Israel-Palestine and the EU's New 'Language of Power' – Plus Ça Change?

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Progress in resolving the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians matters hugely to the EU. Its long-standing and much vaunted commitment to a two-state solution – with an independent, democratic, viable and contiguous Palestinian state living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours[1] – is a key plank in the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), backed up with seriously big amounts of financing in various forms. And yet, the EU's performance hitherto in delivering its goal is widely and consistently held as a failure of paralysis. The EU comes in for constant criticism in both public and scholarly discourse[2] for being a weak actor, indecisive and lacking autonomy. Furthermore, these criticisms are aired not just in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but across all attempts by the EU to assert its CFSP.

In 2019, with the rotation of the EU Commission, a new High Representative of the Union for Foreign and Security Policy (HR/VP) Josep Borrell was appointed, who recognised this weak actorness and sought to address it with a shift – in language at least – towards neo-realism. In a speech made to the European Parliament on 10th October 2019, he called for 'a stronger EU in a world of power politics'[3] where the EU needed to 'learn the language of power'[4] if it was to succeed as a foreign policy actor. Therefore, the focus of this research shall be to answer two questions:

RQ.1 *How can we assess the prospects for success of Borrell's radical shift in discourse to a "language of power"?*

RQ.2 *What are his prospects in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?*

Chapter Two's focus is on answering RQ.1 and does so by employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as both a theoretical perspective and a method concerned with the process of change.[5] CDA's premise that to understand a shift in one discourse, we must investigate its relationship with other social discourse and practices[6] (the vague interplay of social forces that shape our behaviour[7]) helps me build a framework thereby meeting RQ.1 –*We can assess prospects for success by measuring the trajectory of the discursive and social practices that compete in the CFSP domain.* This framework is then applied for the purpose of answering RQ.2 and operationalises it into the following three Sub-Questions:

SQ.1: What have been the discursive and social practices that characterise EU paralysis on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the past?

SQ.2: How have these practices changed over time?

SQ.3: What does this mean for Borrell's aspirations to "a stronger EU"[8]

Chapter Three is focused upon answering SQ.1 and does so first by identifying the previous*Strategic Discourse of the HR(/VP) (the subject of the study; the one that will become Borrell's language of power narrative)* and labels it 'discursive practice' (1). Then, through the medium of elite interviews, it interrogates the social practices of EU diplomats during their decision to boycott Hamas following their success at the 2006 Palestinian elections to reveal

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three other competing social practices. Those were: *a pressure from the audience (2); an internal incoherence (3); and a naturalised obedience of civil servants (4).* The Chapter observes that practice (1) was made weaker by prevailing practices (2), (3) and (4).

Chapter Four then answers SQ.2 by measuring changes to the practices identified in Chapter Three during the EU's reaction to the relocation of the US embassy from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem in 2017/18. Again, the evidence examined comes from a combination of elite interviews and EU documents. This chapter finds a *transformation* of the Strategic Discourse of the HR/VP (1) – to Borrell's aspirations for "A Stronger EU," but simultaneously, an *increased* pressure from the audience (2), an *intensified* internal incoherence (3), and a *consistency* in the naturalised obedience of civil servants (4).

Finally, Chapter Five draws together findings from Chapters Three and Four and locates them in the CDA framework established in Chapter Two, thereby answering SQ.3 and the overall RQ.2 therein. Chapter Five concludes that in order *for Borrell's language of power narrative to be successful in solving the EU's weak actorness towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there must also be a reduction in the relative strength of social practices (2), (3) and (4). Since this study observed no such reduction but instead a growth/ proliferation in the competing practices (2), (3) and (4) it can be said that Borrell's prospects are, unfortunately, very low.*

In undertaking this dissertation, it is my hope to understand the significance of diplomatic social practices within the EU foreign policy process, as this has been neglected.[9] It is also to offer an explanation as to why the EU unwittingly entrenches the Israeli occupation on Palestine and, in doing so, create space for solutions to the EU's weak actorness towards the conflict. Hence, Chapter Five also address the implications of this research and the Conclusion makes suggestions that speak to these broader research aims.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

My research is informed and structured by the theoretical framework, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is also the conceptual tool I implore to analyse and critique my evidence base. Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to introduce the reader to CDA, its use in EU foreign policy analysis and locate my study within a CDA framework thereby meeting RQ.1. To do this I first outline the main claims of Constructivist theory – under which CDA falls – and then use CDA to further Constructivism's notion of *constitutive relationships.* Ensuing I locate CDA in EU foreign policy studies. I then project this analytical concept onto the reality of Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP) in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in order to create a framework for my study and simultaneously justify my use of CDA in this project. Throughout I show where CDA sits in relation to Rationalist approaches to International Relations (IR) and demonstrate the merits of a CDA method in its place. By locating my project within a CDA framework, this chapter should justifiably set out how I will answer RQ.2.

What is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)?

CDA falls under the larger umbrella of Constructivism. Constructivism in IR has a focus on identities, interests and interactions and how these are constructed through collective meanings.[10] Constructivism considers inter-subjective knowledge and ideas to have constitutive effects on social reality and its evolution. Inter-subjective meanings have structural attributes that do not merely constrain or empower actors but they also define their social reality. Foundational to the theory is the understanding that the material world does not come classified and our objects of knowledge are not independent of our interpretations and language. This is because humans are social beings and cannot be separated from a context of normative meaning. 'To construct something is an act, which brings into being a subject or object that otherwise would not exist.'[11] The EU's CFSP is one such subject; a 'terrorist-led Palestinian Authority Government' is another. 'Once constructed, each of these objects has a particular meaning and use within a context. They are social constructs in so far as their shape and form is imbued with social

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values, norms, and assumptions rather than being the product of purely individual thought or meaning.'[12] Constructivist scholar Alexander Wendt took this further. In his seminal text *Constructing International Politics*,[13] he explained that objects (X) are only made possible, and would not exist without, the social structure (Y) by which they are 'constituted'. This constitutive relationship establishes a necessary or logical connection between object and structure.[14] It is this constitutive relationship that I will be investigating in my study. I intend to analyse the dialectical relationship between the HR/VP's Strategy Discourse (X) – his vision or strategy for Europe's foreign policy – and its surrounding social structure – that being, in this case, the policy-making arena on the topic of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Y).

CDA scholars, such as Norman Fairclough, Laclau and Mouffe, have built upon Wendt's theory of constitutive relationships by adding a focus of critique and study. In particular, Fairclough's CDA contends that discourse is a form of social practice which both *constitutes* the social world and is *constituted* by other social practices. As a social practice, discourse does not just contribute to the (re)shaping of social structures but it also reflects them.[15] Political and policy structures, such as the EU's CFSP, are (re)produced through daily social action of individuals. Identities and interests are therefore endogenous to interaction (rather than the rationalist logic whereby they are exogenous).[16] It follows that if you want to transform structure then you have to change practise.[17] Hence, if I am to assess the prospects for change in structure I need to be analysing the social and discursive practises that constitute it; that includes the vague play of practice between discourses and how efforts are made to stabilise and maintain dominant meanings within a particular domain.[18]

There is a need to conceptualise the interplay of different discourses that compete in the same domain to show how structure relates to practice. This can be provided by CDA as I shall now demonstrate. Dominant meanings are maintained via an *order of discourse*.[19] This refers to the way competing discourses in the same domain are networked together. The whole network is the order of discourse and it makes up a social structure. The order of discourse mainstreams and maintains dominant identities, meanings, ways of acting and ways of response.[20] For example, there was a dominant way to conduct diplomatic meetings between EU and Hamas officials (in secret, and with the EU bringing pre-determined policies thus preventing equal dialogue[21]). That is because there is a dominant identity for both actors (legitimate ambassadors vs. illegitimate terrorists[22]) which influences and constrains their practice of interaction. This produces a dominant way of response (securitisation[23]*)* which can serve to reproduce and cement those same dominant identities and practices. Together, all these social practices *constitute* the social structure that defines CFSP-making in the EU. Charett argued that the reproduction of this social structure via repetitive practices of EU diplomats is what characterises the EU's weak actorness on CFSP towards Israel Palestine.[24] The 'critical' aspect of CDA offers a critique of the social institutions and practices that produce discourse. This can lead to an uncovering of deeper social structures and mechanisms as well as the questioning of the role of institutions and practices.[25] Conventional constructivists focus on *why* questions; Critical constructivists focus on *how* questions. Since RQ.1 is – *How can we assess the prospects for success of Borrell's language of power?* – it has appeared that critical analysis is the best approach to answering this.

CDA in EU Foreign Policy Studies

This leads me to locate CDA and Constructivism in EU foreign policy studies. It is now common-place to study the EU as an international actor, however, it is still important to make the link between its internal process of integration and policy-making as well as external developments in the international arena.[26] Hill et al. note three perspectives on IR and the EU: the EU as a subsystem of IR; the EU as a process of IR and; the EU as a power in IR.[27] This study looks inwards, so I will understand the EU as a subsystem of IR because under this perspective lies New or Sociological Institutionalism which encourages us to study the EU via its institutions. It argues that internal socialisation can produce increased actorness over time and key to this area is the way member states are articulated, how they interact and the discourses within them.[28] CDA and Constructivism well compliments this New Institutionalist approach to EU studies.

Key Constructivists writing on EU CFSP include Ian Manners, M.E. Smith and Pierson.[29] They distinguish themselves from the traditional approach to EU foreign policy analysis – Rationalism (such as neo-realist and neo-liberal theories). Rationalist scholars have dismissed EU CFSP in the Middle East as merely declaratory diplomacy –

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'just words.'[30] Constructivists however argue that, using a CDA approach, we are able to analyse aspects of the CFSP that rationalists can't see: that being the social structure/ reality and not just the policy outcomes. Crucially, Constructivists scholars understand EU foreign policy as a 'negotiated order'[31] and hence it should be analysed as such. Discourses and practices that negotiate and make up the social structure, such as the speech given by Borrell at his Parliamentary hearing, are seen by Constructivists to have an important independent status.[32] Habermas' theory of 'communicative action' explains why this is especially true in the case of CFSP. It argues that discursive practices have the capacity to:

(i) change zero sum into mixed motive games and establish the common knowledge necessary to achieve cooperative arrangements in the absence of a hegemonic enforcer; and (ii) establish new international norms to socialise actors into existing ones.[33]

Many hold that CFSP is defined by: an underlying order of formal and informal rules; norms; an ever expanding set of treaty provisions; ever expanding scope of policy areas; reproduced policy practices; ever higher aspirations; and so forth.[34] Simultaneously the CFSP is characterised by apparently unavoidable instances of inaction, lack of consensus, lack of impact on external actors, events and developments.[35] Rationalists look at the latter and make conclusions about the former while CDA encourages us to analyse the former in order to understand the latter – this shall be my approach.

Applying CDA to my Research Project

Having presented a particular way to conceptualise discourses and orders of discourses with a view to operationalise them for the purpose of empirical analysis, I move on to project this analytical concept onto the reality of CFSP in the case of Israel-Palestine in order to create a framework for study and provide an answer to RQ.1. The starting point for my research is a dramatic shift in one of the discursive practices that defines CFSP – the strategic discourse of the HR/VP. Since CDA is especially concerned with radical change taking place in social life and how semiosis fits in with that process of change, it is a remarkably relevant approach to this project. The focus of CDA is on shifts in the relationship of discourses and other social practices.[36] This gives direction and a framework to my study:

- I am seeking to understand: how we can assess the prospects for *success* of Borrell's radical shift in *discourse* to a 'language of power'?
- CDA theory suggests that (a) 'success' would be a change in in the CFSP social structure (in this case to the effect of solving EU weak actorness); and that (b) the HR/VP's 'discourse' is one social practice in a negotiated order of discourses and other social practices.[37]
- Therefore, in orderto accurately assess the prospects for success, I must measure the trajectory of the other social practices that compete or negotiate the order of discourse in the CFSP domain.

This framework can now be applied for the purpose of answering RQ.2: *What are Borrell's prospects in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?*

I have chosen to focus on CFSP towards this conflict for two main reasons. Firstly, during the 1960's and 70's the then referred to 'Arab-Israeli conflict' was seen as a golden opportunity to unite the European Community's (EC) young foreign policy arm and thus can be said to have played an influential part over the development of today's CFSP.[38] The EU's profound and long-standing involvement indicates it has deeply entrenched dominant and competing social practices making it an ideal case study for CDA. At the same time, the EU's performance on the conflict has consistently been regarded as a failure of paralysis, whereby the EU falls short of achieving its two-state solution objective[39] and unintentionally reinforces a status quo power dynamic from Israel on Palestine – "Instead, we bankroll Israeli occupation."[40] There is an imperative therefore to study this impasse from new and underused perspectives such as CDA.

To this latter point, there is an identified gap[41] in the literature on (critical) discourse analysis of CFSP at the policy process level since Rationalist scholars have tended to favour studying policy outcomes as these have more palatable implications. But in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Rationalists studies have fallen short of

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offering solutions with regards to the EU's perceived weak actorness in this area. CDA can offer insight into the internal dynamics of EU foreign policy making and shed light on the social structure where Rationalism cannot. [42] Additionally, CDA is practically useful in two ways: as both a theoretical perspective and a method,[43] it lends itself well to the empirical and explanatory aspects of this study. Moreover, the CDA of Norman Fairclough, can be used in combination with other theoretical approaches since it operates with societal experiences other than discursive phenomena.[44] This is ideal since 'methodological pluralism is required when seeking to explain and understand the EU's international relations.'[45] Finally, CDA is a form of critical social science, so it has emancipatory objectives.[46] This will help me meet my broader research aims and especially to create space for solutions to the EU's weak actorness on Israel-Palestine to the benefit those individuals negatively affected by an Israeli occupation entrenched by EU diplomacy.

CHAPTER THREE

Identifying Discursive & Social Practices

Introduction

Using the CDA framework, this chapter will be focused upon answering SQ.1 (*what have been the discursive and social practices that characterise EU paralysis on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the past?*) My first identified social practice is thatof previous High Representative's (HR)[47] Strategy Discourse, which was articulated in the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS)[48] and conceptualised as Normative Power Europe by Ian Manners[49] or a *liberal chain of equivalence* by CDA scholars.[50] It is the only practice identified here based solely on linguistic text, hence I distinguish it as a 'discursive' practice. It is also singled out as the subject of this study. I then turn my focus to identifying other social practices that compete for space in the CFSP domain to reveal the*order of discourse*. To do this, I use CDA to critically examine the interactions of EU policy-makers following the 2006 Palestinian Legislative elections which saw a Hamas-led Palestinian Authority Government emerge victorious. The prevailing practices – this time social in nature – I identify here:*a pressure from the audience (2); an internal incoherence (3); and a naturalised obedience of civil servants (4).* This chapter will show that there was no constitutive relationship between discursive practice (1) and social practices (2), (3) and (4). Instead, these social practices hinder the effectiveness of the HR's Strategy Discourse and exacerbate the characteristics of EU weak actorness.

Identified Discursive Practice (1): 'A Secure Europe in a Better World'

In 2003 the European Council approved a report by HR for CFSP: the 'European Security Strategy: A Secure Europe in a Better World' (ESS).[51] It marked the EU's first attempt to think through its CFSP objectives.[52] Famously it called for 'effective multilateral system leading to a fairer, safer and more united world.'[53] On achieving such a world, the ESS makes bold assertions of EU's normative power. For example, with regards to building strategic partnerships, reference to 'common values' is made seven times[54] throughout the document. Those common values include commitment to 'human rights, democracy, and rule of law, and market economic principles as well as on common interests and objectives.'[55]

This strategic discourse was conceptualised as 'Normative Power Europe' (NPE). NPE is a conceptual framework, developed mostly by Constructivist scholar Ian Manners.[56] Briefly, NPE is the notion that through action and example the EU can help to influence what is regarded as 'normal' and acceptable in IR.[57] He argued that EU member states bind together over common ideas about EU's role in international society and agree that the point of departure for political practise is the 'common values' upon which EU external actions are based: peace, liberty, democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights.[58] Policy-makers and the ESS articulated NPE in phrases such as 'the European Approach,'[59] which favours diplomacy, negotiation and compromise, in contrast to say the US's militaristic approach.[60] This strategic discourse was seriously influenced by Liberal-idealist conceptions of the EU as committed to 'civilising international relations as part of a wider transformation of international society.'[61] Much of CFSP practices relating to management of conflicts in the 2000's were codified through liberal policies. One example: the EU's Election Observation Mission in the West Bank and Gaza 2006,[62] with an aim to promote

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European values of liberal democracy and human rights through supporting free and fair elections in Palestine.[63] It can be said this policy was shaped within a discourse whereby liberal values play a central role in conflict resolution.[64]

The articulation of shared liberal values in the ESS can be explained by CDA scholar's Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) theory of *chains of equivalence.*[65] This is thelinking of concepts where the difference between them disappears. A liberal chain of equivalence is prevalent in CFSP whereby human rights are affiliated to democracy to liberty and so forth. Larsen claims that, in the 2000's, there did 'not seem to be other general discourses in EU documents which draw on something different from a liberal chain of equivalence.'[66] Having defined the first discursive practice that constitutes part of the CFSP's social structure, I now look to reveal the other social practices that define policy-making in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Identified Social Practices (2), (3) and (4)

Here I will be critically examining the social and discursive practices of EU diplomats during the fall out of the 2006 Palestinian Legislative elections. This event came at a time when the ESS and notions of "the European Approach" were well established. It is also a case study whereby the EU's CFSP was considered weak[67] and riddled with "double standards."[68] The evidence I am examining comes from a combination of elite interviews conducted by myself and an existing series elite interviews by Catherine Charrett[69] as well as EU documents and press statements from the period of January 2006 to June 2006.

In my analysis of the evidence I am focusing on the following in order to delineate different social practices:

* the particular ways in which each discourse ascribes meaning;
* any understandings naturalised in all of the discourses as common-sense.[70]

Context

The January 2006 democratic Palestinian Legislative Elections saw a Hamas-led Palestinian Authority (PA) Government emerge victorious. The elections themselves were EU funded, monitored and deemed by EU officials to be free and fair.[71] Despite this, the EU (as a member of the Quartet[72]) subsequently suspended all financial aid to the PA following their electoral success. They said this was because the PA did not accept the Quartet's principles to renounce violence and recognise the right of Israel to exist.[73] Critics, including EU officials, of the EU's action here said that it was weak, failed to deliver on its shared liberal values and sub sequentially: "(…) the whole lot came tumbling down. There was violence and the prospects of the Palestinian Legislative Council ever having any credibility fell apart."[74]

Social Practices

There were three main social practices that I believe defined and constituted policy making in this case.

2. Pressure from the Audience

The EU was under pressure from Israeli and American political elites to ignore the democratic results and instead support the preferred Palestinian party, Fatah. Turner has called this position 'peace-building-via-exclusion', whereby priority was given to supporting those political elites that the international community favoured, rather than supporting good governance reforms.[75] On the ground this took the form of Israeli and American pressure lobby:

Immediately after the elections, American officials could be seen making their rounds…. The Americans were pressuring EU officials on how they should respond to Hamas's success. Basically, the US was carrying with them Israeli Foreign Minister Lieberman's policy and was pushing this on European officials.[76]

As well as the physical presence of lobbyists, it can be argued that the EU, especially as a member of the Quartet,

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was under pressure to perform to its international audience. Pattern illuminates:

Some member states allowed themselves to be convinced that if we took a position which was regarded as hostile or unhelpful in Israel or Washington, we would play ourselves out of the game.[77]

Indeed, many critiqued Quartet for being ceremonial and in actual fact just pumping out US position. Further evidence to suggest this to be true comes from Persson's analysis of EC/ EU statements from 1967-2009.[78] He observed an EU shift to be less critical of Israel present in all institutions at this time. This was in stark contrast to how the EU had behaved in the past[79] thus suggesting a new discourse had prevailed in the CFSP domain: the EU should complement the US. CDA theory suggests that reasserting this pressure in other key strategic moments would naturalise it, thus siding with the US becomes common sense. This social pressure to ignore the electoral results in favour of supporting the "good guys" (Fatah) weakened the effectiveness of the HR's Strategic Discourse by directly contradicting the liberal ideals of democracy.

3. Internal Incoherence

Another assumed naturalness was to side with either Israel or Palestine amongst EU member states which prevented a coherent response and directly contributed to the EU's 'weak actorness' in this area. Patrick Child narrates a particular working culture among EU member states when addressing issues relating to Palestinian politics:

Basically we have some member states, either because of their historical relationship to the US, or because of their history with Israel and the Jewish population, feel a natural tendency to be on the Israeli side of the argument, and others, for different historical reasons, have more loyalties and sympathies for the Palestinian cause.[81]

Amongst policy makers it is well-known 'facts', such "that ultimately Germany takes no action against Israel,"[82] and that Visegrad states want to show their loyalty as US allies,[83] that limit the creativity of their decisions. Meanwhile:

The British government position has often been deeply sceptical of the Israelis. At the same time, they're not going to rock the boat because of the Americans amongst others. Although there's lots of sympathy directed towards the Palestinians, they have no political clout.[84]

The repetitive use of such claims as though they are brute facts negates the possibility of treating them otherwise. Meanwhile, Davies' comments displays the constitutive relationship between this practice (3) and pressure from the audience (2), as the uniting position of Member States is to side with America. This builds a picture of the *order of discourse*. If the EU is to move past internal incoherence to effective collective action, it would first need to denaturalise these working cultures.

4. Obedient Civil Servants

The final social practise I observe is a discourse of obedience for civil servants and MEP's which, despite their expertise, prevents them from having any influence to change their social structure. Both Charrett and my own interviews show that EU officials 'demonstrate a frustration between believing that the EU's sanction of Hamas was misplaced, and being part of a process that enacted it anyways.'[85] It was documented that some members of the Foreign Affairs Committee 'warned that Hamas should not be pushed too hard and too fast, pointing out that Hamas itself was divided.'[86]

But ultimately those working in the Parliament "did not feel involved".[87] Similarly, in the Commission: 'There was lots of people who were very conscious of the double standards being demonstrated here.'[88] A former colleague of HR Javier Solana offers his opinions on the possibility that Solana preferred an alternative response to Hamas's success:

Anti-Hamas policy, was not Solana's design. Totally not. He implemented it because he was an obedient civil

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servant, but it was not his idea. It is an example of one of those things that were decided elsewhere and imposed on him as an implementer of such decisions, I can bet on that.[89]

A Rationalist explanation would offer that, formally, the Council of Ministers holds power of decision making on foreign policy and passes it on to be enacted by subordinate institutions. But a CDA lens pushes us to problematize how social pressure prevents alternative discourses from being aired. At an institutional level, bureaucrats, such as the HR, are pressured by fears of being politically marginalised or of losing their job to conform to the discourse of the day: 'Any other decision [than to support the conditions] would have put his job at risk, and Solana would have never done this.'[91]

This practice of obedience forecloses engagement with alternative policy outcomes. It also weakens the role of HR and hence his Strategy Discourse (1) as a tool for change.

Conclusion

This chapter identified one discursive practice and three competing social practices that characterised CFSP towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2006. It is clear there was no constitutive relationship between the HR's Strategic Discourse (1) and social practices (2), (3) and (4). What's more, the relative strength of those social practices work to the detriment of discursive practice (1) and the EU's prospects as a strategic actor by keeping it subordinate to the US, disjointed and afraid to change the status quo on Israel-Palestine. In order for Borrell to succeed in overturning EU's weak actorness and embrace a "language of power"[92] therefore, the relative strength of competing practices (2) (3) and (4) would have to reduce. In the next chapter I measure if this has come to be the case.

CHAPTER FOUR

Measuring Change in Discursive & Social Practices

Introduction

Chapter Three put forward one discursive and three competing social practices that characterised CFSP towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2006. This chapter shall be focused upon measuring for change over time to those same practices thereby answering SQ.2. I shall start by outlining the contemporary Strategy Discourse of the HR/VP depicted in the 2016 European Global Strategy and in a speech given by HR/VP, Josep Borrell, 2019. I then turn my attention to the competing three social practices and assess how they have changed in a contemporary setting – that being the EU's reaction to the US' decision to move its embassy from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem in 2017 as well as the broader context. In measuring for change over time, this chapter finds:

1. A transformation of the Strategic Discourse of the HR/VP – with aspirations for 'a Stronger EU'.

Competing with:

- an increased pressure from the audience;
- an intensified internal incoherence;
- a consistency in the naturalised obedience of civil servants

Measured Discursive Practice (1): From 'A Secure Europe' to 'A Stronger Europe'

In December 2013, HR/VP, Federica Mogherini, was tasked with drafting a European Global Strategy (EGS) to revaluate the EU's CFSP strategy, as the relevance of the 2003 ESS[93] strategic document was being questioned.[94] Published in 2016, the EGS[95] is substantially different from the 2003 ESS in numerous ways. For example, where ESS was bold on normative power, even hubristic, the EGS is modest, realistic and constructive[96] – 'We will not strive to export our model, but rather seek reciprocal inspiration from different regional

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experiences.'[97]'Strategic autonomy in regional involvement' is mentioned seven times throughout the document, which Howorth notes this is an echo of the message from Washington – that the EU *must* take over greater leadership in their own neighbourhood.[98] Most importantly, the EGS recognises that 'In this fragile world, soft power is not enough' and that in order to be a credible actor EU must enhance its security and defence.[99] This is a move away from the liberal chain of equivalence (whereby human rights are affiliated to democracy to liberty and so forth) we observed in the ESS towards a more realist foreign policy. New appointee to HR/VP Josep Borrell takes this strategic discourse further by addressing popular criticisms from public and scholarly discussions that the EU is weak, lacks Member State convergence and autonomy. For example, he details that enhanced security and defence should involve accruing military might and that developing European defence will enable the EU to better balance the NATO transatlantic relationship[100] so suggesting the EU play less of a subordinate role to the US. He calls for greater integration of Member State foreign policies with the Commission and European External Action Service (EEAS) and more coherence between internal and external policies, such as trade, as 'we have the instruments to play power politics and we need to put them together.'**[101]** Indeed, he asserts that, against the backdrop of a polycentric international system where principles of liberal democracy not necessarily shared, 'the EU needs to learn the language of power.'[102] Some EU pundits have suggested Borrell is inciting neo-realist foreign policy principles.[103] What is clear is that his speech, coupled with the EGS, marks a dramatic shift away from the previous CFSP Strategic Discourse where 'there did not seem to be other general discourses in EU documents which draw on something different from a liberal chain of equivalence.'[104] Since discourse is used in IR settings to 'establish new international norms to socialise actors into existing ones,'[105] we can assume Borrell is trying to change the social structure to effect of solving EU weak actorness. But for him to be successful, his discourse must prevail over the forceful competing social practices.

Measured Social Practices (2), (3) and (4)

To measure for change to the competing social practices I will be critically examining the practices of EU diplomats in reaction to the US' decision to move its embassy from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem in 2017 and the broader context. I have chosen this event because firstly, it took place a year following the publication of the EGS, hence aspirations for a 'stronger EU in the world' had been set. Secondly, despite these aspirations, the EU failed to respond with a joint statement denouncing the US' move resulting in another instance of EU weak actorness and so parallels with 2006 can be drawn. Evidence I am examining come from elite interviews conducted by myself and by EU journalists as well as EU documents from the period December 2017 to June 2018. In particular I am looking for:

- an increase, decrease or consistency in the prevalence of a social practice
- diverging or deepened understandings naturalised in all of the discourses as common-sense.[106]

Context

On December 6, 2017, US President Donald Trump announced the United States recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and ordered the planning of the relocation of the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. His move overturned the international – and EU – consensus on the conflict which viewed the status of Jerusalem as something to be negotiated as part of a final status agreement.[107] The official opening of the US embassy in Jerusalem took place on May 14th 2018. On both occasions the EU struggled to give a strong coherent response as attempts to publish joint statements were blocked by Member States Hungary, Czech Republic and others.[108] Their veto's left the remaining 25 EU countries to issue individual communiques, while reducing the EU reaction to a tweet by its mission in Tel Aviv.[109]

2. Pressure from the Audience

Chapter three defined this social practice as the EU being under pressure from Israeli and American political elites to toe the US' line. Pressure was exerted directly, via the physical presence of lobbyists, and indirectly, through a pressure to perform to the international audience. CDA focused research reveals that direct pressure from the US and Israel on the EU has actually increased. When asked whether, in their experience, the presence of US and/or Israeli diplomats had increased, decreased or stayed the same, both interviewees stated it had increased in Brussels

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since 2006.[110] [111] By way of explanation former MEP Chris Davies said "Now they're trying to win support for the Trump plan and basically just trying to make sure the EU is acquiescent."[112]

A former MEP illuminated that meetings with Parliamentary Delegations for relations with Israel (D-IL) and with Palestine (DPAL) are conducted separately – with no presence from either counterpart – and this was a deliberate move by the Israeli lobby to ensure a technical barrier to having all parties around the table.[113] Indeed, many MEPs have relays with Israeli lobby groups and are gathered under the banner of the European Coalition for Israel (ECI).[114]Funding for the ECI increased by 100,000€ in 2016,[115] implying efforts to influence the Parliament were increased before and around the time of Trump's embassy relocation.

However, unlike in 2006, the EU is under less pressure to be seen to agree with the US as unilateral moves by the Trump administration are perceived as counterproductive to cooperation by the international audience.[116] Yet the EU still failed to produce a coherent response in opposition to the US 2017-18. CDA directed research offers an explanation – a senior European diplomat told a Brussels based journalist:

The Hungarians didn't want to poke Trump in the eye and the Czechs and the Romanians are considering to move their embassies to Jerusalem against the EU position. This is the state of the EU these days.[117]

Their comments echoes that of *Pattern* in 2006;[118] the same Member States still feel pressure to be seen supporting the US. Like in 2006, there is an assumed a naturalness that the EU should complement US. So prevailing is this social practice that it is seen even to creep into the discourse of HR/VP, Federica Mogherini, shown in her concluding remarks at Parliamentary debate where she states that the EU cannot 'go it alone' because a solution cannot be found without American involvement.[119]

So not only is this social practice at direct odds with Borrell's Strategy Discourse, which calls for an EU independent of the US, but it is also quite clearly much stronger, with some Member States prioritising the US position over the EU's. What's more, its strength is exacerbated by the need to secure unanimity in EU CFSP decision-making leaving competing discourses – like Borrell's – out in the cold.

3. Internal Incoherence

In 2006 this social practice observed an assumed naturalness to side with either Israel or Palestine amongst EU Member States preventing a coherent response. Divergence within EU policy-making on Israel-Palestine is certainly true in the contemporary context. The accession of central European states, Romania (2007) and Croatia (2013), suggests this may have increased as they bring with them a host of representative officials prepared to buttress the Visegrad State's positions.[120]

Following President Trump's announcement, central European Member States, including Romania and Croatia, persistently broke ranks with official EU positions thereby deepening an assumed naturalness to side with Israeli allies. When asked why a spokesman for Czech president drew upon historic ties between the countries:

Israel and the US are key allies for the Czech Republic. Seventy years ago, Czechoslovakia helped Israel in its struggle for independence and 100 years ago, the US helped Czechoslovakia emerge.[121]

This reflects the same working culture observed by *Patrick Child* in 2006.[122] Despite the US' move being at clear odds with the EU's position, central European Member States still feel a naturalised tendency to side with Israel and American allies.

4. Obedient Civil Servants

The final social practise observed from 2006 was a discourse of obedience for civil servants and MEP's which, despite their expertise, prevented them from having influence to change their social structure. The evidence collected from my research suggests this is still true today, although more would be needed to assess whether this has

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increased or decreased. On their perception of the Commission's relative strength, a former MEP relayed an anecdote:

"In my very last week in the parliament organized an event – 'The Legal Challenges of EU Trade with Occupied Territories.' We really wanted somebody from the Commission to come to the Parliament, but they wouldn't send anybody."[123]

When asked why the Commission didn't send anyone, they said:

"Well, they're just scared I think. There's a real fear, because, whatever the Commission says about foreign policy, then there's also the complication of how that plays out within the relations to Israel and Palestine and Israel's seen as a very strong force to be reckoned with."[124]

It was observed in 2006 that bureaucrats, such as the HR/VP, are pressured by fears of being politically marginalised to conform to the discourse of the day.[125] Evidence to show this is still true today suggests it will constrain the ability for Borrell to enact his own Strategy Discourse as repetition of social practices further engrains them into the social structure they constitute.[126]

Conclusion

This chapter has measured changes in the nature of discursive social practices over time. It found a shift in ambition of discursive practice (1) towards a more autonomous, coherent and powerful EU. But simultaneously an increase in prevalence and intensity of social practices (2) and (3) and a deepening of practice (4) through continuity/ repetition. I will now move on to interpret these findings by placing them back into the CDA framework I set out in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER FIVE

Interpreting Change in Social & Discursive Practice and Assessing Prospects for Success.

Introduction

This chapter is focused upon interpreting findings from Chapters Three and Four in order to assess what Borrell's prospects are for success in overturning EU paralysis on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, thus answering SQ.3 and my overall RQ.2 therein. It does this by locating the findings back into the CDA framework set out in Chapter Two whilst appreciating the limitations of this research as well as its significance.

What are Borrell's Prospects?

This study first sought to understand: how we can assess the prospects for *success* of Borrell's radical shift in *discourse* to a "language of power"?

'Success' was defined as a change in the CFSP social structure to the effect of solving EU weak actorness towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict while the 'HR/VP's discourse' was regarded as one practice in a negotiated order of social practices.[127] Hence, I said that to assess *what* Borrell's prospects are, *I must measure the trajectory of the other social practices that negotiate the order of discourse in the CFSP domain*.

To measure trajectory, I first Identified what those practices have been – a Strategic Discourse of the HR(/VP) (1), competing with; pressure from the external audience (2); an internal incoherence (3); and a naturalised obedience of civil servants (4). Chapter Three concluded that, in 2006: there was no constitutive relationship between the Strategic Discourse (1) and social practices (2), (3) and (4); that Strategic Discourse (1) was weak in the face of the competing practices; and finally, that the relative strength of those social practices served to exacerbate characteristics of EU weak actorness.

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In Chapter Four, I investigated how these practices have changed over time and found a radical shift in the Strategic Discourse of the HR/VP to one that addresses EU weak actorness towards Israel-Palestine, but only in rhetoric. *For the HR/VP's Strategic Discourse to be successful, then, we must observe a reduction in the relative strength of competing social practices (2), (3) and (4) that serve to exacerbate EU weak actorness characteristics* . However, this chapter found no such reduction but instead an increase in intensity and prevalence of all three competing social practices. Increase and repetition of social practices can, as Charrett argues, ritualise them.[128] Compulsively repeated and very hard to break, rituals make incredibly strong components of the social structure. It can therefore be concluded that *Borrell's prospects for success at changing the EU's social structure are low, even lower perhaps than if he had been HR(/VP) 14 years ago.*

Limitations of Research

I must stress however, the data provided in Chapter Four is very limited. Whereas in Chapter Three data was drawn from 19 existing elite interviews from 2006,[129] these weren't' available in the context of 2017/18. They were supplemented with interviews from EU commentators, but lacked consistencies in number, scope, focus and the position held by interviewees.

- Therefore, in addition to the two elite interviews conducted by myself, I would recommend that 17 more interviews be conducted with participants from EU institutions.

Although these limitations do not affect the answer to RQ.1 – a '*how*' question – they do affect my ability to make concrete conclusions to RQ.2 – *what* Borrell's prospects are. Nevertheless, it is my hope that the model presented in this research project can be applied to further research on this topic or indeed other research questions. For example: 'What were the social practices present during the EU's response to the annexation of Crimea 2014?' Or 'how do the social practices change in instances of successful EU collective action?'

Also, as Phillips and Jorgensen point out, the research is limited by my own reflexivity. Not only is the knowledge produced here just one representation of the world, but is also part of its own discursive struggle within the research field.[130] This is especially true when seeking to explain the EU in International Relations which requires a methodological pluralism.[131]

- Therefore, I recommend that the findings from my sole use of constructivist CDA as a method be read in relation to, or contrasted by, other established IR concepts such as balance of power, multilateralism, multipolarity and globalisation.[132] For comprehensive understanding of EU foreign policy one needs to combine the EU's internal character (as I have done) with an analysis of the international situation.[133]

Research Significance

As a critical theory and method, we can judge the political significance of my CDA led research in terms of the role the it plays in maintenance of, or challenge to, power relations in society.[134] With that view, in revealing the social discursive practices, my research has challenged both the power US and Israeli representatives hold over EU officials and the socio-political order between EU institutions. It has also implied that to foster more impactful and creative policy-making on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict one must first denaturalising the prevailing social practices that foreclose engaging with alternatives to the status quo. Hence, this research is for Commission and/or EEAS policy-makers, or indeed any person, working to that end. In practice this could take the form of recommendations such as:

- placing limits on lobbyists present in EU institutions working to promote EU-Israeli relationships.
- exploring new formats for European decision-making that circumvent the need for Member State consensus, for instance contact groups of willing member-states or strengthening the EU's policy of 'differentiation'.[135]
- increasing airtime of the HR/VP at EU Council sittings.

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Conclusion

This dissertation first sought to build a new framework – informed by CDA – through which we can study the EU in IR, plugging a much needed gap in the literature on discourse analysis in EU foreign policy studies.[136] Indeed, by employing CDA, I was able to shed light on internal dynamics of EU foreign policy-making where other scholars had not.[137] For example, we see an EU Commission constrained from exerting its full competencies[138] for fear of upsetting EU socio-political order. We also see perhaps a more recent change in the nature of the EU's IR activities towards less transparency, where the US is ostensibly withdrawing from the world stage yet behind the scenes increasing its backdoor diplomatic efforts to ensure an acquiescent EU in relation to Israel-Palestine.

Hence, this dissertation sought to understand the role that discourses and social forces play in cultivating, or indeed thwarting, solutions towards one of the EU's most long-standing foreign policy commitments – the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It investigated the likelihood that one foreign policy tool had in overturning the CFSP's failure of paralysis on its commitment, and judged it to be low in the face of commanding social forces that dictate EU policy behind the scenes – *the more things change, the more they stay the same.* However, by revealing previously unexamined assumptions that guide traditional modes of thought, we become better placed to break with precisely those things which have held the EU back. So, if Joseph Borrell wants to change the way the EU acts, he must interrogate the way it thinks, its common senses, its familiarities, its historic ties; he must understand *how* things stay the same, in order to make a difference.

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