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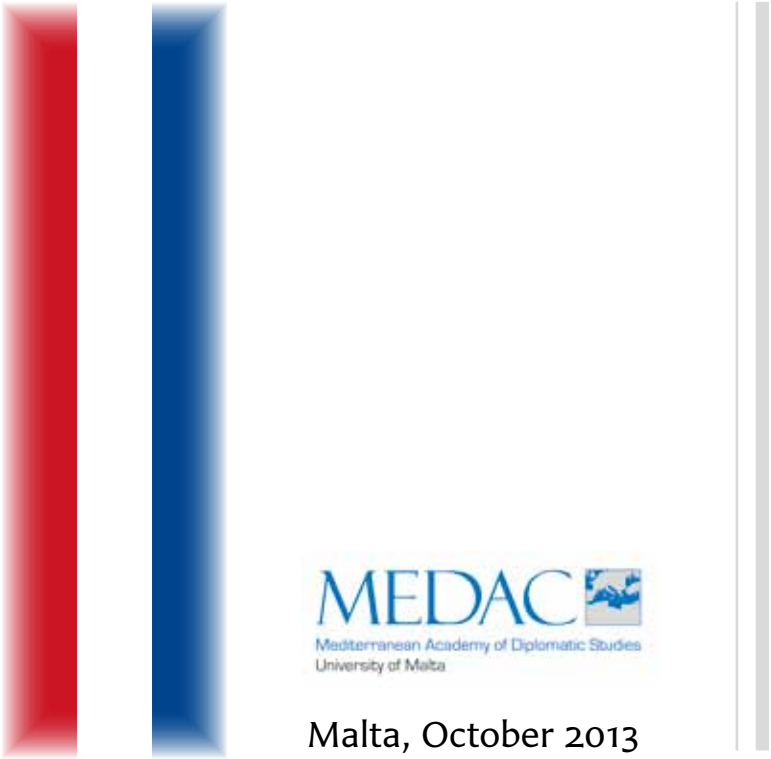
Foreign Policy and The Cultural Factor
A Research and Education Agenda

Peter Ester and *Pieter van Nispen*



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A Research and Education Agenda

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Working together across national borders demands dealing with different cultures. Cultural competence, consisting of understanding beliefs, values, and behavioural practices of other cultures, is a prerequisite for effective co-operation across cultures. It reflects knowledge, skills and capabilities, which are indispensable in disciplines such as international relations, foreign policy, and diplomacy. This statement sounds so simple that it is nearly an axiom. However, systematic academic research in this field is relatively recent and limited in scope (mostly related to business and public opinion). Although the relationships between the study of international relations, foreign policy, diplomacy, and culture may intuitively be understood but they are not subject of a structured research paradigm. Theoretical reflection is almost absent: the literature on the impact of the cultural factor in the field of international relations, foreign policy, and diplomacy is scarce and fragmented and does not signify a mature and dynamic area of academic interest. Now and again a scholarly paper appears dealing with a specific issue but an advanced framework for understanding these relations has not yet been developed. Lacking such a framework the politicians and the civil servants involved often act upon intuitive and received wisdoms. This is a serious omission, particularly in times of severe cross-national conflicts and tensions. But it is also true for the day-to-day diplomatic metier: aspirant diplomats are not systematically trained in understanding and coping with cross-cultural differences. This will affect their diplomatic effectiveness. Having substantial cultural competences – at the macro, meso, and micro level as well – is essential for the proficiency and professionalization of the disciplines of international relations, foreign policy, and diplomacy.

One may only guess why the interaction between international relations, foreign policy, diplomacy, and culture is getting such limited attention in academia and in diplomatic training. This may be due to the complex nature of the relationships, the difficulties of turning the rather abstract and multidimensional concept of culture into applied theories and models, or the specific demands of an interdisciplinary approach. Indeed, discussions with a series of professors of international relations in the Netherlands clearly demonstrated that addressing the impact of the cultural factor in their field of expertise was believed to be beyond their prime research and teaching scope, although acknowledging on a personal level the importance of the subject.

However, our own cross-national and cross-cultural research over the last three decades makes us conclude that the concept of culture has been sufficiently developed – both theoretically and empirically – to enable a closer look at how culture impacts international relations, foreign policy, and diplomacy. This paper summarises our main conceptualisations and empirical findings (with a specific focus on Mediterranean countries) and its cross-cultural similarities and dissimilarities.

More explicitly, this paper advocates that:

- culture should be a central theme in the study of international relations
- culture should be a focal point in the development of foreign policy
- diplomats and civil servants involved in foreign policy should have substantial cross-cultural competence
- the development of cross-cultural competence should be a key skill in diplomatic training
- culture and foreign policy should become a research area in its own right

This paper is directed to foreign policy specialists in all their different colours and for whom we do not need to explain the nuts and bolts of international relations, foreign policy, and diplomacy. For that reason the prime focus is on the cross-cultural dimension and how it applies to the occupational fields of interest and activities of this target group.

Most relevant research is done to clarify the impact of culture on international trade and how to deal with the consequences and hence, it will be used to quite some degree. The cultural competence theorem is basically the same in the public and the private sphere but its application differs. Furthermore, states and international business are quite interconnected as states set the framework for business and enable trade and investment.

The role of business in studying culture and in particular finding ways and means of dealing with differences and the development of a cultural competence should not be underestimated. It actually represents the fourth phase in the study of culture. Its beginnings may be found in the 19th century with the role of missionaries in "civilising the world" and the emergence of cultural anthropology.[1] A hundred years ago sociologists got involved in the study of culture because culture was considered to reflect the collective behaviour of social groups, in itself the domain

1 E.g. Tylor, E. (1920 [1871]) *Primitive Culture* New York, J.P. Putnam's Sons

of sociology.[2] Around the Second World War the same happened with psychology with the argument that culture is based on patterns of thinking[3]. From the 1960s onwards international business asked for a more practical approach, a theory or model which would allow the comparison of national cultures in such a way that the outcome would give handles on how to effectively cope with those differences.[4] The next logical step in this development is the study of culture in relation to the functioning of the nation state. This is the more compelling within the European Union where 28 individual member states with quite different cultural backgrounds need to cooperate and integrate its economic policies.

Structure of the Paper

In this introduction we have outlined the vital importance of the role of culture (i.e.: the cultural factor) in the field of international relations, foreign policy, and diplomacy and the professional need for cultural competence among its practitioners. The next step is to explain how we define and understand these core concepts and how we perceive its mutual relations.

Using these perceptions we will then apply these concepts in a more specific and in a more general way. The former deals with the preparations of a diplomat for a new posting abroad: how to obtain a cultural understanding of the next host country as a *basso continuo* of the concert of activities to come. This micro-level application shows the need for cultural competence of actors involved in foreign policy or diplomacy. This competence goes way beyond the mere phenomenon of intercultural or cross-cultural communication. Secondly, we will show some cultural differences between EU and Mediterranean states – based on cross-national research - and highlight consequences for foreign

2 See: Weber, M. (1920/1988), *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie I. Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*. Tübingen, Mohr/Siebeck

3 Defining when psychology got structurally involved in culture proves rather difficult. On the one end of the scale relevant applications of psychology during the Second World War for military purposes are mentioned. On the other end Valsiner, J. (2000, 2013 *Culture and Human Development, An Introduction*, London, Sage Publications) states that by using the existence of methodology as a yardstick cultural developmental psychology only exists for just over 20 years.

4 See Hofstede, G. (2001), *Culture's Consequences*. Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations.

policy and diplomacy. This second, macro-level application indicates the need of integrating cross-cultural differences in the study of international relations.

The two applications clearly demonstrate a significant gap between the present situation and the more desirable one. On the one hand the existing understanding of the concept of culture may be used for a considerable improvement of the training of diplomats, as well as a more balanced development of foreign policy. This also includes in-service training and the assessment of cultural competences as part of diplomats' performance evaluation. On the other hand we need more information, either through more focussed research or by processing already available information for the specific purposes this paper advocates.

Concepts and their Interplay

In this section we will first outline our approach of the four basic concepts of international relations, foreign policy, diplomacy, and culture and how they affect one another. Secondly, we will elaborate on the concept of culture, primarily because it constitutes such a neglected element in this context. A better understanding of culture will enhance the professionalization and sophistication of the disciplines of international relations, foreign policy, and diplomacy. In view of the cultural importance of the EU for its member and neighbour states we will also briefly reflect on some consequences of our ideas on the cultural factor in that multi-nation context.

International Relations

The study of international relations focuses on the common denominators of the relations between states, independent of time, place, persons and circumstances.[5] To obtain such an understanding research is done into specific events, foreign policies, the role of international organisations, and the role of diplomacy or specific aspects (e.g. funeral diplomacy, gender influences). The outcomes of these studies are compared to distil common dimensions.

5 Koch, K., Soetendorp, R.B. & Staden, A. van (Eds.) (1987: 8) *Internationale betrekkingen, Theorieën en benaderingen* (International relations, Theories and approaches), Aula, Utrecht

By repeating this process under different conditions the key principles of the relations between states should emerge.

Culture is hardly ever included in the study of international relations and to a (very) modest degree in the study of diplomacy. In our opinion however, culture is one of the key determinants. If culture is defined as a way of distinct thinking and acting (see below), then the cultural background and the cultural self-identification of the actors involved impact international relations. Culture - directly and indirectly – determines the parameters actors consciously or unconsciously apply in designing and executing foreign policy. Culture frames the way actors and agencies define foreign policy imperatives and interests. From this statement it logically follows that culture ought to be an integral element and cornerstone of the study of international relations and foreign policy. The shortest way to define culture is that culture is an institution[6]. For a sociologist an institution is a way of thinking, acting, and feeling. Implicitly an institution is linked to a group and hence, culture as well. Because a group or collective may vary quantitatively, and may range from specific (a family, the students in a master programme), to being abstract (all men in the Netherlands, all Catholics), one can observe an enormous scope of overlapping cultures. Every person is a unique member of different groups and hence different cultures. Furthermore, an institution like culture is always linked to a specific place and time.

Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is much more specific than international relations. The latter stresses general principles, the former national interests. Foreign policy underlines what is basic for a particular state and its citizens: it highlights fundamental values, beliefs, and norms. The interests of other states may be taken into account, in particular when considering ways and means of reaching one's own objectives, but are of a different order. Foreign policy in essence is about maintaining and improving the position of a state in the international arena[7]. Looking at foreign policy through cultural glasses it becomes clearer that culture has a major weight on the definition, perception, and shaping of national interests. Again, our patterns of

6 Statement by Vroom, C., sociologist and former professor of cross-cultural management at Maastricht University.

7 The term 'international arena' has been coined by Van Schendelen, M., professor of political science at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam.

thinking direct what we find important (and why) and to what degree. This may be influenced for instance by the geographical position of the state in question but how that position is perceived and what its consequences might be, is directed by (national) cultural parameters. For example: "Small Powers tend to rely more than others on non-coercive means of inter-state influence, particularly in their dealing with superior Powers. Instead of military or economic threats, they are likely to choose legal, moral and intellectual persuasion, and tend to rely more on multilateral means than many larger Powers. Thus, many Small Powers are inclined to conduct foreign policy in an idealistic style."[8]

Foreign policy is more than decision-making and policy implementation. "(…) anyone who wants to understand foreign policy must be as concerned with the *making* of policy (the decision or policy process) as they are with the *substance* of the policy."[9] This results in looking at foreign policy as a system. The foreign policy system may then be understood as either a subsystem of the international system, as a black box "into which stimuli flow and responses somehow emerge", and as a framework for research[10]. Culture is one these stimuli, an element of the black box and integrated in the responses. "The *social structure and culture* of a country has a strong influence on foreign policy though that influence may not be felt directly in day to day decision-making. Social structure, however, provides a framework of values which policy-makers are likely to share. Nationalism, Islam, fundamentalist Christianity, welfare state social democracy or a distinct racial identity, all constitute frameworks of ideas which make demands on policy-makers."[11]

Foreign policy and culture are interlinked; foreign policy reflects societal values. "(…) foreign policy expresses certain values to which

8 Voorhoeve, J.J.C. (1985: 312) *Peace, Profits and Principles, a Study of Dutch Foreign Policy*, Martinus Nijhoff, Leiden

9 White, B: Analysing Foreign Policy: Problems and Approaches, in: Clarke, M. & White, B. (Eds.) (1989: 15) *Understanding Foreign Policy, the Foreign Policy Systems Approach*, Aldershot, Edward Elgar Publishing

10 White, o.c., 22

11 Farrands, C.: The Context of Foreign Policy Systems: Environment and Structure, in: Clarke & White, o.c., 88.

we, as a society, attach great significance (…) The values and interests that underlie foreign policy often coincide with each other, even tough, in certain cases, we may be faced with difficult choices. In many components of policy, both values and interest place a role. (…) Development cooperation is an expression of solidarity with the poor but is also motivated by the thought that a world with more than a billion people living in absolute poverty cannot remain stable in the long term."[12]

If the national interests of one state are determined by its national culture, then the national interests of another state are equally (not necessarily to the same degree) determined by its national culture. Working together or fighting one another in the international arena of states – the focal point of foreign policy – may then be considered as the interaction of national cultures with all kinds of commonalities and differences. To strengthen its hand a government should have a thorough understanding how its own national culture influences its foreign policy and how that affects the national cultures of other states. Both aspects have to be taken into account explicitly to enhance the effectiveness of foreign policy. The study of the role of culture in international business is a clear example of the need for taking cultural differences into consideration (trans-cultural communication). This cross-national perspective on the role of the cultural factor implies that national foreign policy actors need to have the right competences to realistically judge and relate the national 'self' and 'other' cultural values, beliefs, norms, and behavioural practices. A correct understanding of cross-cultural similarities and dissimilarities - and its guiding meanings - is crucial for the effectiveness of foreign policy. Failures in cultural understandings come at a high price.

Diplomacy

Diplomacy encompasses the implementation of foreign policy and the supply of information for its further development. This is realised through the representation of one state (sending state) by diplomats in another state (host state). Traditionally, diplomacy may be divided into five areas: political reporting, economic co-operation, press and cultural affairs, assistance on the level of the state (e.g. development co-operation or assistance with the transformation in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia), and assistance

12 Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1995: 22) *The Foreign Policy of the Netherlands, a Review*, The Hague.

on the level of individual citizens (consular affairs, such as visiting own nationals in prison in the host country, replacing lost or stolen passports, registering births of own nationals, helping own nationals abroad in situations like disasters et cetera). Due to the mass media and the development of IT the general mission of political reporting (on the host country) and of press and cultural affairs (information on the sending state) became less prominent and have been partially replaced by more specific assignments. On the other hand, economic diplomacy (reporting on economic developments in the host country, promoting trade from the sending state to the host country and facilitating investments from the host country to the sending state) is rapidly gaining momentum, a development, which is clearly reinforced by the international economic developments of the last few years. This trend in diplomacy accentuates the additional importance of connecting international trade and the cross-cultural perspective as remarked in the introduction.

Diplomacy is a necessary but insufficient condition for acquiring sophisticated cross-cultural knowledge. Necessary as an input for the understanding of cultural differences on the level of a state, but more needs to be done. In developing foreign policy a government cannot solely rely on its diplomats for cultural input but needs to have a more structured comprehension of cross-cultural diversity and its consequences. This requires much wider and deeper expertise at 'headquarters' and its application in the various strategic and operational foreign policy activities. This argument may be illustrated by the experience of the state's diplomats in the host country (or target country of foreign policy). The underlying assumption is that diplomats in their day-to-day relations with the people and the government officials of the host country develop a thorough understanding of the country's culture. However, most diplomats are not trained in cross-cultural concepts and theories, in how to apply cross-cultural perspectives, and for that reason lack the tools for proper observation and decoding of cultural distinctiveness and for assessing meaning and consequences to cultural idiosyncrasy. Many diplomats, of course, obtain quite an understanding in practice but they do so in a haphazard and non-structured way, i.e. ineffective, time consuming, and not necessarily comprehensive. Acquiring cultural competence, so our argument holds, is the result of informal learning rather than of professional formal diplomatic training.

The relation between diplomacy and culture is rather straightforward. From the perspective of the individual diplomat, diplomacy is mostly an activity done abroad in the interaction with people with a different nationality and culture; next to people with one's own nationality, living in the same

country, including fellow diplomats. Diplomats need to have the right cultural competences for the most effective way of building relations within the host country. This competence encompasses much more than knowing how to communicate with people with a different cultural background as will be outlined below.

One specific aspect of diplomacy is the so-called 'diplomatic culture': the way diplomats behave on the basis of centuries old traditions. Diplomatic culture provided and strengthens diplomats' identity.

Because the vast majority of diplomats from nearly all states are socialized in this diplomatic culture, they know the norms of how to behave between one another as well as in official contacts with the governments of the host countries. However, the network relations of diplomats range much further than these official contacts. Moreover, focusing on diplomatic culture tends to neglect the national backgrounds and cultures of diplomats. In this sense diplomatic culture is a useful concept but it is not sufficient for dealing with the wide variety of cultural aspects a diplomat has to cope wBy way of summary, Figure 1 pictures the pyramid relationship – with an increasing level of detail – between the study of international relations, foreign policy, and diplomacy.

Figure 1: International relations, foreign policy, and diplomacy

Culture

As stated above, international business has driven the concepts of culture as advanced in cultural anthropology, sociology, and psychology towards more practical applications by developing models which explicitly address the impact of the cultural factor in global business environments and practices. This effort is the stepping-stone to our discussion of the effects of national culture on the relations between states. This section goes into the definition of the concept of culture and some practical handles of how to disentangle the cultural factor. This is not an easy task in view of the overwhelming literature on culture and its impact on society and the individual. The conceptualization of culture typically depends on the discipline (e.g. anthropology, sociology, psychology), the school of thought (e.g. cultural studies, psychoanalysis) and the research objectives (e.g. qualitative in-depth research, cross-national survey research). Evidently, an overview of the literature goes beyond the scope of this paper but we will focus on some basic features of culture and the concept of culture that is leading in mainstream cross-cultural research.

Definition and Concept

Looking at hundreds definitions and concepts of culture, six defining elements can be discerned: values and beliefs, thinking and feeling, behaviour, group, time and environment (see Figure 2). Values and beliefs relate to cultural priorities, referring to fundamental convictions and orientations. Thinking and feeling relates to dominant cognitive and affective cultural schemata. Behaviour points at traditions, manners, and rules of conduct that characterise a culture. Group refers to a collective that holds particular cultural values, beliefs, cognitions, feelings, and behavioural patterns. Time and environment, respectively, locate cultural phenomena in specific periods and places. Theoretically one may combine them in one encompassing definition but that would be too broad for practical purposes. A definition that serves both theoretical and applied objectives is the definition by UNESCO: "Culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs."[13]

Figure 2: Elements of culture (*See back page*)

13 UNESCO *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, Paris: 2001

Another approach in getting to grips with culture is developing models, which focus on core elements often by selecting a few principal dimensions. One example is the model of a reversed triangle[14] (Figure 3), originally developed as a summary of the various perspectives on culture and society. The model also proved its practical value in teaching and in training programs dealing with cultural diversity. The guiding notion is a differentiation in cultures according to the size of groups and the corresponding level of analysis. Figure 3 pictures four hierarchical levels of culture: the levels of the state, the organisation, the small group (family, team) and the level of the individual. By clearly distinguishing how culture operates at these four levels one focuses the debate on the impact of the cultural factor - and the required cultural competence – and avoids conceptual ambiguity, theoretical confusion, and promotes practical and proper understanding.

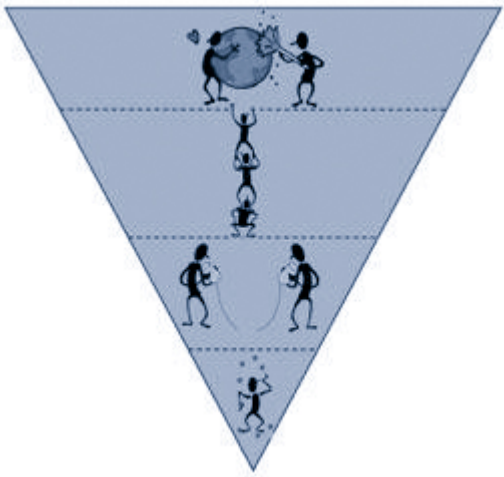

Figure 3: The triangle concept of culture

Individual culture (the unique combination of memberships of dozens of groups) is depicted at the bottom of the triangle. In essence this level represents individual cultural competence: personal skills, values, behaviour, and attitudes. The picture illustrates that proving one's cultural competence and acquiring the right cultural abilities requires training and the right mind set. It is important to note that some balls are on the floor. These represent

14 Nispen, P. van & Stralen, A. van (2009) *Culturele Competentie, de verrijking door verschillen* (Cultural Competence, enrichment through differences), Assen, Van Gorcum and accompanying website (www.culturelecompetentie.vangorcum.nl).

the social mistakes we make by showing inappropriate cultural behaviour. As a child we would be punished, as an adult we may get a remark in our personnel evaluation. Figure 4 shows a simplified representation of individual culture by including some of its personal correlates.[15]

Figure 4: Individual culture (*See back page*)

One level up on the cultural ladder is the small group, e.g. a family or a project team[16]. At this level interpersonal interactions, communication, and group dynamics are added.[17] The individual meets and interacts with other group members, has to clarify his position and role, defend his personal interest, clarify his motives, engages in group discussions, etc. At this second level the individual person is still recognised as such, i.e. a person with good and bad personal habits, likeable or non-likeable, knowledgeable or non-knowledgeable, and other critical characteristics.

The second level from above in the triangle represents the cultures of larger groups, in particular organisational culture (e.g. of a Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an Embassy). The picture shows three people standing on top of one another, representing hierarchy. However horizontal or egalitarian an organisation may be, someone is ultimately responsible, implying that no organisation goes without hierarchy. Nevertheless, authority is not the decisive feature of this level but rather that persons do not count that much as individual personalities. They are actors who fulfil certain functions in reaching the objectives of the group or organisation. The emphasis is on their formal role, not on who they are as a person.

Finally, the top of the reversed triangle visualises culture at the macro-level of the state. People are not recognised as individuals anymore but rather as random numbers in a population, as citizens. The aggregate of these individual counts represents that state. A state in turn consists of many different organisations, small groups, and individuals. The triangle clarifies that culture at the national level is an aggregated concept; a statistical

15 Hoffman, E.M. (1999: 191) *The TOPOI-model, A pluralistic systems-theoretical approach of intercultural communication* (PhD thesis in Dutch with a summary in English)

16 Georgas, J., Berry, J.W., Vijver, F.J.R. van de, Kagitbasi, C. & Poortinga, Y.H. (2006) *Families across Cultures, A 30-Nation Psychological Study*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

17 Donelson R.F. (2006, 4th edition) *Group Dynamics*, Belmont, Thomson Wadsworth

average, which gives an overall idea but which also does not do justice to individual persons. There is neither a one-to-one translation from national culture to individual culture, nor from individual culture to national culture.

These four layers of culture do differ in terms of abstraction and aggregation but they also show similarities. At each level at least two similar processes may be perceived: the search of individuals and groups for identity and certainty. From top to bottom in the triangle identity may be expressed in terms of nationality, work organisation, family, and personality. In the same vein uncertainty may be avoided by adhering to national legislation and cultural prescriptions, to formal and informal employment and employer rules, to behavioural rules learned during upbringing and formative years, and personal values, beliefs, and norms internalised over the life course,

Values & Norms

Values and norms constitute the core of a culture, the cement of a society. They regulate social behaviour, provide identity, and strengthen societal integration. Values are answers to the grand schemes of human existence such as equality, freedom, justice, religion, morality, sexuality, tolerance, and integration. Values according to Kluckhohn are "beliefs about the desirable" and in the same vein Triandis states that "culture is to society what memory is to individuals".[18] Values are deeply rooted beliefs and motivations acquired during one's formative years which explain the human condition and guide behaviour. Values shape and justify human action, they legitimate what is 'good' and what is 'bad'. Parsons defines values as moral beliefs to which people appeal for the ultimate rationales of action and claims that values are the most important elements of social life.[19] Schwartz (1992) describes values as "desirable states, objects, goals, or behaviours, transcending specific situations and applied as normative standards to judge and to choose among alternative modes of behaviour".[20] Values as cultural ideals are always positive, whereas

18 Kluckhohn, C.K. (1951: 395) Values and value orientations in: the theory of action, in Parsons, T. & Shils E. A. (eds.) *Toward a General Theory of Action*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press

Triandis, H. (2004: 29) Dimensions of culture beyond Hofstede, in H. Vinken *et al.* (eds.), *Comparing Cultures. Dimensions of Culture in a Comparative Perspective.* Leiden & Boston, Brill

19 Parsons, T. (1939). *The Structure of Social Action*,. New York, Free Press

20 Schwartz, S.H. (1992) Universals in the content and structure of values: theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries, in: *Advances in Experimental Social*

attitudes or beliefs can be both positive and negative. Values are trans-situational and abstract, they are the fundament of an individual's hierarchy of beliefs. Norms are situation-specific, bound by time and place. They are the application of values in day-to-day reality, the actual expression of values. Norms always refer to concrete rules a person should obey to. A general definition of values may be found in the European Values Study: "Values are deeply rooted dispositions, orientations, or motives guiding people to act or behave in a certain way. They are believed to be more complex, more basic, and more enduring than attitudes, opinions, and preferences".[21] Values - unlike norms – are latent constructs and cannot be measured directly. But they can be measured indirectly, i.e. in the way people evaluate actions or outcomes. An important feature of values is that they are assumed to be relatively stable or even durable: values do not change overnight. Values as Luhmann says, are 'enttäuschungsfest', they are counterfactual resistant.[22] Values change may be related to generational renewal.[23]

Finally, individuals, groups or societies may differ in their hierarchical ordering and patterns of values (some values are more important than others). Exploring such patterns is a major interest of cross-cultural research.

Comparing National Cultures

National culture is a fuzzy concept. It consists of numerous sub-national cultures. In survey research national culture is literally a calculated construct: the average of answers of a representative sample of respondents. No single citizen will fully fit that profile. Confusing the national (macro) level with the individual (micro) level would result in a serious ecological fallacy.[24] Inferences about the beliefs and values of an individual cannot be

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Psychology, 25, 1-65

21 Halman, L. (2001) *The European Values Study: A Third Wave. Source book of the 1999/2000 European Values Study Surveys*, EVS, WORC, Tilburg University

22 Luhmann, N. (1967) Soziologie als Theorie sozialer Systeme, in: *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, IX, 615-644

23 Ester, P., Braun, M., & Mohler, P. (Eds.) (2006) *Globalization, Value Change and Generations*. Leiden/Boston, Brill

24 See Freedman, D.A. (2002) *The Ecological Fallacy*, Berkeley, University of California (Department of Statistics)

deduced from the group or state to which an individual belongs. This is an important conclusion with substantial societal and psychological meaning and with significant implications for the world of diplomacy, particularly with respect to communication and cultural competence. Since the late 1960s cross-national and cross-cultural research has taken an enormous flight and has turned into a professional branch of academic and applied research. The fast development of large-scale comparative survey research and survey methodology, of course, greatly contributed to the rise of cross-national research on cultural differences.[25] The greater availability of international databases on comparative trends in values and value patterns was a major impetus behind this flourishing academic enterprise and has made it a booming business.

As mentioned above large international companies in the sixties needed country-specific information on cultural developments and changes. It became increasingly clear that the cultural factor affected contract negotiation, HRM policy, multicultural team working, marketing and advertising et cetera. Available research did not match these business demands. Geert Hofstede, the *Don* of cross-cultural research, responded to this need by his monumental worldwide study of IBM employees.[26] He was able to detect meaningful differences between national cultures in terms of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, and masculinity/femininity. These cultural dimensions appeared to be powerful instruments in understanding cross-national differences and its meaning for doing global business. Later researchers as Trompenaars[27], and Solomon and

25 See Harkness, J.A., Van de Vijver, F.J.R. & Mohler, P. (eds) (2003) *Cross-Cultural Survey Methods*, Wiley Series in Survey Methodology. Survey research and methodology professionalization also includes sampling, questionnaire design, coping with context effects, bias and equivalence, data collection methods, data analysis, data storage, and data sharing

26 Hofstede, G., Hofstede G.J. & Minkov, M. (2010) *Cultures and Organizations, Software of the Mind, Intercultural Cooperation and Its Importance for Survival*, New York, McGraw-Hill

27 Trompenaars, F., & Hampden-Turner, C. (1997) *Riding the Waves of Culture, understanding cultural Diversity in Business*, Nicholas Brealey Publishing

Schell[28] also conducted comparative studies for business purposes. In the empirical part of this paper we will illustrate the relevance of Hofstede's model for the domain of international relations, foreign policy, and diplomacy.

Since the early 1980s large scale cross-cultural survey research became part of mainstream academic social science research. The most prominent examples are the *European Values Study* (EVS) and the *World Values Survey* (WVS). Tilburg University in the Netherlands started EVS in the late seventies, a comparative research project to delineate value patterns in a number of European countries. The original focus areas were religion and morality, work, family, and politics. After the EVS surveys of 1980 and 1990 these efforts were joined by a similar US research project initiated by political scientist Ronald Inglehart in other countries. The outcomes of the surveys in 2000 by the two groups were merged in one database and are accessible through the internet (www.worldvaluessurvey.org). Both longitudinal research programs have generated a wealth of cross-cultural data that led to an equal wealth of publications.[29] The WVS in collaboration with EVS carried out representative national surveys in more than 100 countries containing almost 90 percent of the world's population. The total number of respondents is over 250,000. Based on the combined EVS and WVS data social scientists are able to study cross-cultural changes over a period of three decades. Two simple examples will be presented further on in this paper.

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28 Solomon, C.M. & Schell, M.S. (2009) *Managing across Cultures, The Seven Keys to Doing Business with a Global Mindset*, McGraw Hill

29 Arts, W.A., Hagenaars, J. & Halman, L. (Eds.) (2003) *The Cultural Diversity of European Unity, Findings, Explanations and Reflections from the European Values Study*, Leiden & Boston, Brill

Ester, P., Halman, J. & De Moor, R. (Eds.) (1994) *The Individualizing Society, Value Change in Europe and North America*, Tilburg, Tilburg University Press

Halman, L. & Voicu, M. (Eds.) (2010) *Mapping Value Orientations in Central and Eastern Europe.* Leiden/Boston, Brill

Inglehart, R. (1977) *The Silent Revolution, Changing values and political styles among Western publics*, Princeton, Princeton University Press

Inglehart, R. (1990) *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*, Princeton, Princeton University Press

Inglehart, R. (1997) *Modernization and Postmodernization, Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies*, Princeton, Princeton University Press

Communicating across Cultures

Communication is a prime factor in coping with cultural diversity. This coping mechanism is often labelled intercultural or cross-cultural communication but both terms do not adequately indicate what they aim at as they essentially refer to cultural differences or cultural commonalities. What is required however in the communication between actors from different (national) cultures is the creation of a higher level of communication which both reconciles differences and commonalities. The latter is called 'trans-cultural' communication but regrettably this term is hardly used. Next to this issue of terminology, three points need further clarification.

The first point is that communication is not a mere 'trick'. One may approach it as such in exchanging messages but this will not result in real and authentic mutual contact. Communicating in that way is close to manipulation and once the other actor gets that impression more harm is done than gains achieved. The notion of genuine communication is also contained in the term 'trans-cultural', in the sense of creating a common reality between actors, which is open to both sides. The consequence of this point is that diplomats should not just instrumentally be trained in intercultural or cross-cultural communication as a means to an end but rather as the mastering and application of cultural competence. The latter includes thorough knowledge, awareness, skills, and appropriate attitudes with respect to one's own culture and the other's culture. Communication across cultures is not a phenomenon in itself but has to be grounded in a shared trans-cultural mind set. Cultural decoding presupposes cultural sophistication.

The second point has to do with the study of communication. In the post-war period numerous models of communication have been developed. Whatever model of communication one may devise and apply, the central facets of these models are inherently being influenced by cultural parameters.[30] No communication without culture, and no culture without communication. One may object that culture may exist outside the realm of communication but that would only be possible with a very narrow interpretation of the concept of culture. Some may argue, for instance, that architecture is a form of culture without communication but this neglects that for instance the shape of the building, its colours, and the materials used

30 See James W.C. (1989, 2009) *Communications as Culture, Essays on media and society*, Routledge

also convey implicit or explicit cultural messages. They express silent signs that may culturally be very expressive and meaningful.

Thirdly, communication is more than the exchange of words or content. Within the framework of neuro-linguistic programming psychologist Albert Mehrabian found that in face-to-face communication only 7% consists of the literal content of words, 38% of the tone of voice, and 55% of body language[31] (the degree to which these figures may be applied universally is a topic of discussion). The strength of non-verbal behaviour is especially strong in ambiguous situations. This clearly illustrates the importance of non-content related communication signs. Body language reveals important messages and its role should not be underestimated, also in communication between diplomats from different cultures. This is also true for the right interpretation of such messages. Some gestures are positive in one culture but offensive in another.[32] Part of body language is biological and part of it is learned (cultural body language). Important is always to see body language in the context of the bigger communication pitcture in order to reach a proper understanding. The interpretation of body language is difficult because it may well depend on the culture of the other (what you observe and what it means). The appropriate reading and use of body language takes quite a bit of training and practice.[33] It varies from the use of space, prosodic characteristics (tone, volume), appearance (clothing, make-up), haptics (touching the other), artefacts (objects), and other non-verbal communicative indicators. Cultural competence in this domain of non-verbal communication and body language is essential in the global worlds of diplomats. Cultural incompetence, reversely, is a major source of diplomatic incompetence.

31 Mehrabian, A. (1981, second edition) *Silent messages: Implicit communication of emotions and attitudes*, Belmont, California, Wadsworth

32 *The Definitive Book of Body Language* (Bantam, 2006) by Barbara and Allen Pease is a good introduction of such communication styles

33 Guirdham, M. (2005) *Communicating across cultures at work*, Palgrave Macmillan

Cultural Competence and Foreign Policy

Although the next section will elaborate on the application of culture to foreign policy and diplomacy we need to make some general remarks here. Being aware of what culture is and how to act accordingly can be characterised as cultural competence[34]. In general terms a competence is an integral combination of knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes.[35] Cultural competence encompasses knowledge of culture, awareness of the impact of culture, the skills required to deal with cultural differences, and the necessary attitudes to integrate knowledge and behaviour. Skills in this context consist mostly of mastering foreign languages, communication, and behaviour, in particular the adaptation of one's own behaviour to a different cultural environment. Attitudes include respect by reserving judgement until one has a more comprehensive understanding of the situation.

The cultural competence of a diplomat consists of at least the following elements. Regarding knowledge and awareness a diplomat needs to have a basic understanding of the logic underlying theories on culture and its implications. The four levels distinguished in the triangle model of Figure 3 may subdivide cultural competence. On the individual level a diplomat has to be culturally self-conscious: knowing one's own culture or rather the unique mix of cultures and its interplay. How far is s/he willing to adapt to other cultural demands? How are personal limits defined? What foods and drinks is one willing to accept? What clothing is one willing to wear in other cultural contexts (from a headscarf for women to a Djellaba for men)? Cultural self-consciousness develops over time through experience and exposure to other cultures. For some people self-consciousness is all they think they need for coping with cultural diversity. Furthermore a diplomat

34 See also note 13. The book in question formed the basis for the iPad app *Cultural Competence*.
Nispen tot Pannerden, P.J.M. van (2011): Handling Culture, in: *Journal of Positive Management*, 2:1

35 See: Mercedes M. & Vaughn, B. (2007: 31-36) Strategic Diversity & Inclusion, in: *Management Magazine*, San Francisco, CA, DTUI Publications Division

must be able to perceive the other's culture along the same lines. On the individual level the concept of values and value differences also need to be taken into account. What are one's basic values and how do they relate to the saliency of values of the host country? Also in this sense, self-reflection and self-efficacy precede cultural competence.

Knowledge on the meso-level of smaller and larger groups implies a diplomat's principal understanding of group dynamics and organisational culture. What are the cultural do's and don'ts of formal and informal meetings in the host country? It also affects one's personal life and professional role: how is one's family reacting to living in another culture and what about their cultural competence? How to co-operate with one's colleagues within the Embassy and how to collaborate with politicians, civil servants, and citizens of the host country? What is the culture within the Embassy and what is the organisational culture of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, both having its consequences for the way to do your job? On this level of smaller and larger groups one is also challenged to consider the concept of diplomatic culture, introduced abOn the macro-level of the state a diplomat needs to be aware of the ways and means of comparing national cultures - including the limitations of such approaches - and the interpretations and skills it requires to adapt the results to oneself and to one's personal circumstances.

Regarding personal skills focal points may be found in mastering the host country's language (strongly stressed in Russian diplomatic training, somewhat less by the State Department, and even less in European diplomatic academies), adaptation of behaviour, and effective communication. Some points on behaviour have already been made (personal limits) but some tricks of the trade should be included here as well. Communication skills are essential and are still not getting enough attention in formal diplomatic training. Being polite for instance, is not always sufficient; one should also know when to deviate from such a more or less standard pattern. The same notion applies to 'being diplomatic'. Sometimes (better) results may be reached by simply being open. Understanding the position of the other in (formal and informal) diplomatic communication should never be underestimated. The anxiety related to communication across cultural borders generates a diplomatic logic of its own.

Proper attitudes are crucial but perhaps regrettably they are mostly developed in pre-adult formative years (like values and beliefs) and remain rather stable over the individual life course. This limits the capacity of learning and attitude change. One returning attitude is basic respect, which boils down to reserving your opinion on the other till you have sufficient information. Another vital attitude is being really interested in the other (a people's person), and not feeling superior in one way or the other. The Dutch diplomat who once in Washington seriously remarked that the world would be better off if the Americans would be more like the Dutch, should have never passed the entrance exam for the foreign service.

The EU Context

Within the framework of this paper the EU has a special position. To start with, the EU may be considered as an entity in between a state and an international organisation. States have foreign policies and international organisations do not. Up till the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty (2009) the European Commission regulated its external relations via a dedicated Commissioner and a Directorate-General, and the European Council via its Common Foreign and Security Policy (Maastricht Treaty). This split often led to different directions with contrasting messages. Though the overarching EU foreign policy is of limited political relevance, this policy nevertheless does matter. Its major *de facto* instrument: admission or non-admission (i.e. promising a country that it could become an EU member state or excluding c.q. postponing membership) had and still has an enormous impact in the European political arena. Through its common trade policy the EU also has quite an effect on national economic development (also in times of a financial crisis), not only of its member states but scores of third countries as well.

Next to the special organisational nature of the EU's foreign policy, its development and implementation are to be realised by diplomats and civil servants from 28 different national cultures. This applies to the EU headquarters in Brussels as well as to the representative EU offices in non-member states. This typical situation adds to the complexity of the foreign policy of the EU: 28 different national cultures result in a multitude of different perceptions, priorities, evaluations, values, and norms. The EU is a melting pot of distinct cultural orientations that can only survive if cross-cultural competence is at the heart of the internal EU diplomatic culture. The very nature of the cultural composition of the EU in itself calls for a stringent training (and research) program of cross-cultural skills and abilities among

the EU diplomats and civil servants. Such programs are still the exception rather than the rule. Still, The EU's foreign policy is based on a cultural agenda that sets common values, joint norms, and a shared identity. Indeed, "(…) the EU's international relations reflect a dominant set of normative assumptions, in particular those connected with 'civilising' processes."[36]

Application

As mentioned in the paragraph on the structure of this paper we will illustrate the consequences of our view on the interrelationship between international relations, foreign policy, diplomacy, and culture through two examples, one on the preparation for a posting abroad and the other on the cultural differences between states. The first example stresses the need for cultural competence; the second example underlines the need for taking cross-cultural differences into consideration in the study of international relations and the development of foreign policy.

Preparing for a Posting Abroad

When a diplomat is informed about the next assignment abroad, s/he is likely to start collecting information about the new country (reading, internet, meeting people from that country or with experience in that country and so on). The emphasis is often on factual knowledge of the political and economic performance as well as the bilateral relations with one's home country. Hopefully this process of information collection also includes reading about the history of the home country and in particular about its effects on the prevailing cultural mentality. Some researchers estimate that this may already explain half of the cultural differences. Books on the linkage between history and mentality are not always easy to find and if finding one its academic nature and purpose may obscure the consequences in day-to-day life. A positive exception, for instance, on the Netherlands is *Under a Low Sky* by Han van der Horst (2001). This book was written as an introduction to Dutch society for foreign students, showing the effects of Dutch history on the Dutch mentality.

36 Hill, C. & Smith, M.: International Relations and the European Union, Themes and Issues, in: Hill, C. & Smith, M. (Eds) (2005:15) *International Relations and the European Union*, Oxford University Press.

The starting point for the cultural novelties of a new posting is to acquire the cultural competence as described above. Although the basic in-service training of diplomats varies from country to country, we dare say that a structured approach to obtain this competence is often lacking in the existing curriculum. Sometimes diplomats learn about cultures and languages of specific countries but often without more advanced learning about theories or perspectives on culture and cultural differences (in Russia for instance one needed such a degree at the special university MGIMO before one could move on to diplomatic training). Other countries offer in-service culture and language training for a period of up to one year (e.g. the USA), again focused on one specific country without the wider background. Many diplomats learn tricks-of-the-trade of intercultural or cross-cultural communication without the proper knowledge basis. Consequently, the acquired skills have limited value and the person in question often does not know how to adapt these skills in other circumstances (other than through an often painful trial-and-error process).

Even having acquired an advanced level of cultural competence, one should realize that its further development never stops. Knowledge works through skills, and attitudes enable successful implementation; experience then feeds into knowledge again and different circumstances (postings in different countries) shed new light on lessons learnt earlier. Advancing cultural competence is a continuous process. Having a good level of cultural sophistication, the cultural preparations for a stay abroad will be more efficient (one knows what to look for) and more effective (one knows why).

Without going into any detail we will use a student demonstration case (the so-called Wegoman case, named after an imaginary company providing management training) to simulate a diplomat's preparation for a new foreign post focussing on cross-cultural differences. The first assignment in this case is to give an overview of the main cultural differences between the sending and the receiving state, using the internet. The focus is not on a specific cultural theory but rather on general cultural aspects such as language, religion, history, body language, ways of doing things, and patterns of thinking. Time and again students come up with an often amazing amount of information in only a few hours of surfing, such as national traditions, customs, national days or celebrations, gestures, clothing styles, folklore, business methods (e.g. use of business cards), and communication habits. In the second assignment students need to apply the cross-cultural theory of e.g. Solomon and Schell. This theory will be outlined in the next section and highlights seven characteristics (e.g. hierarchy, group focus, communication styles) one

needs to look for when interacting with people from other cultures. Their cross-national database contains 50 countries and students in this imaginary case need to list and interpret the scores for both countries. As Solomon and Schell state: small differences may have big consequences in day-to-day life. Furthermore, students need to compare the findings from both assignments. The third assignment is to compare countries by outlining the differences in value patterns. These may be found on the website of the World Values Survey (online data analysis, selection of countries, going through the questions, and spotting the differences).[37] This website does not only contain lots of information but also offers many ways of presenting information and to copy it to an excel file. Finally, all information obtained from the three assignments need to be put together and turned into one overall picture, outlining the major cultural differences between the two countries and its consequences. This in turn could be aligned with the information on other aspects of the next host country. In this Wegoman case study our students are actively engaged in exploring the main cultural differences between countries in a structured way, combining theory, data collection, interpretation, and presentation. It is an effective method for acquiring cultural competence by challenging students' creativity. For a diplomat the case may serve his or her personal application.

This case study approach is based on experience in college education. Several large international companies use similar case methods. It is a very promising way of enhancing cultural competence and could easily be incorporated in the curriculum of diplomatic training and instruction. The necessary investments are limited if one considers the adverse consequences of not being culturally prepared or by trusting the classic learning-by-doing approach. It may prevent diplomatic near misses and outright clashes.

37 www.worldvaluessurvey.org

The EU and the Mediterranean

The application of our conceptual approach in the previous paragraph had the individual diplomat as a focal point. In this paragraph we turn the focus to macro-cultural differences between states. Some of these cross-cultural differences are striking. For the purposes of this paper and in view of the likely interests of the MEDAC network, the analyses include the larger countries of the EU (the seven largest according to GNP, based on OECD figures) and the Mediterranean countries (including the Balkans, Jordan, and Switzerland) as outlined in Table 1. The analysis will be primarily based on the comparative cultural model developed by Geert Hofstede, a model that is firmly grounded in theory and empirical evidence and has proven its validity and applicability. Hofstede is internationally considered as one of the most renowned researchers of culture and his work inspired several generations of cross-cultural scholars[38]. However, we do not want to exclude other theories entirely in view of the rich understanding they might provide and for that reason we will also present one specific example from the cross-cultural studies by Solomon and Schell and two examples from the World Values Survey.

Table 1 **Selected Countries (Mediterranean and non-Mediterranean EU countries)**			
France	Portugal	Montenegro	Israel
Germany	Slovenia	Serbia	Jordan
Italy	Greece	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Egypt
Netherlands	Croatia	Kosovo	Libya
Poland	Malta	Macedonia	Tunisia
Spain	Romania	Turkey	Algeria
UK	Bulgaria	Syria	Morocco
Switzerland	Albania	Lebanon	

38 See Vinken, H. ,Soeters, J. & Ester, P. (Eds.) (2004) *Comparing cultures. Dimensions of culture in a comparative perspective*, Leiden & Boston, Brill

Cultural differences between Countries: Hofstede

In his original model Hofstede defines four fundamental dimensions on which national cultures may differ. The first dimension is *power distance*, the degree in which a society expects and accepts that power is distributed unequally. The second dimension is *uncertainty avoidance* or the degree in which members of society feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations. The third dimension is *individualism*, referring to a society with relatively loose mutual ties and in which individuals are expected to take care of oneself and their immediate family. The opposite end of this dimension is *collectivism*, characterised by a tight and loyal integration of individuals in primary groups, which offer protection throughout life. The fourth dimension is *masculinity*, referring to national cultures in which gender role are clearly differentiated. Men are supposed to be assertive, tough, competitive, and focused on material success. The opposite end of this dimension is *femininity*, accentuating the need for values related to quality of life. These four dimensions reflect the way a society deals with fundamental stratification problems: inequality, control, cohesion, and gender roles. The values for the four dimensions of the countries concerned are summarised in Table 2[39].

TABLE 2 (*See the next page*)

Table 2 reveals a highly interesting picture of cross-national cultural patterns. The highest levels of power distance are observed in Serbia, Romania, and Lebanon; the lowest levels in especially Israel, and in EU countries such as Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and in Switzerland. Malta has relatively lower scores on power distance. Catholic countries such as Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Poland show medium scores. Arab countries such as Egypt, Morocco, and Turkey are at the same level of power distance as France. Thus, there is not an obvious and consistent Mediterranean vs. EU-countries pattern of power distance. The Balkans, so it appears, reveal a similar pattern of high power distance. Individualism is most pronounced in EU-countries such as Great Britain, the Netherlands, France, and Italy

39 Data are again obtained from Hofstede (2001), *Culture's Consequences* and from Hofstede's website (www.Geert-Hofstede.com;consulted on September 15, 2013). Unfortunately, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Syria, Jordan, Libya, Tunisia and Algeria are not included in Hofstede's cross-cultural research.

Table 2 Cultural differences between EU- and Mediterranean countries: Hofstede dimensions (relative country scores)

Country	Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance	Individualism	Masculinity
Bulgaria	70	85	30	40
Croatia	73	80	33	40
Egypt	70	80	25	45
France	68	86	71	43
Germany	35	65	67	66
Great Britain	35	35	89	66
Greece	60	112	35	57
Israel	13	81	54	47
Italy	50	75	76	70
Lebanon	75	50	40	65
Malta	56	96	59	47
Morocco	70	68	25	53
Netherlands	38	53	80	14
Poland	68	93	60	64
Portugal	63	104	27	31
Romania	90	90	30	42
Serbia	86	92	25	43
Slovenia	71	88	27	19
Spain	57	86	51	42
Switzerland	34	58	68	70
Turkey	66	85	37	45

and is least emphasized in Egypt, Morocco, Portugal, Serbia, and Romania. Malta is at the same level as Israel, Poland, and Spain. By and large it can be concluded that individualism is less observed in the Balkans. Masculinity is particularly low in the Netherlands and Slovenia, and highest in EU-countries such as Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Poland, and in Lebanon and Switzerland. The Balkans and several Mediterranean countries such as Egypt, Israel, Malta, and Turkey show masculinity levels comparable with France

and Spain. Morocco and Greece are slightly above these scores. Uncertainty avoidance levels reveal striking findings: by far the highest avoidance levels are found in countries that are hit particularly hard by the economic crisis: Greece, Portugal, and also Malta. The Balkan countries, Israel, Spain, Turkey, and Egypt show comparable (higher) uncertainty avoidance scores. Great Britain, Lebanon, The Netherlands, and Switzerland rank among the lowest uncertainty avoidance countries. The overall conclusion from these cross-national analyses of the cultural dimensions distinguished by Hofstede is that there are clear differences between countries but that there is no simple underlying clustering. Substantial variety is observed. Ironically, the least variety is observed among Balkan countries, a region that is associated with high cultural diversity.

The cultural differences observed in Table 2 are a convincing case for the need to explicitly address such differences in fields of international relations, foreign policy, and diplomacy. A bias in the way we perceive fundamental cultural similarities or dissimilarities may seriously hamper the process of effective foreign policy and diplomacy. A wrong understanding (e.g. over- or underestimating) of how countries relate to basic cultural orientations such as power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, and uncertainty avoidance will negatively affect cross-national negotiation, dialogue, and cooperation.

Solomon and Schell

Solomon and Schell conducted the most recent comparison of cultures on the national level (2009)[40]. These authors make a distinction between the following seven cultural dimensions in which countries may differ:

- Egalitarian/hierarchical: equality of people vs. a preference for hierarchy
- Group focus: an individualistic vs. a collectivistic society
- Relationships: transactional (emphasis on the content of the meeting) vs. interpersonal (importance of getting acquainted first)
- Communication styles: a direct vs. an indirect communication style
- Time orientation: low vs. high value of time
- Change tolerance: reluctant vs. open to change
- Motivation/work-life balance: live to work vs. work to live

40 Solomon & Schell (2009) See: www.rw-3.com for the way these authors valorize cross-national cultural data (RW3 CultureWizard).

In order to avoid unnecessary complexity (at least in the context of this paper) we abstain from making another overall cross-national comparison based on these seven dimensions. One example however, will be presented to demonstrate this approach: the dimension of transactional vs. interpersonal relationships (see table 3). This dimension is of direct relevance to the practice of diplomacy. Data only include a subsection of countries from table 1.[41]

Table 3 Solomon and Schell: Cross-cultural differences in transactional vs. interpersonal relationships

			Egypt	
			France	
			Greece	
	Netherlands		Italy	
	Poland	Germany	Portugal	
	Romania	Israel	Spain	
	Switzerland	United Kingdom	Turkey	
5-9 Transactional	10-13	14-17	18-21	22-25 Interpersonal

Table 3 demonstrates that countries deviate considerably in terms of their attitudes towards the saliency of the transactional or interpersonal nature of relationships, particularly in doing business. Emphasising the importance of transactional relationships means that relationships are short-term and pragmatic and don't necessarily imply relationship building. Fast achievement, efficiency, and getting down to business are the main issues. Stressing the importance of interpersonal relationships is the other side of the continuum meaning that long-term personal contacts are crucial, based on trust, nurturing mutual bonding, tradition, and obligations. Countries favouring transactional business relationships are the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, and Switzerland. Its national cultures underline goal setting and achievement. Interestingly, countries valuing interpersonal relationships

41 Countries not included are Slovenia, Croatia, Malta, Bulgaria, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco.

are all located in the Mediterranean: Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Turkey. These societies cherish to conduct business after rapport is developed by underlining the importance of building trust, having respect, and developing enduring personal networks. The impact of both types of national culture on day-to-day diplomacy is quite obvious. Diplomacy in transactional cultures involves immediate goal setting and performance efficiency; diplomacy in interpersonal cultures requires a longer term perspective with investing in informal and personal relationships. This is a clear example of the importance of diplomats having a high level of cultural competence. Using the transactional diplomatic paradigm in interpersonal host countries, and vice versa, would be disastrous if not fatal.

World Values Survey

As indicated the World Values Survey (WVS) is a research program, implemented by a consortium of universities over the last 30 years in up till now about 100 states on six continents. In each of those states a wide variety of social, cultural, economic, political, moral, and religious values are measured through a common survey questionnaire including more than 250 questions and items. The longitudinal nature of WVS enables to study value changes between and across countries. We have selected two specific examples with scores of the countries involved, confidence in parliament (table 4) and confidence in the United Nations. Kosovo, Syria, Lebanon, Libya and Tunisia are not included in WVS.

TABLE 4 (*See the next page*)

Confidence in parliament, as Table 4 shows, is cross-nationally low. Only in the Netherlands, and surprisingly in Jordan and Egypt[42], a slight majority of the population indicates to have high trust in their national parliament. Lowest confidence is found in Turkey, Morocco, in Macedonia and in the other Balkan states. But also countries such as Algeria, Greece, Italy, Poland, and the United Kingdom demonstrate relatively low trust in parliament.

42 Data in Egypt were collected in 2008.

Table 4 World Values Study: Confidence in Parliament

Confidence: Parliament (%)				
	A great deal	Quite a lot	Not very much	None at all
Albania	10	35	34	21
Algeria	8	26	30	37
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3	17	58	22
Croatia	4	19	56	22
Egypt	29	38	22	11
Greece	3	22	48	28
Italy	5	29	49	17
Malta	8	44	34	15
Morocco	11	13	25	52
Slovenia	5	20	53	22
Turkey	12	19	19	51
Bulgaria	6	22	46	26
France	3	38	36	23
Germany	3	34	47	
Jordan	30	35	21	14
Macedonia	1	6	35	58
Netherlands	5	51	40	5
Poland	8	25	45	22
Portugal	5	44	39	13
Romania	4	16	41	40
Serbia and Montenegro	8	20	36	36
Spain	9	37	42	12
Switzerland	2	42	42	14
UK	4	31	49	15

Findings with respect to confidence in the United Nations are reported in the next table.

Table 5 World Values Study: Confidence in the UN

Confidence: The United Nations (%)				
	A great deal	Quite a lot	Not very much	None at all
Albania	38	48	9	5
Algeria	5	10	27	58
Bosnia and Herzegovina	11	28	41	20
Croatia	8	39	39	14
Egypt	11	21	26	42
Greece	3	16	36	45
Italy	18	50	25	7
Malta	19	44	19	18
Morocco	6	8	22	64
Slovenia	10	39	39	12
Turkey	12	28	20	39
Bulgaria	10	30	40	20
France	9	45	30	16
Germany	5	45	38	12
Jordan	16	20	24	40
Macedonia	19	18	26	37
Netherlands	7	49	39	6
Poland	15	43	32	10
Portugal	14	58	20	9
Romania	11	33	32	23
Serbia and Montenegro	8	22	31	39
Spain	7	36	40	18
Switzerland	5	38	37	20
UK	13	48	31	9

Trust in the United Nations shows marked differences across nations. Trust is extremely low in Algeria, Egypt, Greece, and Morocco and rather low in Jordan, Turkey, and the Balkan states. These countries are part of the greater Mediterranean region. Countries that show medium and higher levels of

confidence in the United Nations include Albania, Malta, Italy, France, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, and the United Kingdom (EU countries with the exception of Albania).

Both the results on trust in national parliament and trust in the United Nations demonstrate varying cross-national levels of confidence. Again, this poses specific challenges for international relations, foreign policy, and diplomacy. This is particularly true when high-trust countries are involved in political negotiation or cultural dialogue with low-trust countries. The diplomatic stage for international negotiation and dialogue is highly context specific which is especially the case for such politically and culturally contrasted countries. This may easily raise diplomatic issues: if e.g. diplomats from countries with high-trust in parliament do strongly focus on parliament enforced negotiation deals with diplomats from low-trust countries, results will be easily disappointing. The same argument holds for negotiation and dialogue between diplomats from countries with high respectively low trust in the United Nations. Support for assigning the decisive role of the UN on tough issues is radically different for the first and latter group. Institutional trust reflects the way diplomatic parties involved will commit to institutional diplomatic arrangements and solutions.

Suggestions for education and further research

The central argument of this paper is the importance of the cultural factor in the domains of international relations, foreign policy, and diplomacy. This highlights the need for robust cultural competence among diplomats and civil servants in these three vital areas. It also highlights the need for an ambitious research program of how culture affects these domains in more detail, especially from a comparative point of view. Until now the impact of culture on the design and implementation of the disciplines of international relations, foreign policy, and diplomacy has been taken too lightly both in the training of key-actors and in applied research. The development of cultural competence should have a much higher priority on the diplomatic training and research agenda. This final section offers some suggestions.

Education and Training

Key to education and training within the framework of the topics discussed above is the basic concept of cultural competence.[43] Skills shaping and reflecting cultural competence need to be developed over time, through study and experience, and need to be exercised in practice. Cultural knowledge also requires experience. Knowledge of culture and of cultural differences remains abstract and relatively meaningless if it is not matched with real life exposure, and vice versa. The more accurate one's understanding of culture, the easier one learns to adapt to other cultures and to be open to people from other cultures.

Obtaining cultural competence is an integral combination of learning (knowledge), training (skills), and development (attitudes). Knowledge includes the central theories on culture and its implications; the value of values; the effects of culture on individuals, including the relation with personality; group dynamics; theories on organisational culture and its effects; the effects of culture on negotiation styles and the negotiation process; the comparison of national cultures; the culture of one's own country, including all the prejudices abroad; and, finally, diplomatic culture. Skills should at least focus on languages (knowing a bit of the language of the host country is normally highly valued), behavioural adaptation, and communicative abilities. Attitudes are essential too, including respect, open mindset, focus on the other. The combination of these three facets indicates the degree of cultural competence, of a person's cultural sophistication.

Negotiation is a basic activity in the domains of international relations, foreign policy, and diplomacy. Culture affects the negotiating style of individuals (see for instance the Thomas-Kilmann conflict mode questionnaire).[44] In a similar vein the process of negotiations is being influenced. Negotiators from an individualistic society, for instance, are used to having a mandate and to decide on their own. Collectivist negotiators, however, consult much more frequently with their ministry back home and the results needs to be approved in their capital. Such crucial differences may very well be trained in a simulation game on culture and negotiations[45].

43 See note 33: a book in Dutch, an iPad app and several websites.

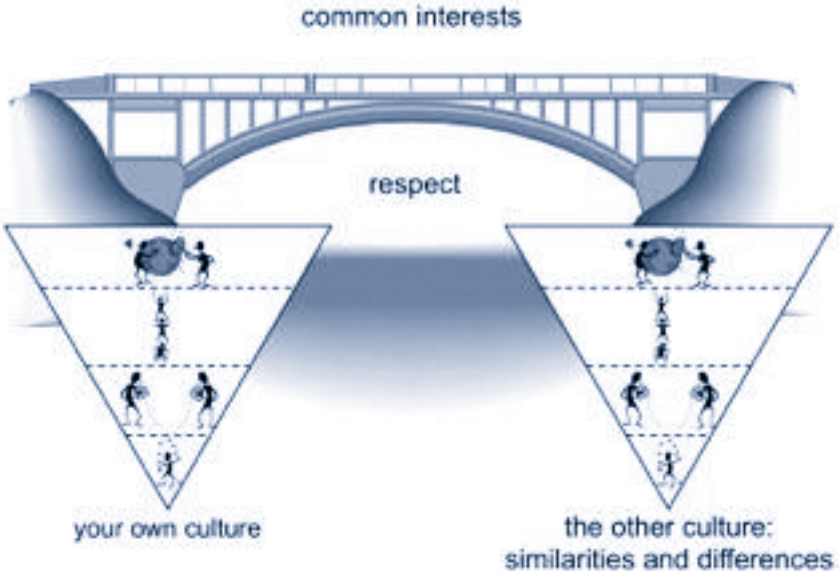
44 See: www.cpp.com/products/tki/index.aspx

45 Hofstede, G.J., Pedersen, P. & Hofstede, G. (2002) *Exploring Culture: Exercises, Stories and Synthetic Cultures,* Intercultural Press offers a simulation on culture on the basis of the Hofstede model. We added more cultural elements (so-called extreme cul-

Cultural competence has of course a much wider application than 'just' foreign policy and diplomacy. In our globalising world, skills, abilities, and attitudes constituting cultural competence may yield a strong positive impact on the problems within a multicultural society. Education and targeted educational programs can play an exemplary role in this respect.

Coping with cultural differences in a more general way may be depicted as a bridge (Figure 5) between one's own culture and the culture of the other party one is dealing with. Such a bridge is founded on respect for the other as a fundamental condition, based on the equality of people.

This approach focuses on practical applications, rather than a primary focus of scientific research. It starts with knowing yourself and the culture of the



country you are coming from, moves through learning about the culture of the other and ends with an understanding of the other as an individual person. A key aspect of respect is that one sets aside one's judgement of the situation. Moreover: not all differences are cultural differences. In evaluating the situation at hand one should internalize the distinction between recognising things as different and finding it 'odd' or 'strange'.

tures) on the basis of the work by Trompenaars and Hall.

Research

In order to realise the education and training trajectories mentioned above in an effective way we need to get more information on how elementary cross-cultural processes operate and how they influence decision-making. It all starts with determining, exploring, and understanding differences in national cultures. But it must be done so in a structured and comprehensive way. Most of the comparative research programs mentioned in this paper cover a selection of national states. In addition a series of interesting websites provide interesting cultural information on various countries but the information is not collected in comparable ways, raising questions about reliability and controllability.

In a similar vein the existing theories and models need to be integrated. The World Values Survey for instance contains several items, which qualify the research by Hofstede and by others. Attempts to assess the mutual explanatory power and added value are promising and demand further research.[46] We also need to know more on how theories that were developed in the international business domain stand in the public domain, and vice versa. The World Values Study contains series of data, which are most relevant to the functioning of government, foreign policy and diplomacy, and also include indicators of e.g. entrepreneurship in a country.

More specifically we need to study how cultural differences are taken into account in the development of foreign policy, starting in one country and expanding this research to other countries, preferably with quite different systems and training programs. This idea also applies to the structure and implementation of diplomatic training programs (basic training and in-service training). Does the selection and recruitment process of future diplomats take culturally relevant personality characteristics into account? For example with respect to cultural openness, empathy, and cultural competence? We also must know more on the phenomenon of diplomatic culture, the effects of culture on negotiation styles and the ways and means culture affects the negotiation process. The latter two points have been studied to some degree but much more understanding is required.

Taking these ideas one step further from the national to the European level we would like or even need to study the development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). What is the effect of the interplay of 28 nationalities in developing and approving proposals for common positions? What is the perception of the CFSP in the 28 member states? How is the CFSP implemented from a cross-cultural perspective and how do people

46 See Soeters, Vinken & Ester (2004).

with different nationalities work together in one representative office abroad? To what degree do EU diplomats in third countries master the cultural competence? Do civil servants and diplomats of the EU develop a European culture and to what degree is their national culture working through? How does the Council of the EU decide on foreign policy, again against a backdrop of diverging national cultures?

A particularly challenging topic of research is to study the impact of the cultural factor in geographical areas covering widely diverging national cultures and political systems. The Mediterranean is a perfect example and the Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies could do pioneering research in this respect.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to demonstrate the necessity of using a cross-cultural perspective in understanding the relations between states next to existing schools of thoughts (such as the liberal school, the realistic school, international political economy school). Similarly, the cultural factor needs to be taken into account in the development of foreign policy because it gives a better understanding of one's own position vis-à-vis the other stakeholders and because it paves the way for a more efficient and effective process of policy implementation. This also relates to diplomacy, in view of the required cultural competence of key-actors involved. All this becomes even more urgent given the overall trend from co-existence to co-operation and the increasing citizen involvement in international public law[47]. The saliency of the cultural factor in the domains of international relations, foreign policy, and diplomacy can no longer be neglected. Advancing cultural competence should be a core topic of diplomatic training programs and diplomatic schools.

In view of the growing political and economic importance of the EU, both for its member states and third countries, and in particular its foreign policy, the call for studying the cross-cultural dimensions of foreign policy and diplomacy becomes even more urgent. The EU is not in the same boat as a state, not only because it is not a state as such but also because policies are developed and implemented in a dynamic interplay of 28 different national cultures. In this sense the cross-cultural perspective is not a "soft" but a "hard" discipline: culture *matters*.

47 See for instance Kooijmans, P.H., Brus, M.M.T.A., Blokker, N.M. & Senden, L.A.J. (2008) *Internationaal publiekrecht in vogelvlucht* (overview of international public law), Deventer, Kluwer

Figure 2: Elements of culture

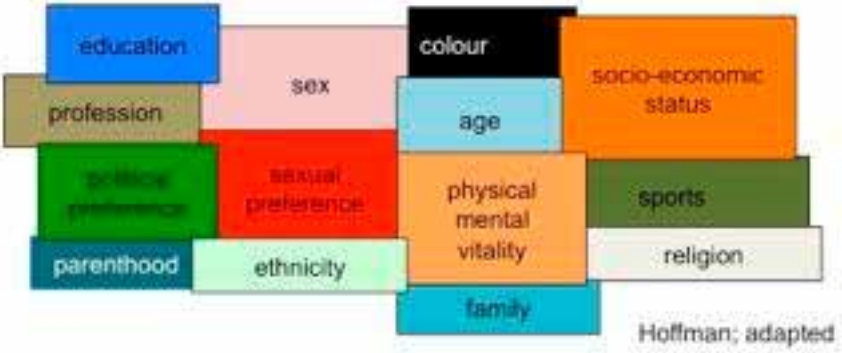


Figure 4: Individual culture

About MEDAC

The Mediterranean Academy of Diplomatic Studies (MEDAC) is an institution of higher learning offering advanced degrees in diplomacy with a focus on Mediterranean issues. The programme consists of courses in International Law, International Economics, International Relations, Diplomatic History and the practice of diplomacy.

MEDAC was established in 1990 pursuant to an agreement between the governments of Malta and Switzerland. The Geneva Graduate Institute of International Studies (HEI) was among its first foreign partners.

With Malta's membership in the European Union and with the financial support of the Arab League MEDAC, more than ever, is emphasizing the Euro-Mediterranean dimension by building bridges between Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

MEDAC is a member of the International Forum on Diplomatic Training (IFDT), of the European Diplomatic Training Initiative (EDTI), a group of EU diplomatic academies training EU personnel, and a member of the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN). Our institution is also part of the Advisory Board of the journal Europe's World.

MEDAC has established close strategic relationships with a large number of prestigious international diplomatic institutions including the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, the Institute for Diplomatic Studies in Cairo, the Institute for Diplomatic Studies, Tunisia, Centre for European Integration Studies (ZEI) of the University in Bonn, Germany as well as Wilton Park – UK, Spanish Diplomatic School, Madrid, Spain, and Department of Mediterranean Studies, University of the Aegean, Rhodes, Greece.

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- Diploma in Diplomacy (DDS)

The programme of Master of Diplomacy (M. Dip.) course is designed for junior diplomats with some field experience. They are instructed in the same core disciplines as the M.A. students (Diplomatic History, International Relations, International Economics, International Law as well as selected lectures in diplomacy) but with a special emphasis on diplomatic practice, languages, public speaking and on-line skills.

The course covers two semesters, from October to June, and includes field trips to Switzerland and to Germany. (See details of all courses on the website: **www.um.edu.mt/medac**)