The Protection of Cultural Heritage Sites as a Mechanism for Further European Union Foreign Policy Integration: An Analysis of Changing Language and Objectives

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Abstract
Culture and cultural heritage have long been ignored or pushed into the background when it comes to being considered in foreign and security policy decisions by major world players, including the European Union. However, as the EU’s desired Common Foreign and Security Policy continues to face large hurdles due to indifference and even repulsion towards continued integration and a larger focus on national sovereignty, the governing bodies of the EU have sought new ways to further integration in this field without relying on solely military action or policy. One such way they have found to do this has been through the protection of cultural heritage and, as such, greater support for UNESCO initiatives and programs. Since 2012, global unrest has only grown, especially in the Middle East and North Africa. As a result, more and more cultural heritage sites are being threatened or destroyed by armed conflict. This paper demonstrates through an analysis of changing language, and thus changing objectives, within official EU statements, speeches, and documents, the EU’s changing view about the usefulness of cultural heritage in creating a common foreign and security policy. The underlying belief of this is the thought that by investing in the protection of cultural heritage sites through UNESCO, the EU helps to stabilize tumultuous regions by rebuilding a sense of identity and solidarity. Thus, culture must be brought to the forefront of foreign and security policy for the EU and is a way to continue to grow European integration in this area.

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Introduction

Culture and cultural heritage are understudied areas of political science but remain a priority of many national governments and international intergovernmental organizations. Specifically, many are interested in the protection of sites that have been threatened by war and armed conflict. The most prominent body that deals with global culture and cultural heritage is the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). UNESCO is an agency of the United Nations (UN). UNESCO is based in Paris and its mission is to promote peace, stability, and human understanding through initiatives in the fields of education, science, and culture. UNESCO believes that “peace must be built upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of humanity” (UNESCO 2019 “UNESCO in Brief- Mission and Mandate”).

UNESCO is most well-known for its list of global cultural heritage sites that it protects with the aid of the international community who are signatories to its 1972 Convention on World Heritage. The European Union (EU), in particular, has become a major player and stakeholder in the protection of global cultural heritage both within its borders and globally. In particular, the EU has become a key player in supporting projects that protect cultural heritage sites that are threatened, specifically by war and armed conflict. The EU views its support of these initiatives as a way to maintain global security and as a way to further European solidarity on issues of global security and defense. In essence, the EU uses its dedication to global cultural heritage protection as a way to further EU integration on its ever elusive common foreign and security policy.

Tal Dingott Alkopher notes in his article analyzing the changing discourse on humanitarian intervention through military action that the last decade has seen a change in how Europe has viewed the idea of humanitarian assistance in the international community. He notes that Europe has replaced the idea of “international responsibility” for “regional responsibility.” Specifically, he states that “the idea of sovereign states being responsible for their own citizens replaced the idea that the international community was responsible for human beings everywhere” (Alkopher 2016, 65). Essentially, Europe has pulled back from its dedication to the international community. Instead, Europe has retreated into itself and has moved further away from reaching an agreement on a common foreign and security policy especially when it comes to intervention in regions in armed conflict. Most notably, the EU’s response to the Syrian Civil War has been disjointed as best. This is due to many EU countries’ reluctance to get involved in the Middle East again following consistent failures throughout the region. This combined with desires to maintain national sovereignty on security issues has led the EU to pull back from its international responsibility in times of crisis.

However, while the EU has backed off of its original dedication to international cooperation through more active intervention measures, the EU as an institution has maintained its dedication to solidarity amongst itself and with the international community on intervention to protect cultural heritage, especially sites that are affected by conflict. This paper will seek to explore why Europe has only reaffirmed its dedication to intervention to protect cultural heritage sites. To do this, this paper will first discuss UNESCO’s involvement in the protection of cultural heritage sites while defining exactly what cultural heritage is. It will then discuss Europe’s commitment to intervene internationally in the literature review. It will then track the European Union’s engagement with UNESCO and UNESCO initiatives since 2012, looking specifically at EU statements, speeches, and press releases and the language within them and how it signals
changes in objectives. The analysis of these documents will demonstrate the EU’s growing dedication to the protection of global cultural heritage and hopefully help to explain why the EU has maintained this as a means of growing its foreign and security policy instead of pursuing greater military coordination. Finally, in my discussion, I will provide an analysis of how culture and cultural heritage provides a means to grow the EU’s common foreign and security policy.

**What is Cultural Heritage?**

Cultural heritage is defined as an “expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation” (Culture in Development 2019). Basically, it is the ways in which people demonstrate and have historically demonstrated their unique culture. It is also important to note that cultural heritage includes aspects of culture that are currently being protected and have been bestowed upon future generations to learn from and care for (UNESCO Office in Cairo 2017). There are two types of cultural heritage that UNESCO in particular sets out to protect. There is intangible cultural heritage, which encompasses rituals, festivals, and oral traditions of different cultures. It is the transmission of culture from one generation to the next, and as such is protected as a global knowledge bank (UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage 2019).

For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on the concept of tangible heritage. Tangible heritage are buildings, monuments, and artifacts that are considered to be of cultural significance. Tangible heritage can demonstrate the memories and lifestyles of the past. UNESCO states that the importance of tangible heritage is tied to its ability to give importance to history and necessitates the telling of the past (UNESCO Office in Cairo 2017). Tangible heritage can be protected via funding and intervention, which is why it will be specifically focused on in this paper. Intangible heritage, on the other hand, is much more difficult to preserve through direct intervention as it is not subject to a great extent of external threats.

**Background on UNESCO’s World Heritage List**

UNESCO’s most famous program is its protection of cultural heritage sites throughout the world that demonstrate significant cultural heritage. These sites are inscribed onto the UNESCO World Heritage List. Currently, UNESCO maintains 1073 cultural heritage sites in 167 countries. In order to be inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritage List, a site must demonstrate significant universal value and demonstrate at least one of ten criteria laid out by UNESCO. The benefits of inscribing a site on the UNESCO World Heritage List are multifaceted. Most importantly, the site becomes subject to protection benefits of the World Heritage Fund. This fund helps states to maintain sites and can provide emergency assistance to protect or repair the site in cases of disaster or crisis.

The World Heritage Fund is the most important operating mechanism of UNESCO and is paid into by parties who are signatories to the 1972 Convention on World Heritage. The Convention on World Heritage defines what sites are eligible to be inscribed in the list and holds each signatory to the standards of preserving their inscribed sites and their national heritage. The Convention is the guiding principle behind the World Heritage Fund and determines when international assistance is necessary to protect cultural sites. Currently 193 countries are parties to the Convention and are thus bound by international treaty to work to preserve and maintain
their cultural heritage sites and protect sites that are threatened globally (UNESCO 2019, “The World Heritage Convention”).

UNESCO also maintains a list of cultural heritage sites that are threatened. Currently, fifty-four cultural heritage sites have been placed on the List of World Heritage Sites in Danger. These include sites threatened by war, natural disaster, or climate change (UNESCO 2019, “World Heritage in Danger”). For the purposes of this paper, only sites threatened by war and armed conflict will be of interest. As global unrest in the form of war and violence continues to grow, especially within states in the Middle East, cultural heritage sites in these regions continue to be threatened if not destroyed. For example, current sites that are threatened by armed conflict and war inscribed on this list include all of Syria’s world heritage sites, including the ancient cities of Aleppo and Damascus, and all of Libya’s world heritage sites, including the archaeological sites of Cyrene and Sabatha.

By placing sites on this list, UNESCO attempts to offer the states where the sites are located extra protection assistance or dedicates itself to providing complete third-party assistance to protect, repair, or clean up these sites. Additionally, placing a site on the World Heritage in Danger list signals to the international community and the signatories of the Convention on World Heritage that they should be willing and able to assist further in the protection of these sites. As it is possible for a world heritage site to lose its status if it loses the criteria that placed it on the list in the first place, placing a site on the list of endangered sites significantly increases the chance that the site will remain inscribed and receive funding to be maintained (UNESCO 2019, “World Heritage in Danger”).

Background on the European Union in UNESCO

The European Union has become a major player and stakeholder in the protection of cultural heritage and works closely with UNESCO in order to not only protect sites in the EU, but also globally. The EU, both through its member states and itself, has consistently been supportive of UNESCO’s initiatives since its inception. It is important to note that all EU states are signatories to the Convention on World Heritage, holding them to the standards of membership elaborated above. The EU, as an international organization, is heavily involved in UNESCO’s missions, specifically those involving cultural heritage protection. The EU is also a voluntary donor to UNESCO initiatives and is the third largest “extra budgetary funding source” for the organization. For example, in 2015, the EU contributed almost $90 million through forty-seven projects in the jurisdiction of UNESCO. In addition to aiding in the protection of cultural heritage sites globally, the EU also supports UNESCO programs in the realms of education, youth empowerment, the protection of media freedom and the protection of journalists, and the trust-building among actors (European Union 2016).

However, there are two key points that raise the question of why the EU is so involved in cultural heritage protection, especially internationally. First, culture is a competence of the member states of the European Union. Article 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union states that, in regard to culture, the EU should “carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States” (Franke and Iskra 2018). It does not give the EU as an entity the ability to make binding decisions regarding culture or the protection of culture. This makes the EU’s involvement in and dedication to UNESCO and cultural heritage protection even more puzzling. However, it should be noted that the Treaty of Lisbon, the most updated form of the Treaty on European Union, emphasizes the importance of culture in the
political decisions made by the EU bodies. It dictates the necessity of respect for cultural and linguistic differences and calls on the EU bodies to safeguard the cultural heritage of Europe (Franke and Iskra 2018). So, while this sheds some light on why the EU is interested in UNESCO partnership, it only answers the question of why within the confines of Europe.

The second key point on this issue is the fact that the EU has observer status within UNESCO’s governing bodies, like the UN General Assembly, and thus in its decisions. Observer status is granted by an international organization to non-members of the organization who have an interest in the topic at hand but, in this case, cannot be full-fledged members of the organization. Being an observer is helpful because it affords a sense of belonging, involvement, and knowledge. But, it can also be hindering. Observer states are often not allowed to vote on issues or propose legislation or resolutions in meetings. Thus, even though an observer knows what is happening, their voice often goes unheard. This is exactly what happens to the EU in the jurisdiction of UNESCO. Given this, it does not make sense why the EU continues to have a strong involvement with the programs of UNESCO. While EU member states do coordinate in order to put forward policies that coincide with UNESCO policy, the EU as an institution has no say in UNESCO’s decisions. Thus, why does the EU continue to put emphasis on UNESCO priorities and programs? What is in it for the EU and what good does it do for them as an international institution? These are the questions that this paper will attempt to answer.

**Literature Review**

This paper will now turn to a review of the existing literature regarding the EU’s involvement and interest in UNESCO and cultural heritage protection on an international scale and explain how my research will fit into and expand on the existing literature. As stated at the beginning of this paper, culture is an understudied subject in the realm of political science. That being said, there is some research that exists regarding the responsibility of international community as a whole to protect cultural heritage, which helps to somewhat answer the question of why the EU continues to be involved with UNESCO.

Current literature on the subject questions the EU’s dedication to the protection of cultural heritage. A 2004 article by Roger O’Keefe questions the responsibility of the international community as a whole to protect cultural heritage sites. According to O’Keefe, all states party to the World Heritage Convention, discussed above, are under international obligation to protect cultural heritage sites. If they fail to do so, then the international community has the ability to and is held responsible to “compel performance” of the state that is neglecting its protection responsibilities. However, this obligation only applies to states that are party to the convention, which the EU as an institution is not. O’Keefe then questions the obligation of non-state actors in regard to the protection of cultural heritage and taking compelling measures to get other actors to comply. He argues that since cultural heritage sites are considered to belong to “mankind as a whole” that all states, whether or not they are party to the convention, are actually responsible to the protection of cultural heritage sites worldwide. However, he argues that the Convention is just a treaty, and as such non-party states do not have any rights or responsibilities subject to what is outlined in the treaty. Thus, according to Article 4 of the 1972 Convention on World Heritage, only states that are party to the convention are responsible for the protection of sites globally, even considering the concept of common heritage or heritage of mankind (O’Keefe 2004).
The fact that the EU is not party as an institution to the convention, only individual EU member states are, suggests that the EU should not be concerned with the protection of cultural heritage globally. It also suggests that the EU as a whole should be unconcerned with the protection of sites within Europe as well. However, it is well documented that they are particularly active in the preservation of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage within their borders. Thus, given the fact that they do not HAVE to be active at the international level on this, yet they are, it demonstrates an underlying reasoning for involvement. This paper will seek to demonstrate that this reasoning has to do with growing the EU’s integration in terms of foreign policy and utilizes the auspices of cultural heritage protection to do so.

The other important topic that currently exists within this realm of literature that is relevant to the topic at hand is the efficacy of UNESCO. Richard Hoggart suggests in his book entitled *An Idea and its Servants: UNESCO from Within* that UNESCO has become an over politicized international entity, which has taken away from the communication of the successful work that it is pursuing across its jurisdiction, not just in the area of heritage protection. Because of this, the overarching theme of the book is whether or not UNESCO should continue to survive. Hoggart believes that it should continue to survive because when it is successful, it is highly successful. Additionally, he emphasizes the importance and revolutionary nature of the constitution governing UNESCO and how it calls for international cooperation at a level other than technical. However, he does concede that big, developed, and successful nations will continue to question the efficacy and usefulness of a body like UNESCO due to reasons that have nothing to do specifically with culture. They will thus cut funding to UNESCO initiatives in order to render it essentially useless (Hoggart 2011). This has been seen already, with the withdrawal of the United States from UNESCO membership at the end of 2018. This trajectory again raises the question of reasoning for the EU’s involvement. Why has it not followed the lead of the United States and withdrawn its cooperation and funding? What keeps the EU in talks with UNESCO and so supportive of its initiatives when its contemporaries continue to withdraw their support?

**Methodology**

The analytical section of this paper is based on the collection of qualitative data. The data collected are official statements, agreements, speeches, and memorandums of the EU regarding cultural heritage, specifically the protection of cultural heritage, and documents regarding or in tandem with UNESCO. I begin the analysis of these documents with the Memorandum of Understanding between the EU and UNESCO in 2012 and move forward chronologically from there. The analysis of the documents is focused specifically on language and content. In terms of language, I look for changes in language regarding the protection of cultural heritage sites globally. Specifically, I track the intensity and strength of the language used to describe the EU’s involvement or desire to be involved. I also track how in depth the documents go into the EU’s stance, looking specifically at how changes in language demarcate changes in objectives. I specifically analyze these factors and how they relate an increasing EU involvement in global cultural heritage to an EU desire to further their common foreign policy integration and reach.

**Content Analysis**

*Memorandum of Understanding 2012*
The best place to start with this content analysis is with the Memorandum of Understanding that was signed between the European Union and UNESCO in Paris on October 8, 2012. I have chosen to start here for two reasons. First, this is the first formal agreement between the two parties that details an extensive working partnership. Second, this memorandum was signed towards the beginning of much of the current unrest in the Middle East and North Africa, a region where many UNESCO sites are being threatened due to ongoing armed conflict. Thus, the Memorandum of Understanding forms a perfect starting point for this analysis both in terms of formality of relationship and timeliness.

The Memorandum of Understanding begins by listing the previous exchanges and informal agreements between the two parties, such as letters exchanged between the presidents and the Financial and Administrative Framework that exists between the EU and the United Nations. This demonstrates that the two groups have had an ongoing informal relationship, including agreements regarding the EU’s financial obligation to UN initiatives, which provides a base for more formal EU participation in areas such as this.

In the final paragraph of the introduction, the overall purpose of the memorandum is spelled out, dictating the aim of the memorandum as “enhancing and increasing their dialogue on policy issues, cooperation, and exchange of data and information in their efforts to achieve their common goals and objectives” (European Union and UNESCO 2012). Essentially, the purpose is to create a formal means by which the two institutions can coordinate their own work because there is a significant amount of overlap in policy objectives between them. However, the more significant piece of the memorandum is the list of areas of cooperation. In this section, areas where the two will further their cooperation, including in science and technology, maritime policy, and education are listed. It is important to note that the only mention of culture in this memorandum is under the auspices of increasing dialogues on culture as a potential area for development. There is no mention of the protection of culture or cultural heritage sites. This demonstrates the lower priority of cooperation in that area by both parties at the beginning of my timeline. This could be due to more pressing objectives or an underdeveloped understanding of the importance of cultural heritage to stability.

However, it is important to note that not only was the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Director General of UNESCO and the European Commissioner for Development, but also by the then current High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission. Thus, while seems to be a low priority of the protection of cultural heritage from a foreign policy and security standpoint, the EU still has a vested interest in other UNESCO initiatives from a foreign policy and security standpoint. Thus, the Memorandum of Understanding provides a strong starting point for the EU’s formal interest in UNESCO initiatives, especially as it relates to furthering European integration and cooperation on issues of foreign policy and security.

European Union Statement at the 37th UNESCO General Conference 2013

The 37th UNESCO General Conference took place in 2013 in China. Throughout each General Conference, members of UNESCO are given time to give official statements that support or question current UNESCO initiatives during allocated times known as “General Debates.” While the European Union is only an observer state of the UNESCO General Conference, it is also given the opportunity to present its statement during one of these sessions. In 2013, one year after the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, the European Union’s
A statement was given by Maria-Francesca Spatolisano of Italy, who was the current head of the EU delegation to UNESCO.

Spatolisano began her statement by discussing UNESCO’s projects on education, which, at the time, were clearly the EU’s primary interest among UNESCO initiatives. Second though, she mentions the importance of culture as a means of promoting humanitarian values and also as a “contributor in the achievement of shared objectives” (Spatolisano 2013). This is an interesting statement as it could be read in two ways. First, it could be read as a contributing factor to increasing cooperation between the EU and UNESCO. But, it could also be read as culture and cultural initiatives being a key contributor to furthering cooperation among EU member states on shared objectives. Thus, post 2012 and the Memorandum of Understanding, this is one of the first formal notions of using UNESCO and cultural heritage protection as a means of furthering cooperation and shared aims.

Additionally, this statement sees a stronger stand being taken by the EU on the issue of cultural heritage sites threatened by conflict, specifically mentioning the EU’s interest in protecting and promoting cultural heritage globally. This is also the first time that the EU has directly involved itself in the protection of sites in danger. Spatolisano specifically mentions the sites threatened or being destroyed in Syria and Mali and expresses the EU’s deep concern over the potential loss of these sites. Although not specifically stated in terms of these sites, she does briefly mention the EU’s involvement in “supporting the preservation and promotion of world heritage,” thus hinting at the EU’s potential willingness to help UNESCO protect or rebuild these sites in particular (Spatolisano 2013).

During this time, in Mali, the ancient mausoleums of Timbuktu, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, had been destroyed by extremists in the country. UNESCO undertook the task of rebuilding and restoring these mausoleums. Interestingly, the EU turned out to be one of the biggest funders of this restoration and protection project, as hinted at in Spatolisano’s speech. In total, the EU donated 500,000 euros to the project with the hopes of helping the country reclaim their identity and heritage and reconcile with each other following the civil unrest that occurred from 2012-2013. Additionally, the hope was to bring more political stability to the nation through a reconstruction of cultural stability. The belief was that by giving the people of Mali back a key aspect of their culture and identity that it would cultivate feelings of solidarity and cooperation (UNESCO 2014. “UNESCO and European Union.”). Thus, there is a distinctive underlying political motive to the efforts of reconstruction, and perhaps specifically the involvement of the European Union. This is especially notable considering the EU’s demonstrated belief that culture, and the protection of culture, are key to greater humanitarianism and global peace and cooperation. Clearly this is not just a belief for Europe, but for the world, and specifically developing nations where Europe has an interest.

Also of note in regards to the official EU statement at this UNESCO General Conference are the individual statements of EU member states. All EU member states are signatories to the UNESCO Convention and are voting members in the General Conference, which means that they are given the right to also make official statements on behalf of their own countries at each General Conference meeting every two years. Interesting to note, though, is that every statement by EU member states begins by acknowledging the state’s support of or association with the official EU statement. Thus, each member state bases its own views and statement first and foremost off of the EU’s statement. This demonstrates, in the context of this paper, the movement towards a greater EU cooperation and integration on issues of culture and cultural heritage, despite culture being a competence of each member state. This alignment of views
shows a growing willingness of member states to pool resources and collaborate on issues of world heritage protection.

*European Commission Communication to the European Parliament for a Resolution: Towards an Integrated Approach to Cultural Heritage for Europe 2014*

2014 was a relatively quiet year in terms of EU statements on or projects with UNESCO. The major project undertaken by the two actors in tandem this year was the Emergency Safeguarding of the Syrian Cultural Heritage project. This project, funded by the European Union and implemented by UNESCO, uses the protection and rebuilding of cultural heritage sites in war-torn Syria as a means of developing cohesion and stability in the region (UNESCO 2014. “The Emergency Safeguarding…”). This project is particularly interesting in terms of EU involvement. EU views on the Syrian crisis and EU intervention in the Syrian crisis differ from member state to member state, which some claiming the need for EU involvement and others demanding the EU not militarily intervene in the region. But, the heavy involvement in this specific project demonstrates a vested and consensus-based EU interest in the region. This shows an ongoing EU effort to increase integration on issues such as this. Thus, while involvement on this project does not include military intervention or action, it does demonstrate that the EU as an institution has reached a consensus on aiding in Syria in the realm of culture, which is a step towards further foreign policy integration.

A key document from this year is a communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament asking them to pass a resolution on the topic of instituting a more integrated European approach to cultural heritage. While this is not specifically directed towards UNESCO initiatives and is instead directed towards more domestic initiatives, there are a few interesting key phrases and claims in this document that indicate a push towards using cultural heritage and protection of it as a means to further EU integration on foreign policy. There is a specific section of this document entitled “Cultural Heritage in EU External Relations,” in which the Commission reiterates the importance of Europe as a leader in global cultural heritage practices. In fact, the Commission directly states that “Culture is an essential asset of Europe’s public diplomacy” (European Commission 2014). Here we see an EU body directly stating the importance of culture and cultural initiatives in how the EU presents itself on the global stage, and by extension, through foreign policy. It is also mentioned here that there is a growing awareness in the formulation of EU external policy about the threats that cultural heritage sites face.

Also mentioned is the EU’s specific relationship with UNESCO and the activities that are undertaken with international organizations such as UNESCO. Most importantly is a note in the annex which dictates to the European Parliament that, under UNESCO declarations, it is necessary to fully integrate “culture into sustainable development strategies worldwide and for national policies and programmes to be stepped up in order to secure the protection and promotion of heritage” (European Commission 2014). The Commission is telling the rest of the EU institutions that the EU has an obligation to focus on heritage under the auspices of external relations and policy as one entity. It is from this statement that the Commission calls for an extension of EU action on culture to extend beyond European borders, noting the global desire for European expertise. It is this statement that is the most interesting and telling because it represents a more distinct and stronger call for European integration on the matter as it extends to the international arena. Clearly, the Commission saw a place for European leadership in this area, but only if the member states worked together and cooperated on policy.
European Union Statement on the Proceedings of the 38th General Conference of UNESCO 2015

The European Union was again present and participatory in the 38th General Conference of UNESCO which took place in Paris in 2015. The EU’s position was delivered by Christian Leffler, the then acting Deputy-Secretary General of the European Union. It should be noted again that individual EU member states, in their statements to the General Conference, once again explicitly align themselves with the position of the EU.

The most important aspect to note in this statement is the increasingly strong language used to describe the EU’s support of UNESCO and the relevance and importance of UNESCO’s work and partnerships, especially in the protection of cultural heritage sites in areas threatened by armed conflict. For example, Leffler refers to UNESCO as a “crucial organization” and strongly declares the EU’s strong and full support for the work that UNESCO is doing in all aspects of its work (Leffler 2015). It is the language such as “crucial” and “full support” that demonstrates a growing EU interest in the work of UNESCO. It is especially prudent in this year because 2015 represented the peak of the civil war in Syria and the refugee crisis in Europe. Thus, it became more and more pertinent for the EU to support initiatives in the country of origin to help repair and regrow society and identity.

Leffler also reiterates the EU’s commitment to supporting UNESCO in efforts to protect and restore cultural heritage and cultural diversity globally. Leffler again uses strong language noting the EU’s “deep concern” for the ongoing destruction of cultural heritage in countries plagued by armed conflict such as Syria. Of important interest on this point and something that is of new interest for the EU is the call for UNESCO to cooperate better with national authorities in these countries in order to obtain more reliable field data on the status of these sites (Leffler 2015). This also indicates the EU’s dedication to aiding in the protection and restoration of these sites. As one of UNESCO’s most prolific donors, it is important for the EU to have accurate data in order to send the appropriate amount of funding. Of note would be that this funding would come directly from the EU’s annual budget, demonstrating again an integrated approach to foreign policy under the guise of humanitarian or cultural aid. It is the strong language and call for action used in this statement that shows how serious the EU’s interest in these problems has become as a single entity.

Federica Mogherini Directly Speaks on the Protection of Cultural Heritage 2017

While not directed specifically at a UNESCO initiative, 2017 marked the first time that the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, spoke directly about the importance of the protection of cultural heritage sites globally. The most powerful and pertinent statement she makes is “The world's cultural heritage needs the protection of our foreign policy. It is not just a matter for culture ministers, it is also a security and foreign policy matter” (Mogherini 2017). To her, the protection of cultural heritage is a place for foreign and security policy and should be included in the future policy formulation for all countries, and specifically the EU. She calls on foreign policy makers to fully understand the power of culture as a facilitator for peace, understanding, and cooperation. She notes that this is how she is conducting foreign policy making in Europe. She notes that the European Parliament had recently implemented a strategy on international cultural relations, supported by all branches of the EU and helping to reshape the way the EU views foreign policy. The strategy has helped to
ensure that all foreign policy decisions, as well as European civilian and military missions consider cultural heritage protection, specifically in missions to countries facing conflict. She also reiterated the EU’s dedication to helping to fund restoration and rebuilding missions and discusses the EU’s commitment to the prevention of the trafficking of cultural items, the sale of which is often used to fund terrorist activities (Mogherini 2017). Thus, the protection of these sites and cultural artifacts is useful in promoting greater security and security policy as well. The protection of these sites is useful in the fight against terrorism as it promotes tourism and developments as well as peace and cooperation. According to Mogherini, “for too long, culture has been treated as a side issue,” and it must and has begun to become a central part of the EU’s decision-making criteria in the realm of foreign policy (Mogherini 2017). The sheer power and legitimacy that this statement has demonstrates the growth of the importance of culture in the EU and its foreign policy objectives. Mogherini blatantly states that culture can be used as a way for the EU to better integrate and standardize its foreign policy priorities as culture has such a dynamic role in foreign and security matters.

This statement is referenced later in the year in the EU’s statement delivered by Christian Leffler at the 39th UNESCO General Conference. He states that cultural heritage sites also require protection as a part of foreign policy, specifically using the phrasing of “our foreign policies” (Leffler 2017). This both specifically calls out UNESCO member states to do the same, but reiterates the EU’s movement towards this, as expanded on by Mogherini. He notes the importance of cultural heritage in the strengthening of a country’s tourism, resilience, security, and economy. Importantly, he notes the importance of cultural heritage and identity connections to cultural heritage as a means to prevent radicalization, and thus pushes protection as a matter of international security (Leffler 2017). Thus, 2017 marks a distinct changing point for the EU in terms of its relationship with UNESCO and with cultural heritage in general. It is this year where cultural heritage became much more than just a place for interest groups but became of distinct interest for governments and intergovernmental organizations such as the EU, who used cultural heritage as a way to further integrate and coordinate approaches to foreign and security policy across the world.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding in 2012, the EU has sought to solidify and grow its relationship with UNESCO and its dedication to the organization’s objectives specifically in the realm of cultural heritage protection. This strengthening and growth has been demonstrated in the above case studies. The changing language throughout EU statements and speeches over the last six years has indicated a focusing of EU priority in the realm of foreign and security on programs of cultural heritage protection in policy and missions. This culminated with statements directly from the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy that specifically dictated the EU’s new focus on issues of cultural protection as an aspect of foreign policy. Now that the tangible evidence has been established, the question of why the EU has pursued specifically initiatives in this area must be answered.

As elaborated at the beginning of this paper, as unrest and violence has grown globally in the last six years and Europe has faced the effects of this violence through influxes of refugees, European integration and dedication to international intervention has suffered, much to the chagrin of EU leadership. Thus, it became pertinent for the EU leadership to find a way to continue to grow integration and maintain the EU’s international responsibilities.
As more and more cultural heritage sites continued to be threatened and even destroyed due to violent conflict, this quickly became an area where the EU realized it could foster consensus and thus integrate further on matters of foreign policy. Research suggests that tangible cultural heritage can act as a reminder of history and a grounding of identity to people in the region, especially if they feel like they are being uprooted by violence and/or unstable regimes (Hilgert 2017). Thus, the protection and rebuilding of cultural sites is a way to give people back a sense of stability. It can re-ground people in their history and their culture and help create an environment of growing cooperation. This can help stabilize and bring peace to regions.

During this timeframe, the EU seemed to realize the importance of culture in providing stability and made moves to pull culture and the protection of culture to a focal point of foreign policy and missions. According to Mogherini, there has been success in this new focus. This seems to stem from the EU’s overall willingness to work on this issue because of the acceptance of the importance of cultural heritage across member states. As a member state competence, all member states have established plans, policies, and programs to protect and preserve their own cultural heritage and are dedicated to doing so. Member state policies are also supplemented by EU levels policies and programs. Thus, it was straightforward and simple to garner support on this issue, especially since many member states rely on UNESCO and its funding in their own cultural protection programs. Thus, culture became the simplest and most agreed upon area to continue to grow EU foreign policy positively.

Culture, and thus tangible cultural heritage sites, can represent identity and thus create solidarity and understanding and cooperation. Over the last six years, the EU has made large strides in realizing this. The EU has noticed that one of the keys to fostering peace is by giving people in a region their identity back. To do this, the EU has sought to strengthen its relationship with UNESCO and its initiatives. The EU has brought cultural heritage and its protection to the forefront of its foreign policy decision making, realizing that it can significantly help countries affected by violence. Underpinning this is the belief by the EU that it as an institution must approach foreign and security policy from a common place. However, this has been difficult to accomplish, especially considering that different member states have different views on foreign policy and specifically military intervention in countries affected by armed conflict. But, EU leaders have realized that getting member states to agree on something niche in the realm of foreign policy is key to furthering this stalling integration that is desired, and this has been demonstrated by the changing and growing relationship the EU has had with UNESCO and its drive to be involved in its initiatives and utilize its initiatives in its foreign policy decision making. This has been shown through the case studies of this paper. If the EU continues to use culture as a central point of decision making in its foreign policy, it stands a greater chance of continuing its integration. While all humans do not share the same culture, all humans share the ideal of culture and can understand its importance. It is keying in on concepts like this that will help lead not only to further EU integration, but to further cooperation, understanding, and stability globally.
References


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