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Peer Pressure: Social Psychology and the Political and Security Committee

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ABSTRACT

Constructivist literature has recently focused on how agents' identities are changed when entering into new international communities. Jeffrey Checkel (2005) proposes that socialization is a process in which new members of a community become inducted into the norms of that community resulting in two types of internalization: Type I socialization, in which actors act in accordance with norms without full internalization; and Type II internalization, in which new actors fully consider these norms as the "right thing to do" irrespective of exogenous factors. While socialization theory has been useful for understanding this process, scholars have not enough paid enough attention to the conditions that make international institutions viable for socialization processes. Most of the research done on actors and institutions within the EU, including the Political and Security Council (PSC), has focused on the usage of persuasion or epistemic community theory. These analyses have primarily dealt with how much socialization has taken place and the potential for this socialization to advance integration in EU foreign policy. This investigation looks into factors that can inhibit or advance this socialization process, specifically the identifiability of PSC ambassadors to their home governments and how this affects group deliberations.

KEYWORDS

Political and Security Council, socialization, international relations, European Union, social psychology

INTRODUCTION

Much of the research on group decision-making within the EU has focused on the premise that states' interests are endogenous to social interactions and therefore may change due to social influences rather than simply due to exogenously given conditions (Wendt 1999). Building on this premise, many authors have presented the argument that international institutions have been the place where these social interactions take place and that they constitute some sort of community (Chayes & Chayes, 1995; Checkel, 1999; 2005; Cowles, Caporaso & Risse, 2001; Gheciu, 2005; Howorth, 2000; Johnston, 2001; Lewis, 2005; Risse, Ropp & Sikkink, 1999; Risse, 2000). Within the EU, the focus has been both on individuals being socialized at the EU level and on whole states being socialized as a result of interaction within the EU. Much of the most fruitful research has focused on how individuals become socialized into communities at the EU supranational level and how this has impacted the development of EU policies (Howorth, 2000).

Some scholars have argued that members become socialized into certain communities within various EU policy areas and that individuals have moved from a strategic calculation strategy of fixed state interests to one in which certain norms are accepted as appropriate. They also argue that this socialization can help explain both further integration impetus and the outcome of EU policies (Howorth, 2011). Scholars have argued for many different mechanisms of socialization including Habermasian communicative action, social learning operational theory from sociology, and persuasion and social influence (Checkel, 2005). Furthermore the *degree of socialization* has frequently been measured by Checkel's Type I and Type II internalization types, specifically states moving from strategic calculation to role playing, and finally, full norm internalization.

Building on previous work regarding the Political and Security Committee (PSC), which has demonstrated at least some degree of socialization and the creation of a cohesive community, I will attempt to show two things related to group unity and group decision-making. First, I argue that media coverage of the PSC negatively affects community cohesion and increases the individuality of each member (i.e., ambassadors are more likely to act against the group decision). Secondly, I argue that the acknowledgement of an out-group, specifically home governments, will decrease group cohesion and increase individual identity. When I use the term "individual identity," I mean the willingness of a member to distinguish him or herself from the group. My analysis suggests that the members of the PSC are not necessarily strongly socialized into group norms and that the PSC faces substantial obstacles to reaching a *degree of socialization* similar to that of other EU policy groups. The reality of individual identification to outside groups suggests that the components identified as being necessary for socialization within international institutional settings need to be reviewed.

SOCIOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONALISM AND CONDITIONS

In this paper, I focus on measuring socialization according to Checkel's Type I and Type II degrees of socialization (Checkel, 2005). Socialization for my purpose, will follow Gheciu's (2005) definition, which is a process of inducting actors into the norms and rules of a given community. In particular, Checkel separates the degree of socialization into three distinct phases: strategic calculation (rational choice theory) before members are part of a group, Type I socialization in which members are consciously observing norms and emulating them (playing roles), and Type II, in which actors fully internalize group norms and treat them as the de facto "right thing to do" (Checkel, 2005).

Following this definition of socialization, there are several factors that make certain institutional settings conducive to the process of socialization. Checkel (2005) notes that socialization is more likely to take place in situations in which contact is long and sustained, intense, and has considerable duration. Checkel also concludes that socialization is more likely to take place when community members have backgrounds with previous international policymaking or diplomatic experience. Other factors relating to the social environment include a common culture or *espirit de corps*, common expertise, and the relationship between the principal and the agent (Cross, 2010). Johnston adds to these conditions with several factors including membership (small or large group, exclusive vs. inclusive), authoritativeness (uneven vs. even authority within the group), the mandate for the group, and finally, the autonomy of the agents from the principal (Johnston, 2001). Together, these factors help to dictate the potential and to what degree group members become socialized.

The Depth of Socialization in Other Policy Groups in the EU

The investigation into the foreign policy aspect of EU socialization has primarily taken place in the last ten years. Anna Juncos and Karolina Pamorska found that there has been little development towards socialization away from strategic calculation in Council Working Groups (CWGs), but that, to the degree it has taken place, it has primarily affected the ability of the agent to influence the principal (Juncos & Pamorska, 2006). Jeffrey Lewis (2005) found that individuals within the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) had adopted what he called a "Janus face" or European identity and a domestic identity held simultaneously that diplomats did not find contradictory. Lewis found that diplomats had substantially adopted norms of behavior that were considerably different from just pure strategic calculations such as the respect for good arguments, dropping arguments if members of the group did not seem to accept them and attempting to help other members sell final solutions to their capitals, suggesting that COREPER had reached some sort of intermediate stage between Type I and Type II internalization. Beyers (2005) found that members of CWGs adopted norms of appropriateness related to joint decision making and consensus seeking, while still having to reconcile these issues with constraints based on domestic identity. Mai'a Cross (2010) finds that COREPER is not only incredibly well socialized to the point of perhaps Type II internalization, but as a policy community it is a powerfully persuasive force in supranational politics within the EU.

Political and Security Committee Research

Scholarship on the PSC has focused on utilizing many of the same methods of inquiry, but with a higher degree of ambiguity regarding the depths of the socialization. The overall focus of this scholarship has been on two things: the degree of socialization of diplomats within the PSC; and the degree to which the PSC is exerting its own influence on EU foreign policy that would demonstrate the development of a supranational policy community. Christoph Meyer (2006) found that because of the closeness of the ambassadors and their sustained contact, as well as the undetermined future of the committee, the PSC was adopting norms of consensus and a reliance on persuasion. Meyer also found that because of the high level of group cohesion, ambassadors were able to use persuasion, as long as it fit into the normative framework, to convince other member-states of their argument. Meyer concludes that through both peer pressure and the influence of information presentation, the PSC has been able to reach foreign policy conclusions that would not be indicated by

member-state strategic preferences and that the PSC is the leading organ for a Europeanization of foreign policy (Meyer, 2006, pp. 136-137).

Juncos and Reynolds (2007) come to similar conclusions, though with less optimistic projections of socialization. Juncos and Reynolds note that because of the movement of diplomats from capitals to Brussels, policy has become increasingly Brusselized. Also, even though the Committee has intense and frequent contacts, the development of an *espirit de corps* has been compromised because of the sheer number of items the PSC has had to deal with. They find that the committee lacks the intimate feeling that characterizes other EU diplomatic-policy bodies. Juncos and Reynolds also note that the degree of freedom for each ambassador depends on his or her member country, ranging from detailed instructions from the home country for larger member states, to relative pragmatic flexibility for smaller member states.

The authors find that some norms are firmly established within the PSC, such as seeking consensus, and the consultation-reflex (Juncos & Reynolds, 2007). Juncos and Reynolds find that because of the condition for unanimity, ambassadors tend to try to find a median line of agreement, which includes the majority opinion and is at least tolerable by all delegations. They note that there is a strong impetus for PSC officials to find a compromise out of both a fear of appearing isolated and a desire to effectively solve problems. They also conclude that the expansion in 2004 and the socialization of new members have made the group act more efficiently.

Jolyon Howorth (2010) comes to similar conclusions. Howorth sees the PSC as the central linchpin for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Howorth concludes that the clear majority of ambassadors see their role on the PSC as one of producing technically or politically feasible EU solutions, not just representing national interests. Howorth argues that the ambassadors value consensus-seeking above all else and he finds that, while the quality of the consensus is up for debate, members feel they can persuade each other using arguments as long as they fit in the normative framework of the group. He also finds that member states with little investment in the outcome or established feeling are willing to go along with the group. Howorth argues that states are invested in making the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) work and consequently give ambassadors the ability to reach compromises to further CSDP policy. Howorth finds a group of ambassadors moving from Type I into Type II socialization, creating a cohesive epistemic community, and writing the book on a new EU foreign policy sphere.

Cross (2011) does not find the PSC to be as quite as cohesive of a community as Howorth. Comparing it to COREPER, Cross states that the PSC has less independent agency and has difficulty when it comes to personal communication between members. Cross notes that because of the sensitive area of external security policy, ambassadors face more supervision and control from their home governments than does COREPER. She also notes that because of the immense workload and high ratio of formal to informal meetings, ambassadors have less time to spend building personal connections and that this inhibits the development of common social norms beyond typical diplomatic ones or procedurally expedient ones. Within the PSC, she concludes that reaching a consensus is one of the strongest norms shared amongst the group. It appears that the process of group decision making is split between persuasion based on arguments and disproportionate pull some countries have regarding the issues being debated.

Ultimately Cross (2011) finds that the ambassadors do have a shared sense of purpose

when it comes to attitudes towards the development of a common foreign policy for the EU, the development of an EU security identity, and the need to speak with one voice, but at the same time she does not find these developments to be considerably deep nor particularly well articulated. Cross concludes that, while the PSC has advanced CFSP considerably in the area of management of operations, the ambassadors as a group are unable to persuade their respective capitals of solutions that they independently created through their shared expertise. This distinction is a large one and may be the biggest point of divergence between Cross and some of the other authors.

THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

My point of inquiry relates back to the quandary of whether the *state* is being socialized or the *person* representing the state is being socialized. While the difference may or may not be important in some analysis, in it lies the basis for the examination of conditions that can lead to lower group coherence, and consequently, less socialization. Specifically, I will examine how ambassadors representing states must deal with two identities when operating within the PSC – one as members of the PSC and the other as the representative of a certain state. While the two are not mutually exclusive identities, for my purposes they do represent two social identities that need to be managed, and consequently two audiences that need to be satisfied. I will consider the PSC social identity to be the *in-group* because of the daily work of the ambassadors with each other and their placements in Brussels, and the respective capitals for each ambassador as the *out-group* that is cognizant of the workings of the in-group. I will utilize the social psychology theory of the social identity model of deindividuation effects (SIDE).

SIDE is built on the premise that individuals manage the image they give of themselves to certain audiences (Barreto, Spears, Ellemers & Shahinper, 2003). Research also suggests that individuals not only manage their individual identity to various groups, but also how audiences view their wider social identities (group identities) (Ellemers, Van Dyck, Hinkle & Jacobs, 2000; Reicher & Levine, 1994). SIDE therefore specifically is a model based on the self-presentation of multiple social identities with various levels of individual-identification. The SIDE model hypothesizes that identity expression encompasses two elements: a cognitive element and a strategic element (Barreto et al., 2003). The cognitive element "refers to the level of self-definition that is salient in a given context, for instance whether or not a given social identity is cognitively salient," while the strategic element "refers to the concern that identity expression be contextually appropriate, and implies sensitivity to the nature of the audience addressed and its power of sanction" (Barreto et al., 2003, p. 300). The two elements are not mutually exclusive and both processes may be occurring at the same time. In fact, both need to be examined when observing agents' public behavior.

SIDE research has consistently shown that agents present themselves differently to various audiences. For example, members of a group express more commitment to group norms when responses regarding identification are made public versus when they remain anonymous (Barreto & Ellemers, 2000; Douglas & McGarty, 2001). Results have also been shown to the opposite effect as well. The mobilization and consolidation of social identities depends entirely on the audience and the potential benefits and reparations from the expression of identities. For my purposes, I will focus on this strategic aspect of SIDE, described by Klein, Spears, and Reicher (2007, p. 30) as "identity performance". They formally define identity performance as "the purposeful expression (or suppression) of behaviors relevant to those

norms conventionally associated with a salient social identity" (p. 30). In this context, two terms can be used to describe the functions of identity performance, specifically "*identity consolidation and identity mobilization*" (Klein et al., 2007, p. 31). Identity consolidation is for the purpose of sustaining and recognizing a specific social identity, and identity mobilization is the conscious instrumental mobilization of a group towards a certain goal.

The ambassadors of the PSC for the purpose of inquiry operate using two social identities: that as a member of the PSC, and as a representative of a specific member state. The audience for the agent matters when it comes to expressing certain special identities. Barreto et al. (2003) conducted a study of Portuguese and Turkish migrants to the Netherlands regarding how much they identified with both their new society and their old society, and presented these surveys in both their home language and in Dutch in order to capture different audience effects. Their second study in the paper regarding Portuguese migrants being identified and being anonymous when taking the survey in front of either a perceived Portuguese or Dutch audience demonstrated that identifiability undermined identity expression when it was perceived to be in conflict with the audience's norms and to enhance identity claims that were not in conflict with the audience's norms (Barreto et al., 2003). Klein, Licata, Azzi, and Durala (2003) conducted a study regarding the expression of Greek attitudes towards Turks when in the presence of a European or Greek audience. As they hypothesized, Greeks with a high identification with Europe expressed less prejudice towards Turks to a European audience than to a Greek audience when compared to Greeks that were low-identifiers with Europe. Sometimes the in-group can be in danger if the out-group holds negative views of it, and the in-group will attempt to change these views. In cases where the out group is perceived to be more powerful than the in-group and the in-group members are identifiable to an out-group, in-group members will not express norms that are considered unacceptable by the out-group and may even enhance their participation in non-sanctionable in-group norms (Reicher & Levine, 1994). For the PSC, this is exceptionally important to note because Ambassadors are members of home governments and, due to the high status of the matters before the PSC, are allowed much less room than other diplomats at the EU level.

This lends itself the need to incorporate out-group identities when making in-group decisions. One tactic is to downplay elements of in-group identification in the presence of an out-group in order to create action. An example was a study conducted on the Congolese independence leader Patrice Lumumba's speeches to Belgian audiences when the Democratic Republic of the Congo was about to become independent (Klein & Licata, 2003). In his speeches, Lumumba often downplayed the antagonism between the two groups and expressed the need for Belgian paternalism towards the new nation when he frequently highlighted these differences and criticized the tactics of the Belgians in front of Congolese audiences. Another laboratory study by Scheepers et al. (2006) showed a low status group distributing more material rewards to the in-group when it was expected to justify the distribution to the in-group versus a higher status outside-group. The outside-group did not display this same audience related differentiation.

Ultimately, according to Klein et al. (2007, p. 38) there are four factors necessary for identity performance to take place.

1. *The individual must identify with a social category.*
2. *The social identity must be salient in the present context.*
3. *An audience must be psychologically present.*
4. *Actors must believe themselves to be visible to the audience.*

The PSC ambassadors clearly fit these four factors, and in their context, there are two social categories they must deal with. At the same time, while the PSC ambassadors almost always have constant communication available, their individual responsibilities to their home governments almost makes ambassadors appear to work as if they are separated from the PSC when identified by home governments. Using SIDE modeling and research, I propose that the strength of the out-group in comparison with the in-group combined with the high visibility of the PSC reduces the strength of PSC cohesiveness despite what ambassadors may be trying to achieve. Secondly, because of the high visibility and strong out-group audience demands, PSC ambassadors must try harder to demobilize the out-group (explain to rather than persuade home governments) to pursue its group goals and conversely utilize the norms the group has established to mobilize action towards the common goal of furthering EU security integration and foreign policy capacities.

Interviews

My arguments relate primarily to the research coming out of Reicher and Levine's (1994) studies which found that when students (in-group) were identified to teachers (out-group) students reduced their expression of in-group norms that were sanctionable and increased the expression of in-group norms for which they would not face punishment. My predictions are that PSC group cohesion and group decision-making will be impacted by the presence of an out-group, in particular an exceptionally powerful out-group (ambassadors' home countries). I would also suggest that the presence of the out-group increases the expression of norms such as the use of arguments, the usage of normative language, a rivalry with COREPER, and finding consensus within the parameters allowed by state influence.

One thing to remember is that *states are not necessarily antagonistic to PSC operations,* but rather almost every state wants to see the CFSP succeed. The real differences between states come in terms of *how* to implement the CFSP, and one would expect to see state interests being more powerful than ambassador's preferences, if the two do not coincide, during the deliberation process.

My interviews were conducted over e-mail over the months of February through June 2012. They include ten interviews of officials that are either PSC ambassadors or deputy representatives. They also include a relatively even mix of newer and older member-states, as well as smaller and bigger member-states. The questions mostly related to how cohesive the group was, their own relationships with home governments, and how media impacted group discussions. It also delved into some of the more nuanced ramifications of these factors.

The interview responses provide strong support for my two hypotheses. When it comes to the media playing a role in the PSC, every interviewee responded that, while the PSC itself does not receive much direct media coverage, leaks to the press and previous ministerial statements often sour group deliberations and lead to a race to the least common denominator. Says one official:

> First of all, I have to say that media coverage of the PSC is quite marginal, but I have no doubts in affirming that media pressure on items being discussed at the PSC will inevitably affect the purity of the debate. In the 3 years that I've been working in the PSC, I remember 4 or 5 occasions when the content of PSC discussions were leaked to the press and it undermined de facto the atmosphere of the negotiations. This tends to happen on the more difficult and sensitive negotiations and it's not good for the quality of the PSC deliberations.

Another official noted that media leaks can sometimes make a state that was in opposition agree with the consensus because of this media pressure. While media coverage of the PSC tends to be focused on the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAFRC) and the European Council (and most of the time the media coverage is neutral) the cases in which it has impacted national governments (and consequently PSC ambassadors) have definitely had an effect on the dialogue going on within the PSC and the amount of candid conversation during formal sessions. It proposes a nexus where high profile decisions impact home governments more substantively and consequently reduce the possibilities for action or force some states to support actions they would not otherwise. Ambassadors often will not have the ability to pursue discussions that out-group would have consequently allowed.

Similarly, state demands on ambassadors play a large role in group deliberation. This story is not necessarily told in black and white terms though. The responses to questions regarding their own directions varied from having to adhere to strict red lines with no ability to compromise to the ambassador being able to essentially make up policy in Brussels as long as the decision did not touch on specific national issues. The common response seems to be that red lines are to be followed on matters of serious national interest, while, when it comes to matters a state may not have an interest in, the ambassador can go along with the group to reach a consensus.

Says one official:

> I will go against the group consensus if necessary, for instance if my capital has instructed me to maintain certain position. This is of course not easy, but I (naturally) feel more of a loyalty for my country than for the group; in the end, it is my country that entrusted me the task of representing it in the group. But instructions are only that strict on issues my capital feels very strongly about. My country, being Western European, does not usually have very strong views on relations with Eastern Europe, for example; it just doesn't affect us so directly as it does Poland or Hungary. So on those issues, even if a policy is proposed that I or my capital disagree with, I might oppose it at first but I will not break consensus; if most states, including the most directly affected ones, agree on this, we will not stand in the way. Of course, we do then expect similar leniency from partners on issues where the interests are the other way around. And that usually works.

When asked about restrictions on other ambassadors though, interviewees gave a more distinct view. Instructions do matter, especially on the issue. Again there tends to be a spectrum. A state will not fight against something unless it is has both a strong interest in the issue being discussed and it has considerable influence in the PSC (military capabilities, expertise, stature, etc.). For example, when it comes to Russian issues, one interviewee noted that Poland and Hungary have considerable leeway because of past experiences, but even they still have to take into account the wishes of the "big three."

One official encapsulates the general response more fully:

> Being the rule unanimity, if a member state has a very strong red-line, the others will simply have to follow. This said, the sympathy of the group towards an isolated member-state is proportional to his capacity to sell his red-line. I can assure you that good diplomatic skills make a big difference on this.

One other official from a smaller state notes that:

> *Quite often I have to decide myself whether to have an intervention or not, depending on the course of discussion.*

In general, there seems to be a middle area of discussion in which an agreement can be reached that fits within the instructions given to certain states. At the same time, interviews suggest that ambassadors can frequently discuss options with their home governments in order to "inform them" of this ongoing discussion, and consequently, can often argue about changing the differences in red lines. There is a strong ethic of reaching consensus that can put ambassadors in a difficult place and can make them more ambitious in discussing options with their own home government. At the same time, certain states are given more influence than others because of their respective statures and capabilities. It appears that states are determining just how the PSC will go in terms of integration, instead of PSC ambassadors. PSC ambassadors have an ability to define possibilities and policy within their sphere that is sharply delineated by their home governments, though this gray area is considerably substantial. Like many other EU issues, it is in this area below high politics and constant principal attention that provides EU wide actors the freedom to move forward possibility. Yet the PSC is still working in a new area that is traditionally been very restricted at the EU level, and while one can see the potential kernel for further defense and foreign policy integration, it appears some other force will be necessary to kickstart this process further. The interviews indicate that the out-group is primarily dictating what is brought up and not brought up, and what is possible and not possible within the in-group.

CONCLUSION

The findings from the original interviews presented in this paper in conjunction with existing findings appear to suggest that the PSC and its ambassadors are considerably restricted because of the presence of home governments. While members clearly identify as members of both groups, they owe their primary allegiance to the out-group. The out-group exercises considerable control over what is acceptable and not acceptable within the PSC. This has potentially interesting repercussions for the PSC. Being at the forefront of a rapidly developing EU foreign policy and dealing with issues considered the last bastion of sovereignty, PSC ambassadors feel themselves as part of something new and exciting, while they are still being held to perhaps higher degrees of control than officials that are members of other EU intergovernmental policy bodies.

While it appears that outside groups, such as home governments and the press, impact what is brought up at the PSC and what solutions are possible, this does not mean that the PSC is following a purely neorealist or neoliberal path of deliberation. While the largest states do hold the most influence within the PSC, preferences do appear to change during the course of deliberation because of both normative and compliance measures. All states are interested in the PSC succeeding and most of the time the group has a relatively clear direction on where they want to go in terms of solutions. Even the most powerful member-states have ideological preferences and identities that cannot be explained purely using rational choice theory.

The evidence suggests that the outside-groups have a strong influence PSC decision-making, even perhaps dictating it to a large degree. This has important implications for both principle-agent issues and EU studies. To what degree is integration possible in this last field? The results have been encouraging but the degree of progress is often overstated. In terms

of principle–agent issues, one could argue that the relationship between the two needs to be reexamined when it comes to constructivist literature. Finally, there needs to be a rigorous review of what institutional conditions facilitate socialization.

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