EU DIPLOMACY AS A QUANTUM SUPERPOSITION: TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL COMMON GROUND FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES OF A PLURALISING PHENOMENON?

La diplomacia de la UE como una superposición cuántica: ¿hacia un marco conceptual para investigaciones multidisciplinares de un fenómeno de pluralización?

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This article seeks to define diplomacy and related concepts in order to establish a conceptual common ground for multidisciplinary research on contemporary diplomacy, considering both the nature of diplomacy itself and the epistemological implications of multiparadigmatic scientific enquiry. Diplomacy is immersed in a process of pluralisation in terms of both actors and practices, which, along with the necessity of accommodating very diverse empirical approaches, leads to a contingent definition of diplomacy in terms of the management of the relations of alienated peoples. The solution to the problem of studying this pluralising phenomenon from different paradigmatic positions simultaneously was found in the conceptualisation of EU diplomacy in terms of the superposition of different quantum states. The article rounds off with a discussion of the epistemological consequences of the multiparadigmatic enquiry that would be made possible by considering EU diplomacy as a quantum superposition.

Abstract

Este artículo tiene como objetivo definir el concepto de diplomacia, así como conceptos relaciona-dos, para establecer un marco conceptual para investigaciones multidisciplinares de la diplomacia contemporánea, considerando tanto la naturaleza esencial de la diplomacia como las implica-ciones epistemológicas de una investigación científica multi-paradigmática. La diplomacia como fenómeno está inmersa en un proceso de pluralización en cuanto a actores y prácticas, lo que junto con la necesidad de acomodar enfoques empíricos muy diversos conlleva a la definición del concepto de diplomacia en términos de la gestión de las relaciones entre pueblos alienados. Para solucionar el problema de cómo estudiar la diplomacia desde diferentes enfoques paradigmáticos simultáneamente y de forma coherente, se propone conceptualizar la diplomacia de la UE como una superposición de distintos estados cuánticos. El artículo termina con una discusión de las consecuencias epistemológicas de la investigación multi-paradigmática posibilitado por la conside-ración de la diplomacia de la UE como una superposición cuántica

Resumen

The desire to know the truth is as old as the human race, and this desire must thrust aside any feeling of caution over the possible loss of the security provided by customary concepts.

Dimitrii I. Blokhintsev

1. Introduction

This article seeks to define diplomacy and related concepts in order to establish a conceptual common ground for multidisciplinary research on contemporary diplomacy, considering both the nature of diplomacy itself and the epistemological implications of multiparadigmatic scien-tific enquiry. This is deemed necessary by the fact that diplomacy itself is undergoing a rapid process of pluralisation and because this transformation has been paralleled by an increased diversity in the field, with studies emerging having legal, institutional, organizational, economic, communicative or other foci.

The social phenomenon of diplomacy has evolved with the Westphalian states system and the sovereign state since the 15th century (Anderson, 1993), culminating with the legal regularisa-tion and codification of existing diplomatic practices and functions in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961. Modern diplomacy is therefore both a product and a creator of the Westphalian state. Nevertheless, it is now clear that because of globalization, diplomacy is undergoing processes of transformation. As such, the main characteristics of the Westphalian model of diplomacy are under pressure from contemporary processes of globalisation, and the question of a rigorous definition of diplomacy and related concepts that allows for studying contemporary phenomena without the false sense of security provided by familiar concepts therefore presents itself as more urgent than ever.

To illustrate the theoretical argument, it will be developed in the specific context of EU diplo-macy, since its sui generis nature makes it a case where conceptual development is most urgent and where the dangers associated with applying traditional concepts should be most evident.

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Given the conceptual aims of the article, it regrettably falls outside its scope to apply the quantum theoretical argument to an empirical case.

At first glance, defining the concept of diplomacy seems to be a futile endeavour, particularly when the aim is to operationalise and clarify the meaning of the concepts, and thereby also of the social phenomena, for a group of researchers that approach the topic from very diverse points of view. As if this diversity were not enough, the social phenomenon that is the object of analysis is immersed in rapid transformation brought about by technological, economic, geopolitical, and economic factors which has led to a pluralisation of diplomacy in terms of the actors involved and the social practices employed. In this context, on one hand, analysts of diplomacy should not just recede into isolated and specific studies of a limited empirical reality based on concepts idiosyncratically defined and designed for the purpose. Although this would allow for great scientific rigour in the individual studies, there would be virtually no prospect for an eclectic scientific progress in the abstract, or a concerted group effort in the concrete. The starting point of the present article is that it is important to acknowledge the coexistence of antagonistic paradigms within the field and find a way to let the findings of the research conducted within each contribute to an overall understanding of the social phenomenon in question. On the other hand, we should not acknowledge ex ante the impossibility of rigorously defining essentially contested concepts, such as diplomacy. Any definition is an ontological claim that brings with it limitations not only of the object of study, but also a subsequent epistemological claim that may include and exclude different concrete research methods. Not defining concepts impedes rational conversation about the social phenomenon and reduces the scope for an eclectic scientific enquiry as surely as a multitude of competing definitions would. It would even entail a danger of the degeneration of epistemological positions and debates into a kind of philosophical solipsism that would render scientific enquiry moot.

This article seeks out to find a way between the Scylla of allowing multiple meanings of scientific key concepts, hindering scientific progress, and the Charybdis of coexisting rigid conceptual definitions making epistemologically diverse studies leading to different interpretations of hitherto understudied empirical phenomena incompatible. The next section of the article considers the status of diplomacy as an essentially contested concept and the further complication that the sui generis nature of the EU supposes for an analysis of its diplomacy. Section three argues for the necessity of applying a contingent definition of diplomacy inspired by the English School and Der Derian's work on diplomacy and presents the notion of a social phenomenon immersed in a process of pluralisation. Section 4 turns to the quantum states of diplomacy with the aim of conceptualising how different phenomena and mutually contradictory scientific enquiries may coexist within the same social space and add value, with a particular focus on the case of the EU. Section 5 contains a few brief reflections on the epistemological implications of the argument before presenting the conclusions of this conceptual analysis in section 6.

2. The study of (EU) diplomacy and the problem of overdetermination

Diplomacy is part of our every-day language and is as such a term with which we are familiar, for instance when we say that somebody behaved diplomatically. It does not mean via an ambassador, but with tact, respect for the other's feelings and very subtly. But this familiarity with the concept, that induces a sense of security in us that we know perfectly well what diplomacy is about, is

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precisely what makes a rigorous definition necessary. Whereas in science there is a necessity of distancing oneself from the implicit meanings of concepts in general, the relevance of distancing is particularly high in the case of diplomacy. Diplomacy is indeed a sponge concept, which sucks of many meanings up to the point where the concept becomes almost meaningless.

However, no social phenomenon can be attributed an essential meaning that is entirely closed or fixed. This is because of the phenomenon of overdetermination, a concept that refers to a surplus of meaning, arising from the plurality of meanings attributed to one single concept, such as diplomacy.[1] This overdetermination is related with the emergence of floating signifiers within academic and political discourses. These are elements that do not couple permanently to any one idea or meaning, but attach themselves to different concepts, and for example define the meaning of diplomacy in terms of foreign policy, courtesy or the daily tasks of a specific group of public officials. Nevertheless, in the discourse-theoretical perspective of Laclau & Mouffe, the basic condition of overdetermination and the existence of floating signifiers do not necessarily mean that it is a futile endeavour to try to define a concept. This is due to the existence of nodal points, which are privileged signifiers that fix the meaning of a chain of elements within discourses. Therefore, the meaning of a specific concept is relatively structured around a number of nodal points within a discourse (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 112), leading to relative objectivity within the social, and relatively stable, although essentially contested, meanings of a concept such as diplomacy.

Despite the polysemanticism of the concept, and although diplomacy predates the sovereign state, it is a rather straightforward first observation that diplomacy is typically defined in the literature as a prerogative of the Westphalian state. A great part of the literature consists of isolated empirical studies that make eclectic progress difficult, whereas more theoretically informed enquiries by authors such as Berridge (2005) and Hamilton & Langhorne (1995) all have the sovereign states and their interaction as their object of analysis. For the present purposes, a more useful is that approach of Jönsson & Hall (2004, p. 3), who see diplomacy as "a perennial international institution that 'expresses a human condition that precedes and transcends the experience of living in the sovereign, territorial states of the past few hundred years'". In this vein, in one of his principal work on diplomacy Der Derian (1987, p. 42) defines diplomacy in terms of alienation as "the mediation among estranged peoples organized into states that interact in a system." In this case, the reference object is clearly the peoples (that are merely presently organised into states) and what is vital is their estranged condition. Diplomacy is thereby defined in terms of the management of alienation between different groups of people, where alienation means "a separation which is accompanied by sentiments ranging from indifference to hostility" (Der Derian, 1987, p. 28). This definition sees alienation and peoples as nodal points, allowing for a range of different elements (specific actors or practices) to be attached to them, thereby making the concept of diplomacy sufficiently flexible to allow for analysing a pluralising phenomenon.

Given the purposes of the present article to provide a conceptual basis for a subsequent empirical analyses, for instance of EU diplomacy and its relations with its neighbours in the Southern Mediterranean, the advantage of Der Derian's approach is that it decouples the definition of diplomacy from specific actors and specific practices, although it limits the concept sufficiently

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1   This argument draws on the discourse theory of Laclau & Mouffe (1985).

to not allow anything to be called diplomacy. Whereas in principle any kind of meaningful practice undertaken to manage the alienated relations between two groups of people is diplomatic action in this definition, to be able to consider it a diplomatic relationship, the groups of people in question cannot in principle overlap, since then per definition they would not be alienated.[2] In this sense, we cannot speak of diplomatic relations between the EU and a member state, but we can speak of the diplomatic relations between two EU member states, although given the extremely institutionalised environment within which they interact and their transfer of competences to a supranational entity, it would be a very special case. What we can also speak of is the diplomacy that takes place between the peoples organised in the EU and different peoples in the Southern Mediterranean, as they are organised in different states. The fact that sovereign states do exist in the region should, however, not be taken to mean that only the interaction of their respective diplomatic services with EEAS officials is to be considered part of the diplomatic relationship. A multitude of actors represent the European and the Southern Mediterranean peoples. Officials of states, regions, cities and civil society organisations ranging from altruistic NGOs to armed rebel organisations all represent peoples, although with different level of recognition, different sources of legitimacy and with a different scope of diplomatic action. Even more actors influence the relationship between the European and Southern Mediterranean peoples, even if they are not representative as such. Examples could be criminal organisations with economic motives or violent actors without popular backing. In this sense, the relationship of the EU with this this whole wide range of actors is potentially relevant to understand the diplomatic relationship, as defined in terms of alienation, and therefore part of the object of scientific enquiry.

Whereas a multitude of actors in the Southern Mediterranean should therefore potentially be included in an analysis of the diplomatic relations of the EU with this region, the picture is equally complex on the EU side, although the legalisation and supranational institutionalisation of diplomatic interaction between Member States, and between these as a group towards non-EU actors, makes for very different analysis. The main danger is here the tendency of observers to analyse the EU as if it were a sovereign state and the activities of the EEAS as if it were simply a diplomatic service. Batora's (2013) point is that we should not think that the EEAS is something that can be easily categorised and analysed as if it were a well-known kind of actor. Also, the analysis should be opened up on the EU end of the relationship and take into account the multitude of relevant actors at EU level, such as the EEAS, the Commission and the Parliament and their different sources of power and legitimacy, but also how other relevant actors influence EU diplomacy, be they Member State diplomatic services, sub-state regions and civil society organisations.

3. Diplomacy as a pluralising phenomenon

Diplomacy was defined in the previous section as decoupled from the sovereign state as a form of political organization. It is important to stress that this was not merely because of taste or for

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2   It is possible, of course, that an individual feels a sense of belonging to two groups simultaneously. The important point is that a significant amount of individuals do not consider one group to be a subgroup of the other, larger group, e.g. it is possible to consider diplomacy between the EU (EU citizens) and a concrete third state, even if a number of individuals identify with and holds the citizenship of both the third state and the EU. However, it would make little sense to argue that a diplomatic relationship exists between Bavaria and Germany.

practical purposes within the context of a specific research project that seeks to give importance to non-state actors. The main reason is that diplomacy as an institution is undergoing a rapid transformation in terms of both the actors involved and the specific practices of interaction,[3] a process that Cornago (2013) conceptualises as a pluralisation of diplomacy. Trying to define a rapidly transforming phenomenon may seem like trying to square the circle, but at the same time, it is precisely the pluralisation of diplomacy that makes a rigorous definition necessary.

In the concrete case, we are not only studying the diplomatic relationships of a sui generis composite and complex actor (the EU) with a multitude of qualitatively very diverse actors from a neighbouring geographical region, but we must do so in the absence of a bench-mark type diplomacy. State diplomacy itself is also transforming in terms of its practices. The monopoly of the foreign ministry on international agency is rapidly disappearing and in the new scenarios, practices that were once marginal to the field, such as paradiplomacy and public diplomacy, are rapidly gaining in importance as practices for managing alienation and seeking political influence globally. With the definition adopted here, public diplomacy becomes a kind of diplomatic action that engages with foreign publics directly and can therefore be seen as a practice of managing alienated relations that is more direct than more traditional practices that seek to achieve this through interaction with representatives, be they state diplomats, city council members or NGO chairpersons. This rather idealist, possible even utopian, conception of public diplomacy is thus different from that of the point of view of traditional Westphalian diplomacy, where public diplomacy can be seen as a subverting, even antidiplomatic, practice that circumvents official channels of communication and seeks to influence the foreign policy of other states through the manipulation of a public opinion that puts pressure on government decision-makers (Rasmussen, 2014, p. 38).

The simultaneous changes in actors and practices is what leads to the argument of understanding contemporary changes in the way different groups deal with their alienation from other groups as a pluralisation of diplomacy away from the heavily institutionalised and state-centred model in all relevant aspects. Following this argument, there is a clear logic to the fact that if the actors involved in diplomacy change, so must necessarily the practices that are employed. Cornago (2013, chapter 4) takes a step further and also traces the impact of this pluralisation on diplomatic law, which is relevant far beyond legal scholarship, since diplomatic law, including both conventions and customary law, is largely indicative of the global common ground of international interaction. Inherent in the current process of pluralisation is therefore the danger of this global common ground being challenged, or even eroded, making diplomacy and its objective of managing the peaceful coexistence of different groups of people in an increasingly interconnected world even more difficult. In this sense I agree with Cornago (2013, pp. 71-76) that it is impossible for analysts to disregard the normative predicaments associated with the pluralisation of diplomacy and that it becomes a normative goal for diplomatic studies to conceptually allow for common ground to be found, to explore new practices and (hopefully) inform constructive diplomatic practice aimed not only at defending a particular interest, but also incorporating the systemic interest of establishing a global common ground for the management of alienation by a multitude of practices, in Cornago's (2013, p. 1) words to recover the *raison de système* in a diplomatic world where states are no longer the only actors.

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3   For a good discussion of the different practices and roles of contemporary diplomacy, see Bjola & Kornprobst (2013).

4. Superposition and quantum states of (EU) diplomacy

Whereas Cornago (2013) makes a convincing argument as for the pluralisation of diplomacy in terms of actors, practices and the systemic impact of these, within both the theoretical concept and social phenomenon of diplomacy, various tensions continue to coexist within diplomacy. These tensions range from the near harmonious to the essentially antagonistic and with various degrees of relative intensity.

Just as this article parts from the conviction of the futility of defining diplomacy in essentialist terms of specific actors or specific practices, it seems to be an equally sterile debate as to which of the approaches to the study of diplomacy is the more correct or useful. The pluralisation of diplomacy means a proliferation of approaches to the study of diplomacy, with a number of competing ontological suppositions. Legal analysis of EU diplomacy obviously contributes with insights into the general phenomenon as surely as economic, sociological or politological approaches. As argued in the introduction, what is important is to conceptualise the field in a way that allows for the coexistence of different scientific approaches and paradigms, without academic debate consisting only of a discussion of whose ontology is the more adequate or whose findings most accurately reflect reality. Only then does the interparadigmatic study of EU diplomacy become feasible in the sense of eclectic scientific progress.

To be able to conceptualise this multiparadigmatic reality in the academic field, I propose here to import basic ideas from the quantum mechanics area of physics which developed after Einstein formulated his general theory of relativity in 1915.[4] Der Derian introduced the concept of quantum diplomacy in a 2011 article, arguing that it is long overdue to "open up our conceptual and philosophical toolbox to the new developments in the hard sciences" (Der Derian, 2011, p. 376). However, Der Derian uses the term concept of quantum diplomacy essentially as a metaphor for the interconnectedness of different manifestations of diplomacy in absence of clearly observable causal relations rather than as an analytical concept. Wendt's (2006) piece where he provides an auto-critique of his *Social Theory of International Politics* (Wendt, 1999) is more ambitious in this sense, trying to develop an analytical concept of quantum social science. As such, the present article will draw more on Wendt's arguments, but changing the focus from the ideational and material properties of human individual and collective consciousness to EU diplomacy.

Quantum mechanics challenges the "illusion of determinism" in classical physics and implies an upheaval of our entire way of though (Blokhintsev, 1968, p. 1). Indeed, the central concept of superposition has been characterised as the most unsettling story to have emerged from the physical sciences in the last 400 years (Albert, 1992, chapter 1). Superposition refers to how matter can have more than one mode of being at the same time. In the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics, a quantum state is any potential state that a system can have, and the point is that the system only assumes a specific state when measured, and up until that point exists as a superposition of potential states. Experimentally, this gives rise to logical paradoxes, leading one observer to argue that it is a phenomenon that can be observed but not truly understood (Albert, 1992, p. 11). In what is probably the most famous thought experiment to illustrate the idea, Schrödinger's cat is at the same time alive and dead until the box in which

Der Derian introduced the concept of quantum diplomacy 2011, arguing that it is long overdue to "open up our conceptual and philosophical toolbox to the new developments in the hard sciences"

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[4] This article is based on the author's basic understanding of the fundamental concepts of quantum mechanics as a social scientist and does not pretend to do justice to the theoretical and mathematical complexity of the field.

it finds itself is opened. The radical ontological claim inherent in the concept of superposition might not be truly understood, however, it can be shown to exist in practice. As such, what is more interesting in the present context is how it can be used to solve the practical problems of interparadigmatic eclectic science in the study of a pluralising diplomacy. Although it is of course highly debatable position, this article starts from the argument that superposition is not any more radical in social science than in physics and that there is no reason to believe that a similar logic (or paradox) might not be an accurate ontological claim.

Few studies have so far applied the insights of quantum mechanics in social science,[5] and the argument is here limited to conceptual development and does not seek to establish any new method for social scientific enquiry deducible from quantum mechanics. Indeed, just as quantum mechanics does not invalidate classical physics, a quantum theoretical approach does not invalidate the classical methods of social scientific enquiry, whichever paradigm they originate in. The central argument in this article is therefore pragmatic, although radical: accepting that an equivalent of quantum superposition could exist in social systems, such as EU diplomacy, can be directly useful in terms of organising and reducing conceptual and definitional complexity when studying a pluralising diplomacy rife with tensions and antagonisms from what must necessarily be an interdisciplinary and multiparadigmatic starting point.[6] Consequently, I propose to consider EU diplomacy as a superposition of different quantum states that might be compatible or mutually exclusive. As noted by Wendt, a complete description of quantum systems must necessarily include the description of different quantum states, even if their truth claims are contradictory (Wendt, 2006, p. 191), a phenomenon described by Niels Bohr as complementarity. It should be noted that some of the most interesting recent scholarship on EU diplomacy, though of course not all, has been published as edited volumes[7] incorporating very different approaches to EU diplomacy in terms of purposes, ontology, epistemology and method, and as such the argument presented here could be seen as much as an attempt to conceptualise an already existing disciplinary tendency toward a pluralistic tolerance, rather than an attempt to fundamentally alter the nature of scientific enquiry in the field.

Accepting the superposition of diplomacy implies that it becomes futile to determine objectively the essential nature of EU diplomacy, such as whether it is fundamentally interest-based, identity-driven or normative, or whether it is geopolitical, economic, legal or ideological factors that best explain the current state of affairs. The argument thus runs in parallel to the wave-particle duality debate on whether light is essentially a wave or a particle, when solid experiments can be designed to prove either. The problem is as such not one of accurateness of measurement, but of the way a system manifests its properties. Superposition is a matter of ontology, not of method. To illustrate the argument, a few of the possible quantum states of EU diplomacy will be discussed in the following.

In diplomacy there is always an inherent alienated other, giving rise to a basic tension between its relational manifestation in concrete relationships and its manifestation in terms of the diplo-

The central argument in this article is therefore pragmatic, although radical: accepting that an equivalent of quantum superposition could exist in social systems

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5 Apart from Der Derian (2011) and Wendt (2006), another notable exception is Haven & Khrennikov (2013).

6 The epistemological implications of this argument are no less dramatic in social science than it is in physics. However, it falls outside of the scope of the article to enter into the depths of this discussion and the focus in the next section is on outlining a few first practical considerations regarding epistemology.

7 Examples include Cardwell (Ed.) (2011); Koops & Macaj (Eds.) (2015); Smith, Keukeleire & Vanhoonacker, (Eds.) (2016); Spence & Bátora (Eds.) (2015).

matic practices and strategies of a given actor. Diplomacy is simultaneously both, but for reason of clarity, it would be beneficial to reserve the term diplomatic relations to the relationship and diplomatic action to the practices and strategies of a given actor. It is therefore more precise to talk of EU diplomatic action or EU diplomatic relationships than the general "EU diplomacy".

Also, there is an inherent tension between the form and content of diplomacy. One simple solution has been to reserve the concept of diplomacy to the form of interaction and foreign policy (states) or external action (EU) to the content of the interchange. However, even if this distinction is linguistically useful, it analytically obscures the fact that a concrete relationship exists as both. The foreign policy content of a relationship will in a pluralising world always be an integral part of its form, and vice-versa. It is only when an observer chooses an analytical focus that the social phenomenon assumes its state of diplomacy (form) or foreign policy (content) in ontological terms.[8]

Another way of applying the reasoning of quantum mechanics in the present context is by considering the traditionally inherent antagonistic causal ideas of diplomacy as quantum states of diplomacy: *Raison d'état* and the *raison de système*. Diplomatic action, as well as a diplomatic relationship, is at the same time defined by a logic of *raison d'état* that seems to further the political objectives of each of the actors involved, although given that we do not consider the states the only relevant actors, we should probably speak of a *raison d'acteur*. The main causal idea is that diplomacy is all about furthering a particular interest. However, the very interaction continuously produces and reproduces the intersubjective understanding allowing the interaction to take place and give meaning to each of the actors and their practices, thereby following also a systemic logic, a *raison de système*, which is about constructing and furthering a universal interest, based on a shared diplomatic culture (Bull, 1977, p. 304).

In terms of identity, this also means that diplomacy at the same time construct relatively stable categories of Us and Them by the very form of interaction while simultaneously contributing to increase knowledge and understanding of the Other, constructing intersubjective understanding not only about diplomacy and international interaction, but ultimately also regarding more fundamental political ideas about the nature of the good society (ontological) and how to achieve it (causal). Furthermore, the very concept of international identity can of course also be considered as a quantum superposition where the identity of an international actor only assumes a specific manifestation in a concrete interaction with another actor (Wendt, 2006, p. 198).

The superposition of diplomatic quantum states is also clearly identifiable in EU diplomatic action. Apart from the edited books cited above, which are reflective of a pluralistic tolerance in the discipline and which provide multiple perspectives on EU diplomacy without debating which is the more correct, the discipline is also characterised by the debate about the essential nature of the EU and its diplomacy. Should EU diplomacy be conceptualised as a traditional Westphalian diplomacy that is basically about defending EU interests on a global level based on an EU nationalist discourse (Frasier Cameron's euro-nationalist thesis (Cameron, 2007, p. 16)), is it mainly about making the world a better place (Manners' normative power thesis (Manners 2002)), about making the world a better scenario for the EU to act upon by shaping the international system in the EU's image (The structural foreign policy thesis of Keukeleire

There is an inherent tension between the form and content of diplomacy

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8   It is beyond the scope of the present article to go into the discussion of how this challenges the subject-object distinction in classical science. For an introduction to this problem, see Wendt (2006).

et al., 2009) or the result of gender bias (Novotná, 2014)? Whereas each perspective obviously brings forward new knowledge about EU diplomatic relations and diplomatic action in terms of content, from a quantum perspective it is useless to debate which approach is the most correct, since all three are merely quantum states of EU diplomacy. Of course, in the framework of a specific enquiry into EU diplomatic action on a specific topic and in a specific setting, it might be possible to convincingly argue whether this should be attributed mainly to EU norms or interests (Van Schaik & Schunz, 2012), however such a conclusion remains solid only with respect to one concrete manifestation of EU diplomacy.

The social system that is EU diplomacy becomes one or the other at the moment of opening the lid of the box to Schrödinger's cat, i.e. initiating empirical studies with specific sets of axiomatic ontological assumptions and therefrom derived epistemologies and methods.

5. The epistemology of multiparadigmatic scientific enquiry: from objectivity to complementarity

The ideas developed in the previous section regarding the quantum superposition of EU diplomacy constitute a radical epistemology, although motivated by pragmatic and practical concerns of making multiparadigmatic enquiry possible. Although it is impossible within the scope of this article to do justice to the epistemological implications of accepting the ontological claim of diplomacy as a quantum superposition, it is beneficial for the completeness of the argument, and for the practical issue of needing to assess the quality of research done on the basis of it, to at least present some first reflections on a few main aspects.

First of all, it is clear that the position proposed here breaks with the Kuhnsian view of scientific progress through paradigmatic change, in the sense of the construction of disciplinary hegemonies, their gradual weakening as science progresses and eventual dissolution (Kuhn, 1962). In this vision, paradigms are replaced because they lose their ability to contribute to scientific progress because their basic ontological assumptions make them unable to incorporate new scientific results, generating the perception that they are wrong or incomplete. Accepting the ontology of superposition means accepting that no objective data can be used to judge the usefulness or quality of the different enquiries into the distinct quantum states of EU diplomacy, be they a legal analysis of the competences for diplomatic action of different EU bodies, a geopolitical analysis of the background conditions within which EU diplomatic relations with the Middle East are defined or analysis of the specific activities of different EU representatives.

The absence of objective standards by which to judge the status of the knowledge created by a multiparadigmatic scientific enquiry constitutes such an enquiry as post-positivist as for its epistemology. Just as Der Derian's contingent definition of diplomacy used as a basis for the present argument might be considered constructivist in the nature, "constructivism applies also to status of scientific knowledge" (Behnke, 2006, p. 51). When making conclusions to an enquiry into one the quantum states of EU diplomacy, these articulations must necessarily be understood with reference to the parts of reality analysed and will therefore be competing with truth claims of the representations of the ontology of other quantum states. A main challenge therefore becomes how to make overall conclusions to a multiparadigmatic enquiry by judging the various truth claims and their relative contribution to the overall effort. A distinct, although

The superposition of diplomatic quantum states is also clearly identifiable in EU diplomatic action

related aspect, is how to judge the scientific quality of each enquiry, in the absence of universal criteria shared across paradigms.

First of all, whereas the knowledge created by the analysis of each quantum state of EU diplomacy is in principle independent from the knowledge created by the analysis of other states, this does not necessarily mean that no scientific standard of quality is possible. Even if the knowledge created by each analysis is contingent, its scientific status makes it fundamentally different from everyday knowledge. Scientific knowledge is produced by following a process governed by rules, and therefore not all representations of a given quantum state have an equal value. As such, it is possible to evaluate the quality of the knowledge generated,[9] not by comparing it to a some objective standard, but by assessing to which degree it has followed the generally accepted rules for scientific practice within its paradigm.[10] On a concrete level, it is therefore possible to judge the quality of the conclusion by reference to the method employed and the coherence between purposes, data, method and conclusions, in each case.[11] The main scientific virtues therefore become transparency with regard to method and honesty in reporting. Kratochwil (2006, p. 47) illustrates the resulting status of scientific knowledge within each paradigm with an interesting metaphor. Since the scientific results cannot be judged with respect to how accurately they represent the empirical reality, the metaphor usually used to describe the epistemological position of scientific Realism in terms of eclecticism as a house being constructed on the basis of a solid foundation, with each research project contributing in the sense of constructing a part of the house, is no longer apt. As an alternative, Kratochwil proposes the metaphor of each scientific representation of reality is equivalent to playing Scrabble. By creating words with the letters the player has been given, meaning is created in the same way as the researcher creates meaning by using data. In Scrabble, different words can be created using the same letters and building on already existing words. In the same way, researchers may create different representations of reality and build on different previous scientific results within their same paradigm and analysing the same quantum state of EU diplomacy. This, however, does not mean that anything goes. In Scrabble, there are rules with respect to how to use the letters and which words can be created. Only when respecting these rules does the player obtain points. Ultimately this depends on the attitudes of other players, in the sense of whether they judge that the rules have been followed and whether the new word created really exists or not. In a similar way, the quality of a scientific representation of reality depends on whether other researchers judge that the relevant rules and methods have been followed in the research process and that there is coherence between purpose, methods, data and conclusion.[12]

Whereas the metaphor of Kratochwil helps us illustrate the standards by which a single representation of a single quantum state of EU diplomacy should be judged, namely the degree of observance of accepted rules and methods within the paradigm, the question remains whether a cross-paradigmatic eclecticism is possible. Here is where the concept of complementarity can

Scientific knowledge is produced by following a process governed by rules, and therefore not all representations of a given quantum state have an equal value

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9   Otherwise, this would exclude ex ante the possibility of science, a much more radical position than the one presented here.

10   As also argued by Philips & Jørgensen (2002, pp. 21-22; pp. 119-137)

11   Of course, to the extent that two concrete research projects share some ontological suppositions and method, some degree of epistemological dialogue is possible and a fruitful debate may arise over which concrete approach most accurately captures the reality of the social system under study. However, since the hard case is where the different approaches do not have a common basis, more attention will here be given to this possibility.

12   It is beyond the scope of this article to consider the relations of power in this respect.

be used to conceptualise the disciplinary challenges. It refers to the fact that phenomena have complementary properties which cannot be observed or measured at the same time, but that each observation is equally correct and scientific enquiry into any of the potential states, such the wave-particle duality of light, will lead to equally valid scientific knowledge and simple aid to better understand the nature of the general phenomenon.

To illustrate the argument, the Kratochwil's Scrabble metaphor can be extended further. Different scientific paradigms can be likened to speaking different scientific languages. There is no such thing as a better or worse language in which to communicate about reality, they are simply different. It is of course also possible to play Scrabble in different languages. In this case, some of the rules of the game will obviously be different. Different combinations of letters are considered to constitute a legitimate word and different points are given to each letter, depending on the frequency with which is appears in the language in question. Also, some letters will exist in some language versions, but not in others, and some language versions will use an entirely different alphabet. Similarly, the rules of scientific enquiry vary with the quantum state being analysed and some methods will be appropriate in one paradigm but not in others. With respect to the possibility for interparadigmatic eclectic research, the point is thus that regardless of which language version you use, it will still enable you to achieve your purpose of scoring points. Also, playing multiple language versions simultaneously will enable the player to learn more about the general features of the game, the usefulness of each letter and general game strategy, although the language versions must be kept separate and each game must respect their respective rules in the sense that they are incompatible even if some words might exist in several languages. The important point here stemming from the complementarity principle is that the complementarity of the knowledge produced does not depend on the degree of compatibility of the paradigms, i.e. on how closely related two linguistic versions of Scrabble are. Therefore, there is much to be learnt from the complementarity of each enquiry into a specific quantum state of EU diplomacy, irrespectively of the paradigmatic distance between the concrete approaches in terms of ontology, epistemology and method.

Another related question therefore becomes how to judge the relative contribution of each study to a multiparadigmatic research project, or research field. A main indicator will be the contribution within the specific paradigm, but ultimately the relative contribution to the overall conclusions of a multiparadigmatic research project will be a social process involving potentially all the relevant researchers, where persuasiveness of argument and transparency of methods are the main criteria, along with the capacity of each contribution to generate synergy effects with the results stemming from other paradigms and to inspire these alternative paradigms in terms of the generation of new research questions and methods.

Similarly, the prospects for interparadigmatic eclectic science generally in the discipline are determined by criteria of intersubjectivity, meaning that the validity of the truth claim of any given interparadigmatic research project is ultimately a social construct that can only by judged by its ability to persuade other scientists with arguments based on its virtues in terms of its internal logical coherence and the added value in terms not only of the contribution to each scientific paradigm, but contribution also to achieving a more holistic understanding of the social phenomenon provided by the complementarity of the concrete studies, i.e. the extent to which the overall result can be considered more than the sum of its parts.

A quantum theoretical approach to the study of diplomacy transcends the distinction between interpretative and positivist approaches in social science

In this perspective, a quantum theoretical approach to the study of diplomacy transcends the distinction between interpretative and positivist approaches in social science, as well as the traditional *Verstehen-Erklären* distinction at the level of concrete studies, since both are subsumed through a notion of complementarity. A quantum perspective on diplomacy has no disciplinary or methodological preference. However, when adopting a holistic perspective and considering the complementarity of different studies, this is necessarily a subjective interpretation rather than a causal-deterministic effect.

6. Conclusion

This article has tried to navigate two separate, but superimposed minefields in the quest of defining diplomacy and related concepts as exemplified by the case of a scientific enquiry into the diplomatic action of the EU in the Southern Mediterranean. The first minefield was constituted by the current process of pluralisation of diplomacy in terms of both actors and practices, which, along with the necessity of accommodating very diverse empirical approaches, led to a contingent definition of diplomacy in terms of the management of the relations of alienated peoples. The solution to the problem of hitting a moving target, i.e. a pluralising diplomacy, was therefore to broaden the scope of the enquiry to potentially very different actors and practices and to conceptualise diplomacy in terms of alienation, but also as a superposition of different quantum states.

The second minefield was constituted by the fact that the point of departure is in EU diplomatic relations and diplomatic action. The broad definition of diplomacy adopted here makes it difficult to talk of the EU in the singular. Firstly, the multitude of actors involved in the management of the alienated relations of European peoples with non-European peoples means that any empirical enquiry into the specific diplomatic practices, for instance of EEAS Delegations or the European Parliament, should take into account the wider framework within which these take place and interact with other practices. Another consequence is, secondly, that any attempt at providing general conclusions with respect to EU diplomatic action in the Mediterranean based on a series of empirical studies becomes a truly daunting task, although the conceptual complexity might be reduced by relying on the concept of superposition. This means that EU diplomacy exists as a superposition of different quantum states. The main epistemological implications of defining diplomacy in terms of pluralisation, management of alienation and quantum states is that the distinction between positivist and interpretative science is transcended and that it becomes impossible to generate more than a partial truth claim based on any concrete study of a diplomatic relationship applying a specific method, since it remains merely a single quantum state out of more possible states. It would be as futile as to judge whether light is essentially a particle or a wave, when empirical studies based on both ontological claims give rise to knowledge-enhancing science and improve our overall understanding of the phenomenon studied. Accepting the complementarity of specific empirical studies, each should be judged by reference to the established scientific methods within the paradigm in which it is located and its relative contribution to understanding diplomacy as a superposition of quantum states. The overall value of an interparadigmatic enquiry thus depends partially on the relative contribution of each individual study within the paradigm in which it is located and the degree of complementarity of the individual studies making the whole more than the sum of its parts.

The broad definition of diplomacy adopted here makes it difficult to talk of the EU in the singular

In order to fully assess the usefulness of conceptualising EU diplomacy as a superposition of quantum states, further studies should be made from this perspective that incorporate the findings of concrete, empirical studies. The lack of this vital second phase in the development of the quantum approach to diplomacy arguably constitutes an important limitation to the argument presented here, although I hope to have stimulated critical thinking about (EU) diplomacy in the reader even so.

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