

Preface

In the summer of 1980, I went to work as a guard and interpreter at the Norwegian embassy in Moscow. The work was my partial payment to the Norwegian Army for having taught me Russian. There was a guard at the gate, put there by our Soviet hosts, so the guarding basically consisted of sleeping on the premises at night and hoisting the flag in the morning. Then there was the interpreting, which turned out to be mostly translation – that is, the work was written rather than verbal. I had ample time to watch diplomats at work, and to ponder the peculiarities of the Soviet Union in general, and its Ministry of Foreign Affairs in particular. One stood out: we were not allowed to travel more than 40 kilometres from the city centre without permission.

I returned from Moscow and went on to finish a doctorate on Russia. When the time came to pick a topic for my post-doc, I settled on diplomacy. My first book on the topic was an ethnography on discourse and practice: what do diplomats do, what do they say they do, and what is the difference between the two (Neumann 2012)? My second book on diplomacy was on the places where diplomacy plays out, and detailed how diplomats put an exorbitant amount of energy into planning and preparing the sites where their trysts are about to happen (Neumann 2013b). Once one has committed to writing a book on space, a book on time follows logically. There is really only one way of finding out why my sometime Russian hosts insisted on restricting diplomatic travel from Moscow, and that is to trace the practice back in time. As it turns out, the practice is centuries old. When Russians began to host Western diplomats on a regular basis from the sixteenth century onwards, the visitors were met at the border, their coaches were draped so that they should not see their surroundings, and only then were they escorted to Moscow, where they were not allowed to move around unescorted.

As this example is meant to demonstrate, and given diplomacy's world-historical ubiquity, there is a need for a book that discusses the emergence of diplomacy over the *longue durée*. Extant histories of diplomacy, which are without exception written from a Western perspective (e.g. Anderson 1993, Berridge 1995, Hamilton and Langhorne 2011), tend to treat changes in diplomacy as something planned by states, which is of course perfectly legitimate. Such an approach should nonetheless be complemented by one that looks at the social institution of diplomacy as something that has emergent properties – that is, that evolves as a result of ever-new changes. The past is definitely still with us. To take a leaf out of the phenomenologist's book, when we take action, it is always informed by our past experiences, and also by our expectations about future events. Temporality – that is, the way time appears to humans – is a many-tensed affair.

There are three tenses in the English language: past, present and future. They are all in what a grammarian would call the *realis* mood, which means that they purport to state facts. It is a delightful part of human existence, however, that we do not

limit ourselves to thinking about a phenomenon like diplomacy only in terms of facts. In addition to the *realis* mood, we also have the *irrealis* mood, the what-ifs and the might-have-beens. The English *irrealis* mood *par excellence* is the subjunctive mood, which, Wikipedia tells us, is ‘typically used to express various states of unreality such as wish, emotion, possibility, judgement, opinion, obligation, or action that have not yet occurred.’¹ In order to include what we may call the social imaginary of diplomacy, the book also offers a chapter on one of the ways in which diplomacy is imagined in a world of fiction that has had a very wide reception indeed, namely that of Harry Potter.

Chapter 1 introduces the book by discussing how diplomacy is about handling the Other, noting how extant theoretical and historical approaches have conceptualized diplomacy, particularly in relation to other ways of dealing with the Other such as war, and stating how an evolutionary approach may complement extant approaches. These extant discussions of diplomacy understood as a social institution take the form of either histories or genealogies.

Chapter 2, ‘The evolution of diplomacy’, attempts to complement these discussions by understanding the emergence of diplomacy in terms of evolution. Specifically, I draw on Eldredge and Gould’s ([1972] 1985; see also Schelling 1969) idea of punctuated equilibria or tipping-points, understood as the culmination of long-term trends. Taking note of two tipping-points for human cooperation generally, namely big game hunting and classificatory kinship, I go on to identify four tipping-points for diplomacy. These are regular and ritualized contacts between culturally similar small-scale polities; regular and ritualized contacts between culturally different large-scale polities; permanent bilateral diplomacy; and permanent multi-lateral diplomacy. I round off by discussing what seems to be a trend on its way to become a new tipping-point, namely that states increasingly hybridize their diplomacy by working with and through non-state actors. This possible tipping-point comes in for more thorough scrutiny in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 3, ‘The evolution of the consular institution’, is co-written with Halvard Leira and discusses the evolution of what we have come to call the consul. The first part looks at consular work *avant la lettre*. We discuss the emergence of intermediary functions between a polity or a group within a polity and a group from another polity, and excavate the phenomenon’s Muslim origins. We trace how, beginning in the sixth century before the common era (BCE), the consular institution evolved to reach a tipping-point in the Eastern Mediterranean at the beginning of the second millennium CE, as the judge of a trading colony. A second tipping-point was brought on by the emergence of sovereignty in Europe, which transformed the judge into a representative of the state. This tipping-point was reached in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars. A short century afterwards, a third tipping-point enveloped the consular institution in the emergent unitary foreign services. We end by speculating that with increased density of global communication the consular institution may be on the way to a return to separate institutions and a new tipping-point.

Seeing is believing. Extant literature on diplomacy is thoroughly text-oriented. While texts are obviously very central indeed to diplomacy, diplomacy precedes literacy as a phenomenon, and diplomats still spend large chunks of their working

time on planning for and executing what we may call visual work. Beginning with a discussion of how the visual emerged in diplomacy, Chapter 4 goes on to lay down the groundwork for the study of visual diplomacy in three ways. First, it establishes diplomacy's visual modalities – that is, how seeing is constitutive of this particular social institution relative to other social institutions. Secondly, it draws attention to the importance of the diplomatic practices that make the visual visible – that is, how diplomats spread images to wider audiences. Thirdly and in conclusion, it draws up a taxonomy of three visual strategies used for this purpose – a hegemonic and Western strategy, a national strategy, and a strategy that is spiteful towards Western hegemony. The power differentials involved between these strategies make visual diplomacy constitutive of the lingering Western hegemony in international relations (IR) at large.

Chapter 5, 'Presentability', gives concrete examples of how the visual diplomacy discussed in Chapter 4 is actually carried out. Diplomats have to be presentable – that is, 'clean, smart, or decent enough to be seen in public'.² The first part of the chapter discusses why visual and aesthetic aspects tend to be under-communicated by Western practitioners and scholars of politics and diplomacy and accounts for this by pointing to a deep-seated scepticism of visual props and a twentieth-century reaction against Nazi aestheticizing of politics. The second part sets out what it takes to stage a successful visual performance and points to three factors: the agent's own preparations, audience assessment and mediation to a broader public. The third part uses the typology suggested in the previous chapter to analyse two particularly successful performances of accreditation and to highlight how they succeeded because they were deemed to be particularly presentable as a result of being particularly smart and decent, respectively. It also discusses two spiteful performances. In conclusion, I argue that smartness trumps decency and spitefulness.

Chapter 6, 'Diplomatic subjunctive: the case of Harry Potter's realms', opens with a short discussion of how diplomacy is represented in popular culture and art. Since very few people have first-hand knowledge of diplomacy, and diplomacy as such is rarely given much exposure in the news, most people owe their understanding of it to representations in popular culture and the arts. These representations have legitimacy effects. They feed back into how diplomats represent themselves to the public and, by extension, into how politicians represent issues to the public. In this sense, representations of diplomacy have an indirect constitutive effect on diplomacy. The main chunk of the chapter gives the concrete example of an imagined diplomat, from the globally well-known world of Harry Potter. When the headmaster at Harry's school, Albus Dumbledore, is drawing up a plan for how to defend his magical world from the coming onslaught of Voldemort, he pays particular attention to how to forge an alliance against him. One particularly hard group to get on board is giants, and so Dumbledore decides to try diplomacy. He sends a man, or, more specifically, a half-man-half-giant by the name of Hagrid, as his envoy to the giants. The chapter discusses the ensuing diplomatic mission and suggests that we may think of this case of imaginary diplomacy as a comment on how states have tried and are trying to liaise with the indigenous peoples of this world. However, the general and important point that emerges from this discussion of imagined diplomacies is that a version of diplomacy

that is now rarely found in the *realis* mood, namely so-called anti-diplomacy, which sees relations to the Other in terms of a confrontation between good and evil and diplomacy as an exercise in gathering the forces of good, seems to be hibernating in *irrealis* mood.

The introduction to this book will begin to argue that diplomacy is in the throes of a tipping-point that may see it transformed from a primarily states-oriented business to a multi-oriented activity focused on global governance. While the change in agents that this would entail has been much discussed, this book's approach to diplomacy as an emergent phenomenon allows us to complement these debates by focusing on possible changes in subject matter. Increasingly, diplomats seem not only to represent states and negotiate with one another but also to work in tandem to shore up the global system overall. Diplomats are trying to reduce tension and state collapse by mediating in crisis environments. Not only multilateral diplomacy but also bilateral diplomacy seem to be focused increasingly on global governance. Chapter 7 therefore concludes the book by arguing that, while the rise of non-Western powers like China and India and the continuing Realpolitik approach to diplomacy taken by Russia seem to uphold and strengthen a state-centric 'old' diplomacy, we are nonetheless witnessing the emergence of a new variant of diplomacy that may be traced back to the European Enlightenment and that has by now come to focus on global governance.

Chapter 2 has a precursor in Iver B. Neumann (2018), 'A Prehistorical Evolutionary View of Diplomacy', *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 14 (1): 4–10, used by permission from Palgrave. Chapter 3 builds on Iver B. Neumann and Halvard Leira (2013), 'Judges, Merchants and Envoys: The Growth and Development of the Consular Institution', pp. 113–132 in Iver B. Neumann and Halvard Leira (eds), *International Diplomacy, Vol I, Sage Library of International Relations* (Los Angeles: Sage). Chapter 5 has a much shorter precursor in Iver B. Neumann (2019), 'Diplomatic Representation in the Public Sphere: Performing Accreditation', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 14 (4): 447–466, used by permission from Brill Nijhoff. Chapter 6 draws on research that also grounded Iver B. Neumann (2006), 'Naturalizing Geography: Harry Potter and the Realms of Muggles, Magic Folks, and Monsters', pp. 157–175 in Daniel H. Nexon and Iver B. Neumann (eds), *Harry Potter in International Relations* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield).

Notes

- 1 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subjunctive_mood, retrieved 25 April 2019.
- 2 <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/presentable>, retrieved 2 February 2019.