

British Council
**Celebrating 75 Years of Cultural Relations:
The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in European
Foreign Policy**
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Welcome

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I. The British Council's 75th Anniversary

Ladies and Gentleman, could I, first of all, very warmly welcome you all to this lecture and panel debate today, which is part of the British Council's 'Talking without Borders' series, which we are using to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the British Council back in 1934. So far this year, we have had the great privilege of hearing from Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who opened our series in February, and many other distinguished speakers throughout the year, and today I am particularly delighted to welcome Gijs de Vries, a man who believes that cultural diplomacy is not a soft option to hard power.

II. The History of the British Council

As an organisation, the British Council has 75 years of global experience in building relationships between the UK and the rest of the world. It was founded back in 1934 – as that sense of countries turning back in on themselves, of nationalism, and of economic isolationism approached – as a means of building a stronger relationship between the UK and other states, particularly European states, and to try to maintain an openness of dialogue.

This openness of dialogue, this mutual dialogue, has been a key theme for the organisation throughout those 75 years. Emerging from the Second World War, Europe was, and remained, a key focus for us, a key focus for cultural relations: recognising and celebrating difference, because it was about difference, and understanding difference, which allowed us to find commonalities and where we were the same. Throughout that period, immediately after the Second World War and into the Cold War, and then almost with the renewal, 20 years ago this year, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the sense that we needed to continue to open a dialogue, a conversation, with different parts of Europe remained at the heart of our organisation. Thinking back, it seems to me extremely unlikely that our predecessors, 60 years ago sitting in this room, would have imagined the speed at which we would be sharing a joint agenda with, for example, the Goethe Institute or other Institutes or, 20 years ago even, the speed with which we would be sharing a close working relationship with Czech and Polish colleagues.

This is the power of the cultural relationship; by exploring, through a general mutual respect, where the differences lie, we identify where the similarities lie and we find ways in which we can work together. Our starting point is absolutely dependent upon that open, honest exchange between people of all backgrounds. What we seek to achieve is understanding and trust between people; and, of course, understanding and trust which is going to benefit the UK, as well as those with whom we are working.

III. Current Task

Our task is more complex now. The internet and the new media have reshaped the way we think about language and the traditional categories we have used for people, ideas, and relationships. In recognising this reality, the British Council have deliberately shifted away from a set of bilateral relationships to pan-European partnerships. We believe that where cultural relations can provide value is not so much in the unilateral presentation of the country's culture, however mutual we try and make it, towards finding ways in which we can address shared problems, shared agendas, and develop shared solutions to those. This approach has led us to being a founding member of the European Union National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC) organisation, which means that we are able to engage in a wholly new set of ways with our European partners. This has led, to provide two examples, to such events as the EUNIC theatre festival in Kabul and the Brussels conference on 'The Family in Europe', held a few months ago.

IV. Today's Debate

That subject of how cultural relations is going to move forward for Europe, as well as in Europe, is the subject of today's debate, with a particular focus on, perhaps, one of the most important countries for us in Europe: China. The format will be an introduction and a setting out of issues by Gijs de Vries, followed by a debate, which we hope you will participate in and contribute to. I am delighted that we are joined by two very important and powerful contributors to this, Finn Andersen, who is President of EUNIC and Secretary General of the Danish Cultural Institute, and Dr Xin Xin from the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Westminster. This debate will be chaired by my colleague, Stephen Roman, who is our Regional Director for Europe.

V. Introductions

Before we move into this, I would like to introduce, with great pleasure, Gijs de Vries, whose background is in Dutch politics, as well as a very distinguished career in European Cultural and Political Leadership. He is a former leader of the Liberal Democratic Group in the European Parliament and the EU's Counter-terrorism Director, during a period of critical security concerns. Gijs has recently authored a monograph on European cultural diplomacy, commissioned by the Slovenian presidency of the EU. He is a founding member of the European Council of Foreign Relations and Vice President of the Netherlands Court of Audit. It is a real pleasure to have such a renowned thinker, in this subject, with us here today and a great pleasure to introduce to you Mr Gijs de Vries.

The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in European Foreign Policy

Gijs de Vries

Netherlands Court of Audit

I. Introduction

Thank you very much, Martin, and thank you very much, Ladies and Gentlemen, for the opportunity to be with you here today. For 75 years the British Council has successfully practiced the art of constructive engagement. It has promoted the use of the world's *lingua franca*. It has built understanding and trust for the United Kingdom abroad. Its work has permitted thousands upon thousands to familiarise themselves with life in the UK and to forge ties that have often lasted a lifetime. So, it is truly an honour for me today to be with you here for this 75th-anniversary lecture.

I would like to talk to you this morning about the role of cultural diplomacy as a dimension of European foreign policy and I will talk about its application to China in particular.

II. European Ideals

Foreign policy is about promoting and defending our interests and values in the world. In Europe, these values form part of our composite European identity. Javier Solana has summarised them as follows: compassion with those who suffer; peace and reconciliation through integration; a strong attachment to human rights, democracy and the rule of law; a spirit of compromise, plus a commitment to promote in a pragmatic way a rules-based international system.

Most countries have found that one way of mobilising their power of attraction is by mobilising their cultural attractiveness. It is by familiarising others with one's own language, films, books, music, architecture, and so on, and with one's people and their thinking, that countries are often able to touch hearts and minds, and to win friends abroad. Arts and heritage, tangible and intangible, are central to the identity of Europeans, and central to how they are perceived by others. From Bach to Bernini, Shakespeare to Chopin, Europe's search for the essence of a life worth living continues to inspire millions worldwide across boundaries of language, religion, or state. So do other aspects of European culture, such as Europe's tradition of scientific investigation and invention, and its codification of human rights and international law.

Rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition and the Enlightenment, the values of individual liberty, of equality and of solidarity, have left an indelible imprint on the identity of Europe and on the history of mankind. In our own lifetime, these values, and the prosperous societies they spawned, have triggered the demise of communism. Ultimately, it was the attractiveness of an idea – the idea of a free society – that brought down the Berlin Wall: soft power at its most powerful. To live in dignity, man must be free; this idea, the connection between freedom and dignity, is at the very core of Europe's identity.

III. Culture and Diplomacy

The fruits of European thinking and creativity continue to excite and inspire people across the world. It is the more surprising, therefore, that European culture still plays such a minor role in the way the European Union presents itself to the world, or, for that matter, to its own citizens.

Of course, culture has long played a part in the bilateral cultural diplomacy of EU member states. For many years National Cultural Institutes have been active in promoting their country's language and other cultural characteristics. Several European countries have elaborated strategies of cultural diplomacy that are sometimes broader in scope and better financed than those of the US, Japan, or Australia. Only China, which is in the process of opening several hundred new Confucius Institutes worldwide, seems intent on beating the European nations at their own game.

The European Commission has been slow to recognise the importance of cultural diplomacy. Cultural cooperation has not been a priority in the Union's external relations. Funding has tended to reflect the bureaucratic structures of the Commission. In its 2007 Communication on culture in a globalising world, the Commission did not succeed in providing a coherent policy perspective.

IV. Deficiencies in Cooperative Strategies

The EU's projects in the field of external cultural cooperation suffer from three structural deficiencies. They tend to be short-term rather than embedded in multi-annual programmes; with the exception of audiovisual policy their focus is on aid, not on cooperation and partnership; and they are neither integrated across regions nor across policy fields such as sport, youth, and human rights.

The Union's cultural projects abroad are also characterised by asymmetries. Cooperation between the EU and its Eastern European partners is considerably less developed than its cooperation with countries across the Mediterranean. Furthermore, the EU has invested considerably more into regional programmes under EUROMED than into bilateral programmes with individual countries across the Mediterranean. This is regrettable as many more people can be reached in contacts with non-governmental organisations at country level, than in projects with government bureaucracies and their umbrella organisations at regional level.

V. Benefits of a European Strategy

Developing a European strategy of cultural diplomacy would benefit EU Member States in several ways. Member States increasingly find that the lack of such a strategy puts them at a disadvantage. Bigger Member States notice that foreign audiences often want to know about experiences and opinions in Europe as a whole, and not only about views in Paris or Madrid. In the absence of a European framework, national diplomats do not always succeed in satisfying this curiosity about 'Europe'. Smaller Member States, which mostly lack the widely spoken languages of their bigger neighbours, and which tend to lack significant resources to invest in cultural diplomacy, find it difficult to make their voice heard. All would benefit from a European strategy of cultural diplomacy, to complement and support national efforts financially and operationally.

VI. Recent Developments

It is much to be welcomed, therefore, that the EU's Council of Ministers last year called for 'the drawing up of a European strategy for incorporating culture consistently and systematically in the

external relations of the Union and contributing to the complementarity of the Union's activities with those of its Member States'.

VII. Challenges

This is easier said than done, particularly in the institutional set-up of the EU. It means, for example, that the Commission and the Council will have to work closely together; the two of them marching off to a different drummer would create confusion across the world.

Such a strategy would require EU ministers to decide who would be in the lead, Ministers of Culture or Ministers of Foreign Affairs, and how the two would work together. Preferably, once the Treaty of Lisbon enters into force, with the involvement of the *de facto* EU Foreign Minister.

Thirdly, the Commission will have to streamline its internal operations with the various Directorates General involved; from enlargement and external relations, to development and culture.

Last but not least, EU institutions and member states will have to work together to ensure that cultural diplomacy is included in the remit of the new European External Action Service (EAS), the EU's foreign service once the Lisbon Treaty comes into force. Staff at EU missions must include experts who are familiar with the workings of Europe's cultural sectors.

So what should a European policy of cultural diplomacy entail? How can the current disparate collection of projects and programmes be moulded into a coherent strategy? What would be the possibilities and the limits of such a strategy in relation to, for example, China?

VIII. China and Europe

China's importance to Europe's long-term interests is second only to the importance of the United States. On current trends the world will gradually come to revolve around three centres of economic gravity: the US, China, and the EU; the political and military consequences of China's rise, though difficult to predict, will profoundly affect the global agenda.

Already, China is the EU's second trading partner, behind the United States. The Union is China's biggest trading partner. At the same time it must be recognised that the volume of trade and investment remains low. The EU still exports more to Switzerland than to China. Most of China's high-tech investments come from the EU, but these represent only 1% of the EU's overall outward investment. Europeans will have to work hard to strengthen their stake in China's development.

IX. Difficulties with China

However, China is not an easy partner. The Chinese market, for example, is largely closed to European service companies. Only 12 of the 22,000 telecoms licences granted since 2001 have been awarded to foreign companies. The China Film Group allows only 50 foreign films per year to be imported, and the annual quota is typically filled by US films. China maintains investment and ownership caps in sectors such as construction and telecommunications. Its public procurement market remains virtually closed. European companies in China estimate that intellectual property violations have cost them around 20% of their potential revenues.

Politically, EU-Chinese relations have not always been plain sailing either, as was illustrated by Beijing's cancellation of the 2008 summit in protest at President Sarkozy's decision to meet with the Dalai Lama.

X. EU-wide Relations with China

Cultural cooperation does not yet figure among the EU's priorities in relation to China. Some countries holding the Council Presidency, such as the UK and France, have organised 'European' cultural events in Beijing, but most others have not. The Commission's China Strategy paper 2007-2013 only mentions culture in passing. The Commission's executive agency for culture is piloting five cooperation projects with China, and Chinese artists have worked with their European counterparts through the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). For its part, China initiated a four-year project with the EU to provide opportunities for several hundred school teachers from Europe to study Chinese and to familiarise themselves with China. Small beer, one might argue, but it is a start.

To some extent this rather disappointing state of affairs may reflect bureaucratic realities in Brussels and Beijing: the EU and China are not used to working together, at least not in the field of culture. Educational cooperation, however, is something of an exception: cooperation between European and Chinese universities has been a marked success. In 2007, European universities hosted some 170,000 Chinese students, with approximately 75,000 of those in the UK. In comparison, only 67,000 Chinese students studied in the United States. Of the foreign students studying in China, about 14% came from Europe, around 10% from the US. This is a good basis to build on, especially for the European Commission, which helped finance the European Higher Education Fair in Beijing in 2007.

XI. Bilateral Relations with China

Bilateral cultural relations between some European countries and China have intensified considerably in recent years. In the first of a series of planned exhibitions, in March 2007 the British Museum brought 272 artefacts to Beijing, and in August 2007 the Louvre – not to be outdone – did the same. In 2008 the First Emperor exhibition in London contained the largest display of terracotta warriors from Xi'an ever to be shown outside China. China is the guest of honour both at the 2009 Frankfurt Book Fair, although that is a bit of a rocky event, and at this year's Europalia festival.

The Goethe Institute, working with public and private partners, launched a three year programme (2007-2010) to display German creativity and urban innovation in six Chinese cities. France, Greece, Italy and Spain have each organised a 'cultural year' in China. Holland has set up The Netherlands-China Arts Foundation. In Britain, the Foreign Office, DCMS, the British Council, and the Scottish Executive are co-financing the 'Connections through Culture' programme, which 'seeks to position the UK as a uniquely valued cultural partner of China'. It will focus, among other things, on the 2010 Shanghai World Expo and the 2012 London Olympics. Many other examples could be cited.

XII. Characteristics of Cultural Diplomacy

Stirring stuff, all this – high-powered, visible, and mostly well-conceived. But some of it, such as exhibiting official art, is also fairly traditional: closer to cultural public relations rather than to cultural diplomacy. It is important to distinguish the two, because cultural diplomacy is about more

than art and heritage. It is about the intellectual life of a nation in the widest sense: its scientific research as well as its art, its social and political life as well as its literature. Crucially, cultural diplomacy is about the values that are at a country's understanding of itself, and about the ways in which these values manifest themselves in daily life. Cultural diplomacy therefore has a reflective, self-critical component. In reaching out to others, it dares to reflect on a country's shortcomings as well as its ambitions and achievements.

Secondly, cultural diplomacy differs from public relations in terms of its timeframe. Cultural diplomacy entails the establishment of long-term partnerships, not *ad hoc* projects. Its focus is not on improving a country's popular image in the short term, but on building a positive reputation, which, by definition, requires consistency and continued dedication.

Third, cultural diplomacy differs from cultural public relations in terms of its purpose. Cultural diplomacy is not only about soliciting admiration or sympathy through the showcasing of national cultural achievements. It is above all about building trust. Its purpose is to establish mutually beneficial cooperation and partnership. It is about establishing mutual benefit as the basis for mutual trust.

XIII. The British Council and China

To establish such partnerships, and maintain them over time, has been an objective of the British Council for decades, and the Council has rightly identified China as one of its priority countries for the coming years. Through its five centres in China the British Council offers a wide range of opportunities to increase collaboration between the UK and China in areas ranging from science, education, and arts, to sport, society and development.

One recent innovative partnership resulted in a comparative study on housing provision for low-income urban residents. The two-year 'Climate Cool' project aimed at raising awareness of climate security and to encourage individual action. Other partnerships are being built in fields such as health and social security, including, where possible, with not-for-profit third sector organisations.

XIV. Promising Collaborations

I believe it is projects such as these that hold most promise for Europe and China - projects that focus on collaboration and mutual benefit and that touch people's lives. The more such projects and programmes which manage to include citizens directly, whether through sports clubs, art societies, or street committees, the better. The internet offers additional opportunities to foster dialogue and understanding, as demonstrated by online publications such as Chinadialogue.net. To support similar initiatives at bringing people together should figure prominently among the priorities of the European Commission, EU governments and national cultural institutes.

XV. EU-Chinese Constraints

Nonetheless, to establish durable bonds is not a simple task, and working with China entails particular difficulties. One of these is censorship. According to International PEN, more than 40 writers and journalists are imprisoned in China for exercising their right to speak and write freely. Such muzzling of independent voices places obvious limits on Europe's ability to cooperate with China. It is also very damaging to China's efforts to portray a positive international image of itself. The Chinese authorities have announced plans to invest some €5 billion to expand its foreign media

presence, for example the launch of an English language television station controlled by the Xinhua news agency. As long as Chinese media serve to dish out official propaganda, most of that, I fear, will be money down the drain. China will find, as others have, that soft power – the power to attract – cannot compensate for negative perceptions caused by a repulsive deployment of hard power.

Some European difficulties in working with China, however, are made, here, in Europe. One significant problem is caused by Europe's tendency to underplay its strengths and fragment its efforts. In working with China, European governments and cultural institutes tend, still, to underestimate the potential for joint action. They also fail to play to the strength of the European Union.

Of course, it must be recognised that cultural diplomacy is a competitive business. It is natural for European governments to compete against each other in their efforts to promote their cultural and economic sectors and to achieve political visibility and goodwill in China. The officially stated goal of Germany's educational exchange programmes is to 'win the best brains for Germany'. The UK, as we heard, is striving to be 'a uniquely valued cultural partner of China'. Any initiative to impose a common European policy on such national endeavours would be doomed from the outset.

XVI. European Joint Initiatives

Competition, however, need not be a zero-sum game. Indeed, joint initiatives have often been remarkably successful in attracting foreign interest, precisely because they tap into curiosity about Europe as a whole. Examples include the large-scale events 'Showcase Europe' and 'Europe Street' held in 2005 to celebrate the 30th anniversary of EU-Chinese diplomatic relations, and the 2008 European Film Festival, at which films from 24 European countries were screened in four locations around Beijing.

XVII. Current Attitudes to European Cultural Cooperation

For such joint initiatives to become a standard feature of cultural programming, however, the EU's cultural institutes will have to demonstrate genuine commitment to European cooperation. Of the five largest national cultural institutes, only the Goethe Institute explicitly and proudly identifies itself as a European institute. The other institutes tend to follow more traditional ways of promoting their national language and cultural heritage. The British Council, it must be said, is particularly shy about the UK's membership of the European Union. Surprisingly, the importance of EU policies in the daily lives of British citizens is not reflected in the programmes and publications of the British Council. To the extent that the EU plays a role in the Council's work, it is primarily, still, a source of funding. Whether this reflects policy preferences of the British Government is something others would be better qualified to judge – the British Council, after all, takes pride in operating at arms length from Whitehall.

It could be argued that a more comprehensive presentation of the UK's role as a member state of the European Union would be in Britain's interests. Under Prime Ministers Blair and Brown the UK has played a leading role in setting EU-wide standards to combat climate change. It has helped the Union to lead the way to the Kyoto Protocol, and today the EU is a key player in preparations for the Copenhagen climate conference. In this as in other fields, standards set by the European Union increasingly act as benchmarks for third countries, who adapt their legislation accordingly. Since 1999, the city of Beijing has ratcheted up its new-car emission standards to the level of the European Union (Euro IV). The rest of China will move to Euro IV next year. These successes

merit reflection in the websites and programmes on climate change run by Europe's national cultural agencies.

XVIII. European Solutions

For EU governments and institutes to present themselves as member states of the European Union is particularly important in a country like China. Many of the difficulties our companies face in dealing with China require solutions at EU-level, from counterfeiting to trade barriers. Trade policy is no longer the competence of national governments – it is the exclusive competence of the European Union. Furthermore, it is a fundamental interest of European nations that China should play a constructive role in world affairs, including through multinational institutions. The EU itself is one of the world's foremost multilateral actors, and in the Lisbon treaty EU member states have pledged to strengthen its international voice.

It would be easier for the Chinese authorities to understand the significance of the European Union if European embassies and some of their cultural institutes in China, instead of treating the EU as an afterthought, would engage more frequently in common public events, such as those in the field of culture. European cultural institutes represented in China could do more to develop joint activities under the umbrella of EUNIC. European-run websites in China could be made to include an EU dimension. The Goethe Institute already do. The British Council's mainland China website has a huge online community of 180,000 members. Why not have it include references to the role and significance of the European Union, both to the UK and to China?

XIX. Limits to Cultural Diplomacy

One caveat is in order. Cultural diplomacy is not a panacea. It can play a significant role in fostering ties and promoting mutual cooperation and understanding, but it does not work miracles. Indeed, cultural diplomacy is most effective if it does not aim at achieving economic or political objectives in the short run. It can support political dialogue and economic cooperation, but a quick fix it is not.

XX. Aspects of a European Strategy for Cultural Diplomacy

Having explored the potential for cultural diplomacy in our relations with China, let us briefly turn to some wider aspects of a European strategy for cultural diplomacy. Such a strategy should, I believe, include at least four dimensions: (1) strengthening the rule of law; (2) developing cultural diplomacy as an instrument of conflict prevention and management; (3) protecting and enhancing cultural heritage; (4) creating mechanisms for civil society cooperation and exchange, through people-to-people contacts.

1. The Rule of Law

Two priorities would be particularly important for EU foreign and cultural ministers to embrace worldwide: the universal ratification and implementation of the standards set in international conventions in the field of culture, and the defence and promotion of freedom of information and expression.

It is time for the Union to urge systematically its partners to ratify and implement all six UNESCO Conventions in the field of culture, including the Convention on Cultural Diversity and to

encourage ratification and implementation of the relevant Council of Europe Conventions, such as the Convention for the Protection of Architectural Heritage.

It is important for the Union to speak out whenever censorship or harassment and oppression of journalists occur; all too often, Europe's voice in addressing violations of the right to freedom of expression is weak. We should make it a point of honour to take up cases of persecuted writers and journalists. A good way of making the Union act more systematically against attacks on freedom of expression would be for EU Foreign Ministers to adopt a set of General Guidelines on Freedom of Expression, and for the European Parliament to watch over their implementation.

2. Conflict Prevention and Management

There is a modest role for cultural projects to contribute to the search for peace. To heal the divisions between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland the European Commission has financed programmes of cross-cultural cooperation between Ballymacarett in Northern Ireland and Ballybofey in Ireland. The Union's own experience in overcoming enmity among its peoples may hold lessons that others might be interested to consider.

In Nicosia, the mayors of the Greek and Turkish parts of town have jointly made a master plan to protect the architectural heritage within the buffer zone. For their efforts to unite their divided city, Lellos Demetriades and Mustafa Akinci have received the Aga Khan Award and the Europa Nostra Medal of Honour. To promote further reconciliation and stability in Cyprus, the Commission is financing a three-year long project in the field of history teaching. Similar projects could be actively encouraged elsewhere, from the Middle East to the Balkans and the Caucasus.

The Union and the Member states have not yet devoted systematic reflection to the role of cultural diplomacy in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. A more active European Union role in addressing the 'frozen conflicts' in the East, including Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh, for example, should include a cultural dimension. Cultural diplomacy could also play an important role in further improving relations between Armenia and Turkey.

3. Cultural Heritage

Third, there is the crucial dimension of cultural heritage. Across the world, cultural and natural heritage is subject to a multitude of threats, from neglect, warfare, and pillage to climate change. Working with foreign countries to help preserve their cultural and natural heritage is a powerful expression of respect for the cultural identity of the country concerned, and thus an important instrument of cultural diplomacy. This could be done more actively, for example in the area around the Mediterranean.

The European heritage federation Europa Nostra has warned that local coastal cultures, for example, traditional fisheries, salt works, traditional shipbuilding craftsmanship and skills, storytelling, customs, sailing traditional vessels and so on. To protect and enhance cultural heritage around the Mediterranean should be addressed in a broad and integrated manner. A programme along these lines could be one of the most promising responsibilities of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and/or of the Mediterranean 'Union' promoted by President Sarkozy.

4. People-to-People Contacts

Last, but not least, it is important to recognise that Europe has a lot to learn from other cultures and traditions, as well as a lot to offer. As mentioned earlier, our purpose should be, in the words of the British Council, to build lasting relationships on trust, mutual understanding and respect. Our focus should be on exchanging ideas, sharing knowledge and learning from countries outside the EU.

It is important for our efforts internationally, also, to reflect the diversity in cultural and ethnic terms of Europe today. Europe is no longer a white, Christian continent and the voices and images the Europe portrays should be reflecting this reality.

For practical and financial reasons many artists find it difficult to participate in international exchanges. If we want artists to have more of a role in building bridges across our nations, a set of special measures will have to be devised tailored to the specific needs of artists; a new and innovative scheme, for example, to promote international mobility of artists – an *Erasmus Mundus* for artists – could play an important role.

Educational exchange must be an integral component of cultural diplomacy, not only for reasons of principle, but also out of practical considerations. Already, more than 2 million students have so far benefited from the Erasmus Programme and it is good to see *Erasmus Mundus* now playing a role in relations with other countries. However, with a total of 1,600 scholarships for the entire world combined the impact of this initiative will remain limited.

Let me hail the efforts of the British Council intends to link 10,000 schools in the UK with a similar number overseas. EU Ministers of Education could set Europe-wide targets, building on this example. By 2015, Ministers could agree, all schools in the European Union should be linked to a partner school abroad, either in another EU Member State or elsewhere in the world. Working towards such international connectedness would be a powerful way of enabling European children to think of themselves as citizens of the world, who are familiar with foreign cultures and experiences.

XXI. Multilingualism

Cultural diplomacy is about dialogue, not monologue. The capacity to listen is conditional, among other things, on our capacity to speak foreign languages. Multilingualism must be a requirement for a strategy of cultural diplomacy that involves civil society. Multilingualism should involve not only the learning of European languages, but also the learning of non-European languages such as Chinese, Hindi, Arabic and Turkish.

However, much as the British Council and its sister agencies are to be commended for promoting interest in European languages abroad, it must be recognised that not all EU member states have been successful in promoting interest foreign languages at home. Three quarters of Hungarians, half of the Portuguese and Spanish speak only their native language. Over half of secondary school students in the UK and a fifth of their Irish counterparts do not study foreign languages at all.

XXII. EUNIC

In elaborating its approach to international cultural cooperation the Commission will need to consult closely with the EUNIC network of European cultural institutes. Cultural diplomacy, by its

very nature, cannot be the exclusive preserve of governments. Private actors and organisations have an essential role to play.

In view of the huge networks that France, the UK, and Germany operate alone, stronger cooperation between these institutes is much to be welcomed. Much here has been achieved during the short period in which EUNIC had been in existence and many excellent projects have been organised from India and Thailand to Canada and Tunisia. Much remains to be done, particularly multi-annual programme for these institutes to work together.

XXIII. Conclusion

In conclusion, I have outlined four dimensions for what could become the European Union's strategy for cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy's potential for strengthening ties depends on its contributing to mutually beneficial, long-term relationships. It is about conversation and cooperation, not only between central governments, but first and foremost between non-governmental organisations and private citizens. The focus of such a dialogue should be cultural in a broad sense, including therefore, social and political values.

To the founding fathers of the European Communities, European unity has never been about economics and politics alone. To the generation that laid the basis for the post-war, common future of Europeans, European unity first and foremost was about people. Their vision was of a Europe where citizens would no longer be motivated by prejudice and nationalism, but by a sense of common destiny. Their hope was of a Europe where people would regard other Europeans not merely as foreigners, but as fellow Europeans. Their legacy encompasses more than a range of highly imaginative common policies and adaptive political institutions. What the European Union's founding generation bestowed on its successor generations is, above all, a dream.

To dream, in politics, is an act of courage. Some may argue that courage, in today's politics, is mostly a dream. But a Europe without dreams would no longer be Europe. The European dream is of a continent at peace with others and with itself; where people live freely and responsibly and in solidarity with others, both in Europe and in the world at large. It is this latter, global dimension which poses perhaps the greatest challenge to our generation. To build a world where freedom reigns, where poverty and iniquity have been vanquished, where human dignity is respected – this is the dream that should be at the heart of Europe's endeavours. It is a dream about universal values – cultural values inspired by Europe's own achievements and failures. It is these values that should be the focus of European diplomacy.

The Panel's Observations

Stephen Roman

Regional Director, West Europe and North America, British Council

I. Summary of Gijs de Vries' Lecture

Thank you Gijs, for that very stimulating, challenging and inspirational vision of where European cultural diplomacy and relations could take us in the future. You have clearly summarised the

common values and heritage that Europe has at the moment; the opportunities and challenges facing Europe; and the centrality of culture within all that. You were also right to highlight the barriers and challenges; both to the European Union itself, in the absence of a coordinated strategy for cultural diplomacy and relations, and also for the European bilateral agencies. European bilateral national and cultural agencies have come along way, but, as you say, there is a long way to go.

The European Union, along with the European Commission, is moving much faster towards recognising the centrality of culture, but, again, there is a long way to go. I hope the national cultural agencies and the European Commission and the European Parliament can work together on this because I think they need each other. Talking particularly about China, you noted that though there is a European effort of a sort, it remains quite fragmented. This applies to other parts of the world and we will be spending a little bit more time with Dr Xin Xin looking particularly at China and how Europe works there. We will also be hearing from Finn in due course about recent Europe-China cultural dialogue. You have ended with a very stimulating clarion call for the four areas, where, potentially, Europe could work together, around the rule of law and human rights; conflict prevention and resolution; cultural heritage and a Europe that learns and listens, which I think is very important.

II. The British Council

I would like to comment briefly in my role as moderator about the British Council; you were very generous in your tributes to our work in China and I am very pleased to have my colleague, Joanna Burke, Regional Director China, here with us today. Within Europe, you have clearly highlighted the path we have to tread; we are not going to work on promoting the European political system, but I think the British Council, and my colleagues from the Council in Europe, would confirm that we have moved quite a way, as an organisation, towards being inclusive Europeans in the ways we run our programmes. That is reflected in the work we have done in the establishment of EUNIC, which we will hear more about.

Thank you for what I found inspirational and exciting; it is exactly where the British Council in UK needs to be, both in promoting our national self-interest globally, and with countries such as Germany, but also as part of a European venture; the two, in a sense, are complementary. We will continue to move forward both in terms of achieving our own national interests, our national self-interests, which all national cultural agencies are committed to, while recognising that that can be best achieved in today's world by working in a much more collaborative way and recognising the interdependences; the fact that we are in a global conversation; that cultural relations and diplomacy is about listening, learning and sharing, as opposed to national promotion and a one-way road. This applies to how European cultural agencies work, both among themselves and with countries and regions like China and Africa.

III. The Panellists

I would now like to move to comments from the panel and I would like to introduce the two panellists.

First, Dr Xin Xin, from the University of Westminster, where she teaches in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication; she is an expert in culture, media, society, and transitional societies, particularly in relation to China and Russia, which is apt given the focus on China in Gij's talk, and she has done some very interesting research on the Confucius Institutes in the US

and in the UK and the ways in which China is promoting its image in, and interaction with, the world. We will look forward to hearing about reactions, from a Chinese perspective, on this issue from Dr Xin Xin.

Secondly, I would like to welcome Finn Andersen, who is the Secretary General of the Danish Cultural Institute and the current President of EUNIC. Finn has a strong UK background, a particularly Scottish background. He did his original Masters in Aarhus University in English and Cultural Studies, followed by an MSc in Cultural Policy at Heriot-Watt and then a Doctor of Letters from Napier University, Edinburgh. He has been Secretary General of the Danish Cultural Institute since 1997; before that he was in charge of the Danish Cultural Institution in the UK. He has been President of EUNIC for four months, but, by now, it may seem longer. Finn, reflecting on what you have heard from Gijs, how much do you think various European National Cultural Institutes are beginning to collaborate? Do you see this still as a group of fragmented and disparate organisations that are not really pulling together and pulling their weight on a global stage? Do you have any reactions to this or any other comments to make in relation to Gijs' speech?

Finn Andersen

President of EUNIC & Secretary General, Danish Cultural Institute

I. The British Council

Thank you very much for inviting me to participate in this discussion. It is a great pleasure to be back in Britain; I was not in the capital of England, but of Scotland, which is a totally different thing, as I was assured for 13 years in Scotland. Anyway, it is a great pleasure to be here. I would look to echo Mr de Vries' praise of the British Council because to many of us, colleagues from Europe, the British Council has always been a role model that we have admired for their professionalism and efficiency in the promotion of British culture. It is interesting to hear about your recent policy change, which takes you a little bit closer to what the Danish Culture Institutes are offering, namely dialogue and mutuality; that is intercultural dialogue, so welcome to the club.

II. Gijs de Vries

Thank you Mr de Vries for an excellent talk. You provided a catalogue which exhausts, almost, everything that could be said about cultural relations. I could not disagree with many things. What confused me a little was that you called culture relations 'culture diplomacy', but, from the British Council, I had learnt it the other way round, but what is in a word anyway? We understood what you meant in any case.

III. EUNIC

You have highlighted the great importance of culture in international relations, where it is important, and you have stressed the importance of Europe getting its act together. I wholeheartedly agree. This is the philosophy underlying the creation of EUNIC, which was formed three years ago in Prague and was meant to be a network organisation for arms length cultural institutes from the European countries. There are about 22 countries that have cultural institutes: some big, some small; mine was one of the smaller ones with only 11 branches, with one

in the UK. For many reasons, political and professional, cultural institutes should start working more closely together in a systematic way.

For years, there has been sporadic collaboration between the Goethe and the French Institutes or the British Council, in certain instances. Back in Scotland, actually, right from the early 1980s, we had a European Union cultural forum, which consisted of the local cultural institutes, and, in some cases, Consulates General, who got together with some Scottish Institutes and formed this forum to debate issues of common interest and to have joint European promotion. One of the biggest ones I was involved in at the time, in Scotland, was in 1992, when Britain had the presidency of the EU, and the summit meeting took place in Edinburgh, where we had the *Lux Europa*, the Light of Europe, which included the artistic works, outdoor light installations, from 45 artists all over Edinburgh. This was one of the big projects of the European Festival, which your Prime Minister at the time staged.

Just to give you a brief history, this was picked up then in Brussels with a local cluster of about 10 or 12 institutes and then, three years ago, the heads at a meeting in Brussels decided that more was needed and that cooperation was needed worldwide. As such, EUNIC now consists of 31 organisations, at heads level, from 26 European countries. We are having discussions, at the moment about membership and whether to allow embassies and in what role; whether it be associate, for example. Clearly, there is difference between the ways cultural institutes work and the work of cultural diplomats in embassies, who are still, either mainly or exclusively, representing their own country and that country's policy. This sticks at government level throughout Europe. Our idea was, instead, to see the common interests and common challenges we shared. While professional and mutual inspiration is important, it is also about trying to work together in preserving and maintaining the values we all cherish and which we call 'European values'; as you have listed all of them, I do not have to repeat them. We all know what they are.

IV. Challenges

Personally, I believe that over the next 10 – 15 years we are going to face bigger challenges from China and the Middle East and so on. The UNESCO conference 2005, stressed the quality of cultures, which is good, but the downside, as Europeans is that the values we considered to be universal are not considered in this way outside Europe. As such, we have to be prepared to enter into dialogue with people from different traditions and with different ideas of their values. Politically, it is very important that we do not try country by country, but that we try to understand together.

V. Future Projects

There are 31 main organisations and, at city level, we have around 50 so-called 'clusters' around the world; organisations of local institutes that get together from time to time to discuss issues of common interest and we have already heard Martin Robinson mentioned a couple of projects, such as the film festival in Kabul and the conference on 'family' in Brussels. Next week, there is another significant conference, 'Twenty Years after the Fall of the Berlin Wall', where we are going to discuss what has happened to Europe after this great event, the fall of the wall. Did all our expectations and hopes in 1989 come true? What has happened in the meantime – including the financial crisis, threats of terrorism and immigration? That is all the issues that are now dominating the European debate. So, it is very important that we create these forums to discuss Europe's issues; China, which we will discuss shortly, is one of the major issues.

At heads level, we have identified a number of main themes we want to discuss, and the BRIC countries are the geographical areas on which we are focusing, starting with China moving on to Russia, Brazil, and India. Other strategic themes are intercultural dialogue, which is so important now, cultural cooperation in general, and cultural management. We are going to focus on the big issues facing mankind, including climate change, and will hold a major conference, to be held in Copenhagen in December, to discuss culture and climate change, where we will see how artists worldwide are getting involved in this issue.

Stephen Roman

We will return to you briefly to hear a little about the China cultural dialogue, but I am conscious of time. Thank you very much Finn for that very good overview of where EUNIC currently stands. Turning to Dr Xin Xin, I note what Gijs has said about China wanting a more European engagement, as opposed to engagement with particular countries in terms of culture, with France or the UK and so on, but engaging more broadly with Europe as a whole. How far do think that is an expectation in China now, that they would like a broader European engagement, and to what extent is China itself seeking to promote its own values and traditions into Europe?

Dr Xin Xin

RCUK Academic Fellow, China Media Centre, University of Westminster

I. Soft Power

For your first question I would like to wait a bit. First I will share with you some of my thoughts, which are based on my recent research about China's recent cultural diplomacy efforts, and we can discuss it a bit later. Today, I would like to discuss those efforts, very particularly concerning Europe. It is true that China has gained enormous hard power over the past 30 years and Chinese political and military strength has increased dramatically. However, at the same time, Chinese leaders have realised that the country's soft power – particularly the cultural influence – does not match this growing hard power. In addition, concerns over the threat posed by China have spread across the world, and still influence how the outside world perceives China. This worries Chinese leaders, particularly at the point when China's global business plan – the so-called *zou chu qu* – is in full swing.

II. International Broadcasting

Of course, this plan also concerns Europe. In order to improve its global image, especially in Europe and the US, China adopted some traditional public diplomacy efforts, or instruments, which were also used in Europe and the US; for example, international culture and education exchange programmes, and international broadcasting. China is part of the student and scholar exchange programmes under the EU Window project. Currently, China's international broadcasting, technically speaking, covers the whole world, although the audience in Europe and other parts of the world is tiny and can be ignored. However, this does not stop the Chinese government sponsoring a very ambitious 'China CNN' [?] plan, according to which Europe is one of the most strategic regions in which China's cultural influence needs to be enhanced. In addition, China has launched numerous official news websites in order to reach a global audience.

III. Social Networks

While their influence remains limited, the most popular social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and many others, are still blocked in China. Most scholars suggest that internet-based social media are becoming quite an effective new public diplomacy instrument, through which an increasingly globalised public can be reached more effectively and less expensively relative to traditional means. International broadcasting and the internet are still part of the Party's propaganda targeting foreigners. They are circumscribed to a large extent in China by its current censoring system, which also poses challenges to the country's long-term public diplomacy efforts. Most importantly, as media initiatives, they are not able to compete for credit or influence with multinational media corporations based in western democracies.

IV. Confucius Institutes

We cannot ignore China's most famous public diplomacy initiative: the Confucius Institutes, of which more than 300 have been established in more than 80 countries over a period of just five years. More than 80 are located in Europe: 13 in France, 11 in Germany, nine in Italy and eight in the UK. Confucius Institutes are joint ventures between the Office of Chinese Language Council International (*Hanban*) and a foreign educational institution. Each Confucius Institute has a Chinese partner school. As a collaborative project, Confucius Institutes have attracted considerable attention from foreign education institutions in host countries and local politicians. This is a controversial project. The controversy was triggered by *Hanban*'s major overseas investment instead of into domestic education; the issue of sustainability; the relationship with *Hanban*; and the possibly impact on the academic autonomy of the host university.

V. The Olympic Games

China has also taken advantage from hosting international events such as the Beijing Olympics and the Shanghai World Exposition in order to pursue short-term public diplomacy goals. How have the Olympics provided China with public diplomacy opportunities and challenges? On the one hand, the global reach of the Games meant that China, as the host nation, was expected to cooperate with others in the Olympic family to construct a generalised and benign Games narrative that resonated with global audiences; on the other hand, the public diplomacy agenda, not just in Beijing but also in other Olympic venues, coexisted uneasily with the potential for nationalist foment that the Games might excite.

Stephan Roman

Thank you, Dr Xin. You have clearly raised an issue about the importance that China is attaching to public diplomacy and cultural relations work. This, I hope, will stimulate some questions from the floor. Finn, I was going to suggest that you say something about the China-Europe dialogue, so could you give us some high-level conclusions?

Finn Andersen

Until five years ago, China did not allow foreign cultural institutes inside its country. My own institute was one of the very first to be lucky enough to obtain permission to operate there in 2005. We are in the early days of exploring how to cooperate with the Chinese, because, as everyone knows, it is a very centralised governmental situation with most of the cultural institutions. Joanna

could talk for a long time about the difficulties as one of the practitioners from the British Council in Beijing. I had the pleasure of being with the Beijing cluster just last week and discussed the problems faced by the various cultural institutes that have now been established.

25 European countries and the Chinese National Academy for the Arts, a state research organisation, have established a three-year programme of cooperation. It started in Beijing last year with a major conference discussing important themes. This year, the conference will be held in Copenhagen; next year's will take place in Shanghai. This year's theme was 'The state of the arts in China and in Europe'. The theme was about cultural memory, which the Chinese approached with some caution, although they agreed to enter into a dialogue about it. Other themes included creative industries and cultural diversity. About 100 participants discussed the topics very openly and frankly, and we agreed to set up new networks and collaborations in the future. It is a slow process and there are many obstacles that we need to overcome, so soft diplomacy is very much called for here.

Questions and Answers

Dr Niki Katsaouni, Cultural Counsellor, High Commission of the Republic of Cyprus in London

What I would like to draw our attention to today is two things: first, that, ever since Europe decided to become a European Union, it was obvious that, after it had become a financial common market, culture, civilisation and social issues would play a major part. Therefore, the first major contribution of the unity of Europe is not only the cooperation between members and the intercultural dialogue that goes on, but also a very close self-criticism and self-view that we did not know about before.

In other words, for the first time, we value our culture more, because we have to be part of the cooperation between European countries. The most important gain realised by European countries is seeing their own standing in the world, with regard to concepts such as the rule of law, civil rights and grassroots society, which we did not know about before. It is not only about intercultural dialogue, but also about understanding our own culture. This is very important to me.

The second theme, which has not been addressed today, is the problem of immigration, which is not a financial problem, but a cultural and social problem and one of values. We tend to sweep it under the carpet, although it is an issue that has to be faced by all countries. It influences not just our economy, but our schools and our relationships with our neighbours. I think that, before we go to China, we should look into our own towns and tidy things up in Europe.

Andrew Leung, RSA

I am very interested in the use of cultural diplomacy in resolving conflicts. Could the panel tell us to what extent the European Union, perhaps along with China, might be able to use cultural diplomacy to address the Middle East conflict?

Carla Figueira Bourton, Researcher

You mentioned multilingualism as an ideal for the European Union. In what language is the voice of the EU going to be heard? Will it be English or French, or would it be fairer for everyone in Europe and elsewhere in the world if it was perhaps an artificial language, such as Esperanto?

Miguel Otero, Oxford Brookes University

I just spent four months in China, researching the financial elite. I interviewed more than 30 leading financial figures from the Central Bank and the Ministry of Finance etc. When I asked about relations with the European Union, the response was always that European officials insisted on the notions of democracy and human rights and that China should make major efforts in that regard. If China was to progress, it should really tackle the rule of law, the separation of powers and press freedom etc. They were not very happy with all of this, saying that it was a patronising view on the part of Europeans, who were looking down at the Chinese and telling them how they had to change in order to progress. How do you combine this with cultural diplomacy?

Gijs de Vries

The question of 'migration' is an absolutely essential one for each of our countries. It creates tensions in our societies, but it also creates enormous opportunities. Particularly at local level, towns and cities are increasingly sensitive to the social and economic potential of cultural diversity, working with Turkish, Pakistani and Moroccan communities to create quite a vibrant set of interactions between different communities. There is cultural strength in that new diversity, just as there is a source of tension.

Second, there is scope for the EU to make much more of the presence of fascinating voices from traditionally non-European cultures in European culture today: people like the Turkish-German filmmaker, Fatih Akin, or the French writer, Tahar Ben Jalloun. There are dozens upon dozens of examples of people from non-European cultures who have integrated into European society and become fascinating cultural voices. There is huge strength in having these individuals and their legacy play a more visible role in the way in which we present ourselves to other countries.

I have been careful to stress that there is a modest role for culture to play in conflict prevention and resolution. In terms of the Middle East, there have been some extremely courageous and touching efforts to reduce prejudice among Palestinians and Israelis through cultural exchange involving classical music, film and education etc. Certainly, they will not solve the lack of peace in the Middle East, but they help lower mental barriers, create goodwill and build on people's positive intentions. In that respect, that role is much to be valued, as we have learned in the former Yugoslavia, where Europe should have made and could still make much more of supporting cultural exchange among its peoples.

Finn Andersen

As a speaker of one of the so-called 'smaller' languages, at least in terms of numbers who speak Danish, I am all in favour of multilingualism. Most people consider language and cultural identity to be closely connected, so it is one of the riches of European culture that as many languages as possible are spoken and preserved. One of EUNIC's key priorities is multilingualism and we have various projects underway around mapping what is going on in foreign language-teaching in Europe. We are going to find out how many foreign languages are being taught in the UK, for

example, and how extensively. By the way, a few years ago, I read a history of the English language, published by the BBC. It asked us to guess which language we would all be speaking worldwide, had the Vikings won the last battle in England.

Stephen Roman

Dr Xin, could you respond to the comment made about human rights: that Europe tends to lecture China on human rights and democracy, which is a barrier to cultural communication?

Dr Xin Xin

It is very difficult to make such a comment. Speaking from a Chinese perspective, even when I interviewed numerous Chinese for my own research, they would always ask a certain question: 'Who gave Europeans and Americans the right to lecture us on issues?' On the other hand, when you phrase it slightly differently, you talk not only about human rights, but you ask, 'Would you like to leave your society with a guarantee of freedom of speech? Do you want a society that practices rule of law?' The answer is always 'yes'. My response to the question, then, is that it really depends on how you start the dialogue and how you approach the topic in a way that is acceptable and understandable to a Chinese audience.

William Wong, Visiting Clore Fellow, London School of Economics

Last year, former EU trade commissioner Chris Patten gave a talk on the subject of European foreign policy. I left that evening with the overwhelming impression that we do not yet have a coherent European foreign policy. Closer to home, within Britain, it was reported in *The Independent* earlier this year that fewer than five British MPs have any serious ambition to become Culture Secretary. That says a lot about culture within the British Cabinet. My question, then, is: given the fragmented nature of the EU and the fact that China seems really eager to be better understood on its own terms, might a future EU President be our saviour?

Gijs de Vries

That really is asking for another half-hour lecture, so I will try to put it in a nutshell. Creating institutional positions is not a shortcut to operational effectiveness. Of course, it is very difficult to have 27 proud, sovereign, independent countries work together in foreign affairs; it is perhaps the most difficult area of all, together with security-related issues. Yet, *e pur si muove*, we have seen, for example, the EU working quite effectively to help the world arrive at the Kyoto Treaty; EU member states being equally effective in working against American opposition to create the International Criminal Court; and initiatives, ranging from EU diplomacy at the United Nations to questions of international trade, which are very close to foreign affairs. It depends on the issue being raised.

I believe that small steps are likely to be the way forward. Small steps in relation to institutional development can, and hopefully will, involve a strengthening of cooperation between the Council and the Commission through the creation of the *de facto* EU foreign minister, but it is no more than a small step. Ultimately, it depends on the perceived self-interest of our respective countries. Here, however, the media and Members of Parliament could play a very important role. There is a tendency in the media, for commercial reasons, to look for fights, conflicts and areas of disagreement, and to overlook areas where we are working quite well together in our national interest. I believe it could be part of the responsibilities of our journalists and our national

politicians to draw the attention of the public to areas where it is in our national interest to work with other EU member states and where we do so quite effectively.

Closing Comments

Stephen Roman

Thank you very much – we will have to draw this session to a close now. I would like to very much thank our keynote speaker, Gijs de Vries, for his very stimulating talk. I would like to thank Dr Xin Xin and Secretary General Finn Andersen for joining us on the panel and giving their perspectives from China and EUNIC.

It is fair to say that this is the beginning of a very major opportunity in terms of cultural relations, the future of culture in the world, and how Europe is going to work together to address this in an increasingly globalising world in which China, India and other key powers play an increasingly prominent role. We are at the beginning of a journey. We have seen some of the milestones ahead and some of the challenges; I am sure that we will be returning to this room in years to come for further discussions about this very issue. Enjoy the rest of the day. Thank you.

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