The formal and informal practices that have emerged reveal the ways in which European¹ diplomats work together in spite of the boundaries set by the traditional foreign policy of EU member states, and the uncertainties created by the disagreements among EU member states in Brussels regarding the form and substance of EU foreign policy. This chapter uncovers a mix of conscious and unconscious steps taken to realize EU foreign policy. They form a pattern of meaningful actions reproduced through the network of coordination and consultation among the members of the European diplomatic community. European diplomats show an awareness about the significance of working together to enact EU foreign policy, although they also recognize its limits. Overall, the environment in which they operate is built around learning the informal and formal ways of doing things, many of which are now considered common sense, while others are seen as still evolving. In this sense, learning what it means to be a European diplomat contributes to creating a community of practice of EU foreign and security policy.

¹ In this chapter, 'European diplomats' refers to both civil servants in the EU delegations and EU member states' embassies and diplomatic missions.

There are few accounts of the role and function of the EU delegations, despite them being the most visible representation of an emerging European diplomacy (Austermann, 2014; Spence and Bátorá, 2015; Bicchi and Maurer, 2018). Even less attention has been paid to the ways in which the EU delegations coordinate with member state embassies to project EU foreign policy abroad. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the EU delegations, their role embodying EU diplomacy through their presence around the world, and the practices of coordination between the EU delegations and the member state embassies on the ground. However, the collective enactment of EU foreign policy on the ground needs to manage differences in views among member states in the policy-shaping stage in Brussels that risk being reproduced in third countries. Moreover, traditional ties of EU member states with host countries, entrenched views on national diplomacy, and differences in strategic culture, also affect the willingness to coordinate foreign policy under the EU flag abroad. This makes it important to understand how diplomatic practices (that is, formal and informal rules, procedures and working methods) regarding the implementation of EU foreign policy manage contestation and continuity.

Against this background, the aim of this chapter is twofold. First, it sheds light on the nature of the delegations as a novel kind of diplomatic entity under the auspices of the European External Action Service (EEAS), along with their role in the everyday making of EU foreign and security policy on the ground. Second, it examines the diplomatic practices of EU delegations and EU member state embassies in third countries, and how they develop strategies to implement EU foreign policy. The chapter first describes the roles, functions and composition of the EU delegations and situates these in the larger institutional framework of the European diplomacy, that is, the EEAS, the EU institutions, and the member state diplomatic corps. The chapter then explores the ways in which the EU delegations interact with member state embassies on the ground to identify reflexive and non-reflexive practices that have emerged in these communities. The findings presented in this chapter are derived from official documents of the EEAS, the European Commission and EU member states, as well as from secondary sources in the form of academic articles, reports and news reporting. In addition, interview data from field trips to Washington, Beijing and Seoul in November and December 2019 are included to illustrate the EU and member state diplomats' perceptions of the working methods that steer their interaction in third country capitals around the world.

THE NETWORK OF EU DELEGATIONS

The EU delegations constitute an important part of the puzzle of the everyday making of EU foreign and security policy. They are responsible for carrying out the important task of delivering EU external policies in third country

capitals and international organizations where the EU is represented, primarily in the remit of development policy, EU enlargement, crisis management and humanitarian relief, but increasingly also in regard to issues of international politics. The delegations represent the EU abroad with the mandate to explain and advocate for the EU policy positions taken in Brussels. The enactment of EU diplomacy in third countries is shared with EU member state embassies, a process that requires careful coordination and cooperation.

The EU delegations originate from the former delegations of the European Commission, first set up in the 1970s as the extended arm of the European executive with an initial focus on development policy (Austermann, 2014). Although the very first delegation of the European Commission was set up in Washington in 1954, the following decades saw the establishment of delegations primarily in Africa as a direct result of the signing of the Yaoundé Convention. At the end of the 1970s, the conclusion of the Lomé Convention allowed the representation offices to evolve from being almost exclusively oriented towards development aid, to quasi-diplomatic missions (Austermann, 2014, pp. 40–42).

As per the agreements established in the 2009 Lisbon Treaty, the European Commission delegations became EU delegations in line with the ambition to strengthen the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) (TEU, art. 221). By the summer of 2020, the EU was operating 142 delegations around the world, out of which nine were accredited at international or regional organizations – chiefly, the United Nations (UN), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the African Union (AU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Council of Europe – and four were located in territories with a special status (Palestine, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Kosovo) (EEAS, 2020). This number of delegations is greater than that of most EU member states, as only Germany with its 153 foreign missions and France with 162 missions have a higher number of diplomatic missions than the EU.² This extensive network of diplomatic missions has turned the EU into a regular member of the *corps diplomatique* around the world in its own right, undoubtedly increasing its visibility as a global actor.

² There are two important differences to take into account when comparing the number of diplomatic missions: first, Germany and France have an extensive network of consulates in larger countries which the EU does not have; and second, the former have embassies in other EU member states, whereas the European Commission has representations in the EU capitals which are not included in the EU delegation network.

THE HYBRID CHARACTER OF THE EU DELEGATIONS

The EU delegations defy the Westphalian notion of sovereignty, as the EU diplomatic missions represent a political union of states and its institutions rather than a nation-state in the traditional understanding of sovereign power (Bruter, 1999; Duquet, 2018). This hybrid character has important implications for the scope of competences that the delegations hold, the sources of authority to act available to them, and the composition of the delegation staff. Despite the EU not having sovereign state power, the EU delegations are recognized as diplomatic missions by their host countries; and although diplomatic relations are not developed on the basis of reciprocity but on the basis of an agreement with the host country (a so-called Establishment Agreement), they are conferred the same kind of privileges and immunities accorded to national diplomatic missions by the Vienna Convention. Through a procedure that replicates the accreditation of national ambassadors taking up their function in a third country capital, EU ambassadors present their credentials to the authorities of the host country upon taking office. Subsequently, EU ambassadors enjoy a status equivalent to their national peers (Wouters and Duquet, 2012, pp. 38–39). Until Brexit, no third country had refused to acknowledge the diplomatic status of an EU ambassador, with the exception of the Trump administration, which in December 2018 abruptly and without any explanation relegated the status of the EU ambassador, David O’Sullivan, to that of a representative of an international organization. The decision was reversed in March 2019, again without any official explanation, as the status of the new EU ambassador, Stavros Lambrinidis, was reverted back to that of a national ambassador (Erlanger, 2019a, 2019b). The United Kingdom (UK) broke with the diplomatic practice when it refused to confer diplomatic status on the EU delegation set up in London after the withdrawal from the EU (Fox, 2021). This decision became a bone of contention with the EU and further deteriorated the relations between the EU and the UK.

Because of the intergovernmental nature of the CFSP, the EU delegations have several principals. The High Representative (HR) is the figurehead of the EEAS tasked to plan, coordinate and implement the CFSP. The treaties gave the office a dual character and charge (its so-called ‘double-hatted’ character) when the HR was given the overall responsibility for the external policies of the EU as Vice-President (VP) of External Affairs of the European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR). As a result of this reform, the EU delegations act on all EU external policies, and therefore also take instructions from the European Commission to implement common European policies, for example, development policy,

humanitarian relief, and EU enlargement. This also means that the delegations are largely staffed by officials from the European Commission. To prevent organizational overlap and confusion between the European Commission and the EEAS, the two adopted an agreement in regard to the EU delegations (European Commission and the EEAS, 2012; European Commission, 2012). This document lays out a number of important principles: (1) the Head of Mission (HoM) of an EU delegation is responsible for all staff, whether they originate from the EEAS, the European Commission or a member state; (2) the HoM receives instructions from the HR/VP, the EEAS and the European Commission; (3) the delegations provide policy reporting for the HR/VP, the President of the European Commission and all relevant commissioners, the EEAS, and the European Commission services; and (4) the delegations offer support to visitors from the EEAS, the European Commission and the European Parliament, as well as provide pre-visit briefings when necessary. To a certain extent, this agreement diffused the tension that had emerged between the European Commission and the EEAS concerning the division of competences and resources in the field. However, in many ways, the delegations still represent a microcosm of the 'double agency' built into the EU foreign and security policy (Henökl, 2014).

The hybrid character of the EU foreign policy is clearly reflected in the staffing of the delegations. In an unprecedented endeavour to build a transnational diplomatic service from scratch, the Lisbon Treaty required the EEAS to be staffed with an equal number of officials from the European Commission, the Council Secretariat and the diplomatic services of the EU member states (TEU, art. 27; Smith, 2015). The recruitment of staff to the EEAS and the delegations from the European Commission and the Council Secretariat was carried out swiftly in the early 2010s, as the directorates general of these bodies already involved in foreign and security policy were all transferred to the EEAS, along with officials from directorates general of development policy, trade, home affairs and justice affairs. The recruitment of diplomats from the diplomatic services of the member states took longer and was associated with uncertainty for national diplomats concerning the prospects of career moves between European and national civil services (Spence, 2012). However, in the EEAS Human Resources Report of 2014, it was reported that a third of the EEAS senior (administrator) staff were composed of diplomats from the member states (EEAS, 2015); evidence that member states have come to appreciate the significance of European diplomacy, which has resulted in more competition for the top jobs in the EU delegations, in particular for the position of HoM (Duke, 2014; Di Vita, 2020). For the EU delegations, this dual agency implies that their staff originate from the EEAS, the diplomatic services of the member states and, even more importantly, the European Commission. At the end of 2017, the EU delegations were staffed with 3016 officials (935 senior staff

and 630 administrative staff) from the EEAS and seconded national experts and local agents, and 3616 officials from the European Commission (EEAS, 2018a, 2018b). The exact composition of the staff of specific delegations varies with the nature of their work.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EU DELEGATIONS

The responsibilities of the delegations are briefly outlined in the 2010 Council decision to set up the EEAS (TEU, 32 and 35; TFEU, 221; Council of the EU, 2010), which stipulates that the delegations assist the HR/VR and the EEAS to carry out EU foreign policy on the ground, in cooperation with the diplomatic missions of member states, and represent the EU in third country capitals and international organizations. These brief provisions in the treaties and the Council document hide a much larger and more complex picture of what precisely the EU delegations do and how they operate. Simply put, the delegations exercise many traditional diplomatic tasks in a manner similar to national embassies and in accordance with diplomatic practice (Duquet, 2018). The main tasks of EU delegations include representation, observation, reporting, and promoting friendly relations with the host country, which they carry out with the help of the traditional diplomatic toolbox. They therefore constitute the eyes, ears and mouths of the European Commission and the EEAS in the country where they are located (Balfour and Raik, 2013).

The functions and tasks of the EU delegations are not dissimilar to those of national foreign services, but in a manner different to them, vary according to the scope of the EU external policies, which are conditioned on the competences transferred to the EU institutions by the treaties. Another aspect that has a significant impact on the role that the EU delegations can play on the ground has to do with the number of member states present in different regions of the world, including countries in Africa where only a handful of member states are present and the delegations' role on the ground is significant. This is in contrast to the so-called bilateral capitals such as Washington, Moscow and Beijing, where all member states are present and the stakes of national foreign policy are high, and therefore the interaction between the EU delegation and the national embassies is more complex. On this basis, the EU delegation activities fall into four categories mirroring different types of relationships that the EU has forged around the world.

First, the EU delegations are responsible for relations with developing countries, especially the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states, by building on the legacy of the former European Commission delegations. The EU has a strong presence in the developing countries in Africa and Asia, and still more than one-third of all EU delegations are located in Africa (Helly et al., 2014; Carbone and Keijzer, 2016). They have the upstream and downstream

responsibility to implement the EU's multiannual development cooperation programme (Helly et al., 2014). That is, the delegations feed information to the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) ahead of the European Commission's work on programme planning, and take responsibility for the follow-up and evaluation of specific programmes and projects. The delegations ensure the disbursement of aid and other tasks that involve the day-to-day management of EU development policy. In addition, they take a leading role in the coordination on the ground of EU development assistance in cooperation with the development agencies of EU member states.

Second, the EU delegations are responsible for maintaining relations with countries of the Western Balkans and Turkey, which are negotiating to become members of the EU. Here, the EU delegations primarily work in the enlargement process as they have to consider the special responsibility of the European Commission in this area (Council of the EU, 2010). That is, the EU delegations have very close contacts with host country authorities regarding the reforms necessary to comply with the EU *acquis* ahead of accession. As a consequence, they have specific influence over domestic affairs of the candidate countries, especially through the EU annual country reports. These delegations are mainly staffed with officials from the European Commission (Terzi, 2018).

Third, the EU delegations are responsible for the international and regional organizations to which the EU is accredited, and for coordinating joint EU responses on issues or points of negotiation under way. Because of the different areas of multilateral cooperation – for example, international trade under the WTO, public health under the World Health Organization (WHO), and international security policy and other topics on the agenda of the UN – the EU delegations have varying means at their disposal to coordinate a response from the EU member states.

Fourth, the EU delegations are responsible for activities geared towards traditional diplomacy of representation and promotion of European interests in capitals of regional or great powers, for example, Tokyo, Seoul, Canberra, Ottawa, Washington, Beijing and Moscow. The EU member states are especially sensitive regarding their presence in these capitals, and therefore less willing to let EU delegations play an important role. In particular, the larger EU member states guard the prerogatives of their bilateral relations with host countries and the contacts that have been established over many years. For smaller EU member states, however, the EU delegations play an important role in conveying information and providing access to contacts in the host country which they would otherwise not reach (Maurer and Raik, 2018).

The promotion of the national interest, normally the main duty of national ambassadors, is more problematic for the EU as many European interests are

derived from the norms and principles expressed in the founding treaties. Subsequently, when delegations promote the protection of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, they risk falling foul of another cardinal diplomatic principle: the non-intervention in the domestic affairs of the host state. Nevertheless, the EU often looks for ways around host country sensitivities through strength in numbers. In Washington and Beijing, for example, it has become customary for the EU delegation to initiate a joint presentation to national authorities of a *démarche* against the death penalty with the support of the EU member states embassies (EU MS 1; EU delegation 2). Another problem area for the EU delegations is the protection of European citizens, as they have very few, if any, competences in the area of consular affairs. The issue has been discussed on several occasions, especially in relation to those member states that lack diplomatic presence in certain places where an EU delegation is located. Heretofore, the member states have been reluctant to grant the EU, and therefore the EU delegations, the competence to carry out consular tasks (Duquet, 2018). Nevertheless, the EU delegations support EU member state missions in the protection of EU citizens in times of crisis, through coordinated approaches that have proven important, for example, during the COVID-19 pandemic when the EU delegations organized joint evacuations of EU citizens (Bengtsson, 2021).

THE COORDINATION OF EU FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY ON THE GROUND

EU foreign policy is not actualized before it hits the ground in third countries or international organizations. However, implementing EU foreign policy is more complex than simply conveying EU official statements or handing over a *démarche* to a host country, as it involves the complex undertaking of policy coordination. Concretely, the coordination of EU diplomatic projection between the EU delegation and the embassies of EU member states involves four broad tasks: sharing of knowledge about EU external policies and the position taken by the host country in regard to EU policy; formulating a unison diplomatic language vis-à-vis third countries, primarily through the dissemination of ‘lines to take’ on specific issues; conducting diplomatic representations towards host country authorities; and organizing joint action in terms of public outreach and communication.

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EU FOREIGN POLICY ON THE GROUND

In the last ten years, the implementation of EU foreign policy has taken more distinct forms. Working methods and practices of consultation and coordina-

tion have been established to the extent that even in the three capitals where member states want to retain a strong national presence and close bilateral contacts (that is, Washington, Moscow and Beijing), the EU diplomatic presence has become a standing feature.

The work of the delegations is shaped by the competences of the EU institutions in specific fields, which has given rise to a few cardinal principles shaping daily working practices on the ground. First, the EU delegations are responsible for explaining policies that fall within the remit of the EU – of which trade policy is the most significant – to host country authorities, with the member states taking a more passive role. Second, in regard to foreign and security policy, the EU delegations initiate action only if there is an agreed EU position in the form of a common strategy, decision or statement. Third, EU policy is not ‘made’ in third country capitals in the sense that there are negotiations between the EU member states over the content and scope of policy, as this has already been settled in Brussels. These principles take the form of practical knowledge that European diplomats need to acquire, serve to delineate the boundary between European and national foreign policy, and limit the risk of disagreement from Brussels complicating the coordination abroad. That is, the power of precedence (that is, to follow agreed EU policy) is strong, and guides the practice of coordination.

Before the Lisbon Treaty, the EU delegations and the activities of the member states embassies were not particularly intertwined in major third country capitals, as each looked after and acted upon their own policy preferences. In these localities, the European Commission delegations tended to adopt a service-oriented approach to EU diplomacy (Bruter, 1999). The roles assigned to the EU delegations and the member state embassies gradually became clearer after the Lisbon Treaty, and few turf battles have been reported in third country capitals. Nevertheless, the EU delegations around the world continue to be careful not to ‘step on the toes’ of EU member states (Maurer and Raik, 2018).

At the end of the 2010s, however, even in capitals where ‘bilateral’ diplomacy is pursued by the member states such as Washington and Beijing, the acceptance of and support to the CFSP has become surprisingly strong. Member state diplomats have grown more aware of the importance to support the EU in their consultations with host country officials. In a more ominous international climate (for example, the fall-out concerning Brexit and President Trump’s antagonistic stance towards the EU), EU member state diplomats consciously and by common accord saw the need to defend the EU’s actions, policies and positions. In Washington, an EU member state diplomat made the following observation: ‘[T]here is a very strong anti-EU angle in the current [Trump] administration, which forces us to push back when they criticize the European Union’ (EU MS 5). Likewise, in capitals of antagonistic

states, chiefly Beijing and Moscow, the support that a united European stance provides is considered important (Maurer and Raik, 2018; EU MS 6).

PRACTICES OF COOPERATION AND COORDINATION

The hybrid character of EU foreign policy puts its mark on the practice of interaction between the EU delegation and member state embassies. EU member state diplomats characterize this complex interaction as hierarchical, although flexible and easy-going. They stress that coordination and cooperation are voluntary, but at the same time associate coordination and cooperation with a strong sense of duty. Nevertheless, the coordination surrounding EU foreign policy does not preclude them from engaging in bilateral relations with the host country, as this is seen as a fact of life of a national diplomat and an innate quality of EU diplomacy. How they balance projecting national and European interests is something that, in their view, a seasoned diplomat knows how to do (EU MS 4; EU MS 5).

Since 2010, a number of formal and informal practices of coordination have been established to guide the coordination of EU foreign policy abroad. Its most noteworthy aspect is the extensive interaction between officials at the EU delegation and member state embassies, on multiple levels and in many ways reminiscent of the hierarchical decision-making in Brussels. The coordination follows a pyramidal structure with the HoMs at the top meet to discuss issues that have been prepared at the lower levels. Typically, the ambassadors meet once a month for either breakfast or lunch, usually at the EU ambassador's residence. Since the Lisbon Treaty, the EU ambassador holds the chair, with the ambassador of the member state holding the rotating EU presidency sitting next to him or her at the table. Next down from the ambassador's level is the deputy chiefs of mission (DCMs) meeting. This body is where the real business of EU coordination is conducted. The DCMs prepare the agenda of the HoMs' meeting, sort out issues that have arisen in the groups beneath them, and discuss upcoming visits of key officials from the EU institutions in Brussels and member state governments. They also decide whether a problem in the EU's relations with the host country needs the attention of the ambassadors, in which case it is moved to the HoM level. The DCM group meets three times per month in most third countries and international organizations. The meetings are chaired by the deputy of the EU delegation, who is also in charge of drawing up the agenda. Below HoMs and DCMs, many expert groups meet regularly, typically once a month. These groups, which can be up to 15 sectoral areas, include counsellors with a standing role in the embassy connected to a particular policy area, for example, political, economic or military affairs, and trade, science, technology, environment, culture and tourism. In addition to these regular groups, in some places like-minded officials at the member

state embassies have set up specific thematic groups to exchange points of view and share information on topics of mutual interest (for example, the Russian affairs group in Washington). These groups form quite spontaneously. At the same time, they tend to follow established patterns of cooperation among the member states, for example, the United Kingdom, Germany and France and the EEAS (the E3/EU) in connection to the Iran nuclear agreement, or those with a common point of view such as the Visegrad group. Any diplomat of the EU member states can join the thematic groups and a representative of the EU delegation is always invited. Such ad hoc groups favour the larger embassies as they have more experts and staff are not spread as thinly over policy areas. Consequently, diplomats from the larger EU member states often take the lead in setting up these thematic groups.

These recurring meetings among European and national diplomats provide the backbone to the dense networks of coordination in third countries and international organizations. The mode of interaction is geared towards information-sharing, exchange of views and collaboration on current issues. Coordination is often linked to the representation of European interests with host authorities, and efforts to reach out to elite circles and the general public in order to project the EU and European affairs more widely. The EU delegation has a particular responsibility to keep the member state diplomats updated on developments in Brussels concerning EU policy, especially when it involves the host country. The member state ambassadors are also briefed on the outcome of the visits of high-ranking office holders of the EU institutions with members of the host country's government. Member state diplomats find these regular updates helpful as they provide knowledge which is useful in their contacts with host country authorities. Overall, the EU delegation is considered 'very valuable by the member states, especially from a knowledge and information perspective' (EU MS 6). Member state embassies increasingly ask for and receive common speaking points, the so-called 'lines to take', which are used in bilateral contacts with host country authorities. Some EU diplomats believe this flow of information to be uneven, as it is more extensive from the EU delegation to the embassies than the other way around. One EU ambassador admits that he sometimes chides his national counterparts: '[W]hy am I the only one sharing?' (EU delegation 3). This question epitomizes the central role of the EU delegation and the strong precedence of agreed EU policy. It seems that the exchange is more equitable on the deputy level. It is a moot point whether this is due to the ingrained diplomatic reflex of gathering information, as withholding information is stronger among the ambassadors as they represent their countries abroad, compared to the deputy heads of mission, who are more intensively involved in coordinating EU policy.

Formally, the EU delegations are tasked with representing EU policy to host country authorities. This can take the form of representations, *démarches*

and other kinds of action, such as in the United States (US) where the EU delegation and the member state embassies have a standing collaboration on *démarche* to protest the death penalty. As a general rule, the member states are invited to join the EU delegation when an official representation is made, but more often they decide to sign the *démarche* rather than join the EU ambassador. Increasingly, however, when a member state has a specific interest, it tends to join the EU delegation in all consultations with the host country concerning the topic; for example, when preparing to host a major international conference, such as the COP25 follow-up conference in Madrid 2019 (EU MS 2). The EU delegations also assist smaller member state embassies to establish contacts with the host country authorities, especially to reach high-ranking officials with whom they otherwise would not have been granted a meeting. Contacts are also established by inviting host country ministers or high officials to the EU delegation in a meeting with the HoMs or the DCMs; a form of consultation that tends to be appreciated by the host country officials as they then meet with many European states.

Increasingly the EU delegations and embassies of member states join forces in projecting the EU and its policies in host countries. This joint advocacy has to do with the increasing importance of conducting public diplomacy and reaching out to the general public in ways that were formerly not customary, including on social media. Joint actions highlight EU initiatives or policies, such as climate change, or issues rooted in European norms and values, such as human rights. Outreach initiatives, such as events, conferences and specific actions, can come from either the EU delegation or the embassies of the member states. It has become common practice that member states and the EU delegation attend each other's activities in a show of support and unity. For example, in December 2019, the EU delegation in Beijing issued a statement on the occasion of the 71st anniversary of the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was celebrated at a public event where representatives from all member state embassies were present (EU delegation 2). Another example is the European ambassadors, all dressed in EU T-shirts, who joined forces to pick up rubbish from a beach in Buzan, South Korea, to raise awareness of plastic in the oceans and the EU's actions to deal with this problem (EU delegation 3). Other examples are the joint trips that the EU delegation and some member states undertook during the US presidential primaries to reach out to states beyond the rustbelt (EU MS 5).

Generally, the EU delegation and the member state embassies do their own reporting back to their respective headquarters on the developments in the host country. However, at times the EU delegation takes the initiative to prepare an HoM report, which is sent to the EU institutions and member states in the name of the EU and member states' ambassadors. These reports are appreciated both

in Brussels and in member state capitals as they are seen as representing an authoritative perspective on developments in the host country.

In the last decades, the practices of cooperation and coordination between the EU delegation and the member state embassies have become well established. It has become a fixture for member state diplomats to participate in meetings at the EU delegation and take part in the exchanges of information and consultations. Nonetheless, bilateral foreign policy is still practised, as many member states, especially the larger ones, do not want to replace their bilateral relations with the host country and the diplomatic contacts that have been built up over the years. However, to juxtapose national and European foreign policy seems unproblematic in most cases. Rather, it has become a daily feature of European diplomacy.

A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE OF EU FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

Experienced European diplomats express the view that during the last ten years the atmosphere among EU member states in third country capitals has changed a great deal. EU coordination is now the norm, and the coordination reflex is strong. The onus of making a community of practice emerge around the world resides with the EU ambassador, who must ‘make the member states sing from the same hymn sheet’ (EU delegation 3). The Foreign Affairs Council sets the policy which gives little leeway for the member states to diverge from the EU line. Overall, EU member state diplomats appreciate acting in unison, as it adds clout and importance in third country capitals (see Appendix 3: all interviews in Washington, Beijing, Seoul, 2019).

Even in traditional ‘bilateral’ capitals (for example, Washington and Beijing) there is a marked sense of common purpose among the diplomats of member states, and several stress that they now present themselves as a representative of their respective country as well as ‘as a proud member of the EU’ (EU MS 2). They also emphasize that they advocate the EU line whenever a policy or position is reached (EU MS 4), and express a dual loyalty, identifying both as a citizen of Europe and a citizen of their home country (EU MS 3; EU MS 2). In the US, the Trump administration’s hostile attitude towards the EU acted as a wake-up call and led member states to ‘rethink that it should no longer be only the EU delegation working for the EU but that members should also do their part’ (EU MS 1). The pressure especially on trade led the member states ‘to stick together’ and ‘share joint speaking points’ (EU MS 5). The EU member states also saw the very low level of knowledge about the EU in Washington and beyond as a problem, which prompted them to undertake various joint activities, appearing in the media together, travelling to states as a joint EU delegation, and organizing outreach events. A common view

among member state diplomats in Washington and Beijing is that they must make certain not to be played against each other, which makes it even more important to keep to the agreed EU line.

In general, member state diplomats pointed out that since the policy implemented by Brussels in third country capitals is already accepted, there is no negotiation or dissent. Therefore, the mode of interaction is characterized by consensus among the HoMs and DCMs, and this is normally achieved by keeping each other well informed (see Appendix 3: all interviews in Washington, Beijing and Seoul, 2019). In the same vein, both member state diplomats and the EU delegation are keen to point out that the relations among them are harmonious and characterized by consensus. The participants seem to know informal rules well, and the practices of coordination appear to be clear. The general view is that if a member state is not in agreement with a specific EU policy, it is already well known and seldom repeated in a third country capital (EU MS 2; EU delegation 1), although on the DCM level patterns from Brussels concerning certain member states ‘are repeated’ and ‘need to be handled’ (EU MS 6). Typically, opposing views and attitudes are expressed in ‘silent opposition’, and non-participation in joint action on behalf of the dissenting member states (EU delegation 1). Nevertheless, EU member state diplomats who display ‘an uncooperative behaviour’ in the meetings would find themselves ‘little by little excluded from the group’ (EU MS 1), as such behaviour is seen as a break with the norm of solidarity among the EU and member state diplomats. If ambassadors need to break ranks, they must signal it in clear terms to the others, often by clarifying that the position emanates from the national government, so as to show that they are fulfilling their professional role as a national representative (EU MS 3). In this way, the ambassadors need not break with the group on a personal level. There is a widespread understanding that ambassadors are following instructions received from headquarters:

Everybody has a pretty clear picture of how and where it is important to represent the EU’s common position ... but, of course, we have difference as specific policies are concerned ... some countries are very, very keen on making the point that there is an EU policy, while others may not be that keen. (EU MS 4)

It is considered a clear break of established practice to expose another member state to the host country. Practitioners in Washington speak in terms of an unwritten rule among the member state embassies: ‘Do not go to the US authorities and speak badly of another member state and do not ask the US government about the relations with another EU member state’ (EU MS 1). For example, when the Hungarian ambassador criticized Sweden’s handling of the refugee crisis in 2015 in a speech to Congress by referring to ‘160 000

Muslims coming to Sweden', it drew the ire of the other member states: '[O]ne does not hang out other EU member states in that manner' (EU MS 7). Overall, EU and member state diplomats express clear practical knowledge about where the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable conduct lie.

In general, the EU delegation and member state embassies look after each other in their relations with the host country authorities. In Beijing, Washington and Seoul, the EU delegations look after the interests especially of small and middle-sized member states, which on the whole have a tougher time than the larger EU member states in being recognized by the host country, and may even be bullied by the host country. For a new (and small) member state, such as Croatia, the access that the EU delegation provides to host country authorities in large capitals is invaluable (EU MS 3). In addition, the strength in numbers is important as 'if you have several EU member states on board and all ask for a meeting with the [Trump] administration, and also with the US Congress, then you get the meeting because there is ... more weight, political weight' (EU MS 1; EU MS 3). In Beijing, the EU delegation stresses that it seeks to make sure that China is not singling out specific EU member states by treating them differently: 'China is a different entity that one needs to know how to handle ... one feels as if one is never able to break through the system. Then it is a great asset to have the EU speaking with one voice. EU27 commands respect. 27 member states give weight' (EU MS 6).

The atmosphere in the groups ranging from the HoMs to the expert groups is described invariably as 'very positive, very convivial'; 'very collegial, I would say, very team-oriented. Um, even friendly' (EU delegation 1; EU MS 3). Especially among the DCMs, the atmosphere is described as positive: 'Super good! It is really a team ... We meet regularly and you really bond with our colleagues' (EU MS 2). The HoMs describe themselves as 'a very tight group ... in which personal connections play a big role', although they emphasize sharing information and openness in their exchange of views more than their efforts to coordinate their actions and statements (EU MS 4; EU MS 5). To instil a good atmosphere and trust among European diplomats in Washington, the EU delegations organize trips both for the ambassadors and for the DCMs.

Personal characteristics are important for diplomats. Reflecting on what characterizes a 'good' diplomat, practitioners stress the importance of knowledge, both general and specific, including the know-how of diplomatic practices. In general, the HoMs and DCMs stationed in key third country capitals are very seasoned diplomats, as they usually have held several previous postings before this assignment, and therefore share many characteristics. Nevertheless, practitioners contend that sometimes member state diplomats display national characteristics in the sense that their behaviour corresponds with their home governments' attitudes about the EU. In addition, the length of their EU membership appears to make a difference. For example, views are

expressed to the effect that diplomats for Belgium or Luxemburg, which are small countries but with a long EU history, coordinating within EU foreign policy remit comes more naturally than for diplomats from newer member states (EU delegation 1; EU MS 5). In addition, many diplomats from both the EU delegation and member state embassies who have a previous working experience in Brussels, either in EU decision-making or even in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), have a much stronger sense of familiarity with the EU and readiness to take part in the coordination of CFSP on the ground. EU ambassadors believe it is essential to have deep knowledge of EU policy development to gain the respect from their member state peers (EU delegation 3). Clearly, previous experience with European foreign policy-making and knowledge of diplomatic practices makes the transition from one locality or setting to another easier.

The EU and member state diplomats recognize the importance of symbolism. In Washington, where the Trump administration had a very dismissive attitude towards the EU, steps to display unity in connection to cultural expressions were taken. For example, it has become a practice to play the European anthem right after the national anthem at member states' yearly national celebrations. Also, member states now actively help to prepare Europe Day celebrations and make a point of being present. These kinds of demonstrations of European unity are largely prompted by a host country's hostility towards the EU, which incentivized embassies of member states to stand up for the EU through this symbolic action.

CONCLUSION: AN EMERGING EUROPEAN COMMUNITY OF DIPLOMATIC PRACTICES

In the last decade, the coordination of EU foreign policy on the ground in third country capitals has become part of the everyday life of European diplomats. Generally, they recognize the value in acting in unison, and even standing up for EU policy with host country authorities. However, this does not mean that member state embassies have abandoned their pursuit of bilateral foreign policy, which is accepted by all, including the EU delegations, if it is carried out appropriately and at no cost to other EU member states. Nonetheless, the conduct of national foreign policy is now circumscribed by a number of diplomatic practices learned and transmitted through an emerging European diplomatic community. On the ground, there is a strong coordination reflex, primarily by ensuring a continuous information flow between the EU delegation and the embassies of member states. Increasingly, there is also a willingness to adopt common speaking points when interacting with host country officials. There is awareness of the value of solidarity among EU member state diplomats stationed abroad, which on a minimal level concerns rules such as

supporting other member states in the face of criticism and pressure from a host country, and not seeking favour with the host country at the expense of another member state. In addition, member state diplomats have a growing realization of the importance to convey that they speak for the EU as well as for their country in their consultations with the host country. This awareness has grown stronger in the face of outright hostility of the former Trump administration, and the blatant attempts by China and Russia to play EU member states against one another. In addition, the long shadow of Brexit with its existential threat to the EU has had an effect on member states' attentiveness to keeping its diplomatic community together. Contrary to predictions, a hostile external environment has brought EU member states closer together, and conscious steps on the ground among European diplomats have been taken to encourage cohesiveness among member states.

Recurring meetings have become part of the day-to-day coordination and implementation of EU policy. They have become a defining feature of what it means to be an EU member state diplomat in third country capitals, and provide the backbone of the EU community of practice. Beyond the concrete advantages such as more extensive information and better access to host country authorities (especially important for small and medium-sized countries), the support of the EU delegation and other EU member states provides a sense of security and strength in hostile environments: '[T]he more EU countries [are] on board ... the stronger you are, your message is stronger, you're more credible' (EU MS 3). Diplomats are also aware of the impact that 'sticking together' has on other like-minded liberal countries under similar pressure, as a form of jealousy over 'all this coordination going on' (EU MS 1). Although the EU delegations and member state embassies are in no way merging in a physical or functional sense, a relatively strong community of practice seems to be emerging, especially in third countries where the environment is hostile.

For diplomats in the field, the co-existence of European and national diplomacy (that is, bilateral diplomacy) is obvious and seen as a normal fact of life for a diplomat. At the same time, because effective coordination of EU foreign policy is becoming increasingly important, many formal and informal rules and practices have been created to manage the co-existence of national and European foreign policy. Because embassies and the EU delegations deal with policy positions agreed upon in Brussels, the expectation is that member states should comply. In the field, member states that still do not want to adhere to the policy should at a minimum not pursue a contrary policy, as this would be seen as disloyal; therefore, they should refrain from participating in meetings and stay out of *démarches*. Member states expressing dissent in Brussels will most often not stop a joint action being taken abroad: '[T]hey will never say no; they prefer to stay silent' (EU MS 5). For this reason, many dimensions of the coordination, such as participation in expert and thematic groups, are vol-

untary. Obviously, there is no check on member state diplomats' actions or the nature of their interaction with host authorities, and therefore there is also no illusion that member states shape their bilateral contact with the host authorities in the way that they think will be most beneficial for their home countries.

European diplomats display a mix of reflective and unreflective practices as they go about implementing EU foreign policy abroad. Some of these have become the backbone of EU foreign policy-making in the form of assumed practical knowledge. Clearly, the close interaction between the EU delegation and other embassies of EU member states forms the background to what it means to be a diplomat from an EU member state, and influences how these diplomats view the world. Important in this now established environment is not only how they interact, but also what they coordinate. The power of precedence is strong concerning the substance of coordination, which is the EU foreign policy created in Brussels. This adds a sense of predictability concerning the content of coordination, and what is expected to be achieved in terms of output in the field: '[T]here are issues on which the finding of common ground takes time and effort ... But the good thing about the European Union is that once it is there, it stays for ever' (EU MS 2). This helps the EU and member states' diplomats identify the boundary between EU member states' bilateral diplomacy and EU foreign policy. On another level, there are also clear lines not to cross in the form of behaviour if an EU member state diplomat wants to be considered a trustworthy and reliable member of the European diplomatic community.

Although diplomats in the field like to emphasize that they are merely reiterating policy positions agreed in Brussels, they do have more agency than they normally admit in shaping how EU policy is conveyed to host country authorities and the public. As representatives of EU member states, they are aware of their significant influence in developing the impression of the EU in the host country. Therefore, member state diplomats (for example, those in Washington and Beijing) display a high degree of representational knowledge about their role and status. In hostile host countries, the member state diplomats realize the cost to their own country as well as to the EU overall if they do not also speak for the EU and defend the policies created in Brussels. According to the diplomats themselves, this has not always been the case, but the consequences of not standing up for the EU abroad have in recent years become more obvious, and have led to a more conscious awareness of the problem and a change in attitude.