Published on *USC Center on Public Diplomacy* (https://uscpublicdiplomacy.org)

Nov 04, 2016 by Daryl Copeland

The Year Ahead: A Strategic Opportunity for European Public Diplomacy [1]

With the rising tide of violence in Pakistan, the controversial surge into Afghanistan, the multilateral meltdown on climate change at COP 15, and tales of possible terrorist plots, it is easy to overlook what has been going on in Europe, where I spent considerable time this fall on a book tour. On November 9th I found myself with friends at the Brandenburg Gate, attending the commemorative ceremony organized to mark the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall, the re-unification of Germany and Europe, and the end of the Cold War.

That is a lot to celebrate, but to call the event historic does not quite convey the emotion, the excitement, and the sheer exhilaration that was palpable in the streets. If the rain dampened the numbers, it could not douse the spirit of the evening.

Not even close.

Gorbachev and Genscher. Medvedev and Merkel. Sarkozy. Brown. Walesa. Secretary Clinton introducing a videogram from President Obama - which elicited the loudest applause of the evening.

Imagine. As a symbol of the new Europe, this was a breathtaking sight to behold.

Amidst the speeches, music, fireworks and mulled wine, I found myself thinking, what does all of this mean, and where might it be going?

Most of the European officials, journalists and students I spoke to were leery, if not jaded about the emergence of the New Europe. Most seemed to have forgotten, amidst the tangle of treaties and the boggle of the Brussels bureaucracy, just how much has already been achieved. Yet these are early days yet for the integration project, which in the space of a scant half century has so tightly bound the destinies of former adversaries that armed conflict is now unthinkable. The latest legal and institutional developments bring the level of integration in the ever-expanding Union to a higher, more political level. The entry into force in late 2009 of the Treaty of Lisbon heralds passage into a new, more advanced phase in the continuing European experiment. The Treaty creates the post of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, to which a much expanded European diplomatic corps, the European External Action Service will report.

Over the coming months, officials from the European Commission will undoubtedly be meeting frequently with the newly appointed High Representative in order first to design, and then to build the new diplomatic institutions.

This, in my estimation, is a linchpin moment, but the broader ramifications of these changes are little understood, either within the EU or, especially, outside it. Indeed, much of the commentary -- provided so far mainly by the Euro-skeptics -- has been dismissive, if not

derisive.

This is unfortunate, because if properly managed, much good can come of these achievements, both for EU, and for the world beyond.

How might Europeans make the most of this historic opportunity to construct a common European foreign and security policy and to maximize their global influence in the 21st century?

For the past few hundred years, European statecraft has been concerned mainly with balancing power, first on a multi-polar continent, then in a bipolar world. The vectors of national power - armies, navies, economies, populations, territories - were carefully calculated and then balanced. Alliances were made and treaties entered into for purposes of expressing and extending that balance, and so was world order maintained.

From the Congress of Vienna until the end of the Cold War, armed force was the ultimate arbiter.

All of this might finally have changed with the advent of American uni-polarity in the early 1990s, but, in large part as a result of disastrous policy choices, this brief period of hegemony flamed out quickly in the wake of a violent starburst of shock and awe over Baghdad in 2004.

The mainstream view today is that world politics are now returning to some kind of a multipolar dispensation. But I have real doubts. Why? Because in the era of globalization, the principal sources of power and influence are now both highly dispersed geographically, and, among and between themselves, are fundamentally different in kind.

Unlike in the previous eras, the *heterogeneous* nature of the competing poles renders comparison difficult, and measurement even more so.

The USA, for instance, will for the foreseeable future be the world's leading military, or hard power.

Yet its economic and industrial position is in relative terms fading fast, a trend accelerated by the continuing financial crisis and costly foreign wars. Within a decade or two the mantle of leadership, and pride of place as the epicenter of the world economy, will have passed to the Asia-Pacific region generally, and to China in particular - with India not that far behind.

Russia seems intent on becoming an energy and resource pole, a status complicated by its residual capacities as a former superpower.

Brazil may also emerge as a pole, perhaps of cultural diversity or as the leader of the global south.

So, too, with other countries -- Turkey? Iran? -- and regions.

The emergence of a *hetero-polar world order* will call for a new emphasis on diplomacy involving a nuanced, and highly complex balancing between dynamic poles, and knowledge-driven problem solving to address common threats and challenges.

Many among this new suite of issues, such as climate change, resource scarcity and

pandemic disease, will be rooted in science and driven by technology.

What, then, for Europe?

If history is a reliable indicator, then it is entirely likely that the integration of the European economy will one day be matched by the consolidation of the European polity. With an increasingly interwoven economic union will inevitably come a higher degree of political influence, and that enlarged political influence will sooner or later translate into increased international sway.

To what end? And, just as importantly, how might this be exercised?

With its peace, prosperity, safe and livable cities, social safety net, excellent public infrastructure, rich historical heritage and thriving artistic and cultural life, in the era of heteropolarity, Europa seems destined to lead the world in soft power, the power of attraction. The source of Europe's strength and the basis of its comparative advantage will reside in the demonstration effect, in the ability to project its success by example internationally.

And if soft power is the fuel of influence, then innovative public diplomacy - based on meaningful exchange, reputation management and relationship building - will inevitably find application as the primary delivery vehicle.

In *Guerrilla Diplomacy* , I argue that because development has in large part become the new security in the age of globalization, diplomacy must displace defense at the center of international policy. In this regard, Europeans would be well advised to stop fretting over their serial inability to fashion a common defense policy. Bombs and guns, generals and admirals will have a place, but they will not determine the way forward for Europe in a heteropolar world. That enterprise will instead turn on dialogue, on cross-cultural communication, on negotiation and compromise in the management of the Union's bi- and multilateral relations.

Defense departments, although they have been allocated the lion's share of resources, are, as instruments of international policy, both too sharp, and too dull to provide these kinds of services.

You can't garrison against infectious disease, call in an air strike on global warming, or send in an expeditionary force to occupy alternatives to the carbon economy.

Diplomats, on the other hand, with their specialized cross-cultural, linguistic and political communications skills can, and indeed must address these issues.

The translation of Europe's considerable appeal into tangible, progressive influence vis-à-vis the other poles will largely depend, therefore, on the quality, agility and acuity of its public diplomacy.

If that idea catches on at the level of decision-makers and opinion-leaders within the European Union, it just might help to re-capture the public imagination which lately appears to have been flagging as regards the integration project - and in so doing assist in taking the entire process to a higher level.

In the face of such an outcome in 2010, we would all be more secure.