

CONFERENCE REPORT

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1. INTRODUCTION

The conference "Towards a Global Diplomatic History (c.1400-1900)" held on 30-31 May 2024 at the University of Warwick, intended to redefine the conventional Eurocentric narrative of diplomatic history. Traditionally, the history of diplomacy has been portrayed as a European-centric story, highlighting the city-states of Renaissance Italy, the Westphalian system, the rise of the modern nation-state, and the spread of international law rooted in European legal theory as important elements. These elements have been credited with the emergence of the modern international order in the nineteenth century.

Recent scholarship has increasingly contested traditional Eurocentric narratives of diplomatic history, highlighting inter-polity relations in Africa, Asia, and Indigenous communities, which expand our understanding of global diplomatic development. Despite numerous local and regional studies, a unified global narrative remains unwritten. The AHRC-funded Global Diplomacy Network aims to bridge this gap, and the recent conference explored methodological challenges and opportunities, with participants presenting papers on the transregional dynamics shaping diplomacy worldwide.

Key questions guiding the conference included:

- What were the principal agents and processes driving the development of inter-polity relations in various regions during the early modern period?
- How did diplomatic norms, structures, and practices of varying cultural origins influence one another and evolve through global interactions?
- What new diplomatic practices emerged from inter-regional exchanges, and which were marginalized or abolished?
- What role did non-Western communities and concepts play in the formation of the global diplomatic system?

Through these discussions, the conference aimed to establish a new spatial and temporal understanding of global diplomatic history, moving beyond Eurocentric narratives to acknowledge the formative contributions of actors and traditions from around the world. This report summarizes the insights and discussions from the conference, highlighting the dynamic and multifaceted nature of global diplomacy from c.1400-1900.

2. SESSION 1 – WORLD-MAKING

The first session of the conference, titled "World-Making," explored innovative frameworks and historical perspectives on global diplomatic practices from the Qing Empire, 18th-century Morocco, and the Ottoman Empire. The session featured three presentations by Meng Zhang, Peter Kitlas, and Michael Talbot, each offering unique insights into the complexities of diplomatic history.

Meng Zhang: "‘Inner and Outer’: Toward a New Framework for Qing Foreign Relations"

Meng Zhang from Vanderbilt University presented a framework for understanding Qing foreign relations. Traditional scholarship often focuses on the Sinitic 'tribute system' or the Inner Asian khanate tradition, projecting a modern domestic-foreign dichotomy onto Qing interdomain relations. Zhang proposed an alternative framework using the discourse of 'inner and outer,' which conveyed a flexible notion of political space influenced by cultural, ethnolinguistic, and religious factors. This approach allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the Qing political landscape, where the concepts of 'inner' and 'outer' are context-dependent and fluid. Zhang's framework, according to her, offers a spatial and temporal imagination that better reflects Qing historical practices.

Peter Kitlas: "An Eighteenth-century Scribal Revival? The Challenges of Incorporating Islamic Thought into Global Diplomatic History"

Peter Kitlas from the American University of Beirut delved into the role of scribes in shaping diplomatic practices in 18th-century Morocco. Challenging the traditional legal-centric view of Islamic diplomacy, Kitlas argued that scribes (kuttab) were key actors in diplomatic affairs, positioning themselves as ethical mediators in opposition to the corrupt political-religious class. Through a detailed case study of Ahmad al-Maqnasi, a Moroccan scribe-diplomat, Kitlas illustrated how these individuals combined traditional scribal ethics with contemporary diplomatic practices. Al-Maqnasi's diplomatic missions and writings highlighted the importance of considering ethical frameworks alongside legal concepts in understanding Islamic diplomacy. Kitlas concluded that acknowledging the term 'Islamic diplomacy' enriches our understanding of Moroccan history and its intellectual traditions.

Michael Talbot: "The World of the Ottoman Consular Network"

Michael Talbot from the University of Greenwich presented an extensive study on the Ottoman consular network, emphasizing its significance beyond the shadow of ambassadors. Talbot traced the development of the Ottoman consular system, managed by *şehbenders* ('harbour masters'), from its Mediterranean origins to a global presence by the late 19th century. Through case studies in New Orleans, Birmingham, and Batavia (modern Jakarta), Talbot illustrated the diverse roles of Ottoman consuls. They not only managed local Ottoman communities and commercial interests but also embodied the Ottoman state's political and cultural presence abroad. Talbot emphasized the importance of using precise terminology to reflect the Ottomans' self-perception, showcasing how their consular network provided a unique spatial view of global diplomacy.

Discussion Highlights

The subsequent discussion was vibrant, with participants exploring the implications of these new frameworks and perspectives. Questions ranged from the evolution of the tributary system in Southeast Asia to the specific functions and loyalties of Ottoman consuls. The panellists elaborated on the nuanced roles of consuls, the inner-outer conceptual framework, and the ethical dimensions of scribal diplomacy.

Meng Zhang highlighted the political sensitivity inherent in Qing administrative practices, while Peter Kitlas emphasized the ethical positioning of Moroccan scribes against the political-religious elite. Michael Talbot's reflections on the multifaceted duties of Ottoman consuls, including monitoring revolutionary activities and commercial mediation, provided a comprehensive view of their complex roles.

The session underscored the importance of reconsidering traditional frameworks and incorporating diverse intellectual traditions to enrich our understanding of global diplomatic history. The innovative approaches presented by Zhang, Kitlas, and Talbot opened new avenues for research and dialogue, demonstrating the dynamic nature of historical diplomatic studies.

3. SESSION 2 – RITUAL PERFORMANCE

The second session of the conference, titled "Ritual Performance," featured thought-provoking presentations by Céline Carayon and Ulfatbek Abdurasulov. Both scholars delved into the intricate roles of rituals and performativity in early modern diplomacy, focusing on French-Indigenous relations in the Americas and Russian-Central Asian interactions.

Céline Carayon: “‘Ces sortes d’amis’ (That Kind of Friends): Compéage as Embodied Interregional Diplomacy in the Early French-Indigenous Atlantic”

Céline Carayon from Salisbury University explored the ritualized alliance system known as *compéage*, which French colonists and missionaries encountered in the seventeenth-century Greater Caribbean and coastal Brazil. This system established deep personal, commercial, and diplomatic bonds between French individuals and Indigenous people. *Compéage* was a form of personal alliance akin to assumed kinship, integrating French and Indigenous participants into mutual relationships sustained by rituals and sensory performances. These alliances were distinct from other kinship-based alliances observed in North America.

Carayon emphasized that establishing *compéage* involved carefully scripted rituals, including physical greetings, gift exchanges, and formalized speeches. These rituals created a profound emotional bond between participants, essential for maintaining the fragile French colonial presence. French colonists adapted to local Indigenous norms that emphasized kinship and reciprocity, often including relationships with natural elements. This adaptation revealed the deep cultural understanding and accommodation required for successful colonial diplomacy.

The success of French colonial efforts hinged on these personal alliances. The breakdown of *compéage* relationships could lead to significant intercultural violence, destabilizing French colonial ventures. Carayon's analysis underscored the

importance of these alliances in sustaining French confidence in their colonial endeavours, highlighting the need to consider local Indigenous practices and cultural norms in diplomatic history.

Ulfatbek Abdurasulov: “Allegiance in the Eye of the Beholder: Rituals and Performativity in Russian-Central Asian Diplomacy”

Ulfatbek Abdurasulov from the Austrian Academy of Science examined the complexities of early modern Russian-Central Asian diplomacy, focusing on the alleged submission of the Khanate of Khiva to Russia in 1700. Russian diplomatic practices involved elaborate rituals such as oath-taking and submission ceremonies, which held different meanings for the involved parties. These rituals were interpreted differently by Russian and Central Asian participants, reflecting distinct cultural understandings.

Abdurasulov detailed the case of Shāh Niyāz Khān's alleged plea of allegiance to Tsar Peter I, situating it within the broader Eurasian political context, including the Treaty of Karlovitz and Russian-Turkish negotiations. The interpretation of the written plea varied, with Russian officials viewing it as a formal submission, while Khivan authorities likely saw it differently. This discrepancy highlighted the improvisational and co-productive nature of Russian-Central Asian diplomacy, where performative acts and semiotic interpretations played crucial roles.

The presentation also emphasized the internal political dynamics within Russia, characterized by competition between different factions. The involvement of key figures like Prince Boris Galitzin underscored the internal political struggles that influenced how diplomatic missions were handled and interpreted. Abdurasulov's analysis revealed the complex interplay of political motivations, cultural interpretations, and performative acts in early modern diplomacy.

Discussion Highlights

The presentations sparked a lively discussion, addressing several key themes. Participants highlighted the importance of understanding diplomatic rituals within their specific cultural contexts. Both Carayon and Abdurasulov emphasized that European diplomatic norms were often adapted to fit local customs and expectations. The discussion also explored the central role of food in diplomatic rituals, particularly in Carayon's presentation. The consumption of food and the accompanying taboos were integral to establishing and maintaining alliances.

The significance of kinship metaphors in diplomatic relations was another key topic, with Carayon explaining how Indigenous concepts of kinship shaped French colonial interactions. Abdurasulov's analysis of the political motivations behind the Russian interpretation of Khivan submission led to discussions on the broader geopolitical strategies of the Russian state. The session also addressed the internal political dynamics within Russia and the influence of powerful figures like Prince Galitzin on diplomatic practices.

Translation and its impact on diplomatic relations emerged as a significant issue. Abdurasulov pointed out the discrepancies between the Persian original and the Russian translation of Khivan documents, which had profound implications for how

these relations were understood. The session underscored the complexity and variability of diplomatic interactions across different regions and periods, emphasizing the need to consider cultural, political, and semiotic factors in historical analyses. The session provided valuable insights into the embodied and performative dimensions of early modern diplomacy. The presentations by Carayon and Abdurasulov highlighted the intricate and dynamic nature of diplomatic interactions, demonstrating the importance of local practices and cultural norms in shaping historical diplomatic relations.

4. ROUNDTABLE 1: ARCHIVES OF GLOBAL DIPLOMACY

Chair: Guido van Meersbergen, University of Warwick

Panelists:

- Sâqib Bâburî, British Library
- Nandini Chatterjee, University of Exeter
- Kurosh Meshkat, British Library

Discussion summary:

The roundtable session on "Archives of Global Diplomacy" featured insightful presentations from Sâqib Bâburî, Nandini Chatterjee, and Kurosh Meshkat, each delving into the nature and significance of diplomatic documents across different historical contexts. The discussions illuminated the complexity and richness of diplomatic artifacts, emphasizing their role in shaping historical narratives and international relations.

Presentation by Sâqib Bâburî: British Library

Sâqib Bâburî from the British Library opened the session with an analysis of diplomatic documents from Timurid India, spanning nearly a century. He showcased three documents addressed to British monarchs—William III, George II, and George III. Bâburî highlighted the formal consistencies in these documents, such as the tall rectangular format and the clustering of text in the lower left corner, while noting differences like the use of gold margins in later documents.

Bâburî traced the genealogy of these documents back to earlier examples from the Ilkhanate, highlighting the use of multiple languages and scripts for both domestic and diplomatic purposes. This lineage demonstrated the evolution of document design, with specific elements like text clustering and seal placement becoming standardized over time. Bâburî emphasized that these design choices reflect broader cultural and political contexts, including the adaptation of Persian and Arabic scripts in diplomatic communications.

Presentation by Nandini Chatterjee: University of Exeter

Nandini Chatterjee from the University of Exeter explored the conceptual framework for understanding diplomatic documents. She began by comparing the Treaty of Nanjing with the Treaty of Waitangi, highlighting the visual and material differences that reflect differing diplomatic cultures. While the Treaty of Nanjing

appeared to strive for visual equivalence, the Treaty of Waitangi was more of a bundle of rags, signifying a less formalized diplomatic interaction.

Chatterjee then introduced the concept of documents as currency, particularly in the context of sub-imperial orders from the Mughal successor states. She described how these documents, often exchanged for military resources or other favors, functioned as a form of currency within diplomatic and commercial networks. This perspective challenged traditional views of treaties and diplomatic documents, suggesting that their value lay in their circulation and the relationships they facilitated.

Presentation by Kurosh Meshkat: British Library

Kurosh Meshkat from the British Library discussed the importance of understanding the wider cultural context of diplomatic documents and rituals. He emphasized that both the content of correspondence and the ceremonies surrounding diplomatic interactions are extensions of the core culture of a place and its broader region. Meshkat argued that appreciating these cultural dimensions is crucial for understanding the true significance of diplomatic artifacts.

He provided examples from Persian diplomatic history, illustrating how letters and other documents often contained hidden meanings or conundrums that required deep cultural knowledge to decipher. Meshkat's analysis underscored the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in the study of diplomatic history, blending textual analysis with an understanding of ritual and performativity.

Discussion Highlights

The roundtable sparked a lively discussion, with several key themes emerging: Participants emphasized the need to understand diplomatic documents within their specific cultural contexts. Bâburî's analysis of Timurid documents and Meshkat's discussion of Persian diplomatic practices highlighted how cultural norms and practices shape diplomatic artifacts. Furthermore, Chatterjee's proposal to view diplomatic documents as a form of currency resonated with many participants. This perspective opened new avenues for understanding the circulation and value of these documents beyond their immediate diplomatic context.

The role of rituals in diplomatic interactions was another key theme. Meshkat's focus on the performative aspects of diplomacy and Bâburî's analysis of document design both highlighted how rituals and materiality contribute to the meaning and function of diplomatic artifacts. Additionally, the discussion underscored the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in diplomatic history. Combining textual analysis with insights from anthropology, art history, and other fields can provide a more nuanced understanding of diplomatic artifacts and their broader significance.

5. KEYNOTE ADDRESS ON THE FOUNDATIONS OF INTER-POLITY RELATIONS IN PRE-1800 NORTH AMERICA

Introduction

The keynote address by Professor Saliha Belmessous from the University of Oxford and the University of New South Wales, titled "The Foundations of Inter-Polity Relations in Pre-1800 North America," explored the significant role of the legal principle of protection in shaping relations between indigenous societies and European colonies. Professor Belmessous provided a nuanced analysis of how this principle, deeply rooted in both indigenous and European political systems, evolved and functioned within these inter-polity dynamics.

Keynote Summary

Professor Belmessous challenged the Eurocentric view that Europeans introduced law to indigenous societies. She presented evidence that indigenous peoples lived in a world regulated by their own systems of norms, rights, obligations, customs, and more.

Her primary focus was on the legal principle of protection, which was crucial in inter-polity relations. She explained that indigenous societies' social organization was based on kinship, establishing rights and duties among members. This kinship system adapted to inter-polity relations, creating reciprocal relationships through fictive kinship. Protection structured interactions, enabling the formation of economic, political, and military alliances. These alliances, often unequal, involved one entity pledging protection in exchange for tribute, although equal partnerships based on mutual protection also existed.

Belmessous emphasized the importance of kinship terminology in these alliances, noting titles such as fathers, uncles, and brothers reflected hierarchical relationships. Reciprocity was central, with trade relations fostering interdependence and peace.

Interaction with European Colonies

The principle of protection further developed with the inclusion of French and British colonies in indigenous politics. Indigenous polities established relationships with European colonies through fictive kinship, often viewing Europeans as equals and using brotherhood metaphors. Some indigenous nations placed themselves under the protection of the King of England while maintaining independence from colonial governors.

As European colonies expanded, the balance of power shifted. By the late 17th century, the French and British assumed more dominant roles as protectors, often trying to impose unequal relationships. However, indigenous peoples resisted subjugation, insisting on mutual consent and reciprocity.

Belmessous discussed how trade relations were central to protection agreements, with the exchange of goods serving as both economic necessity and diplomatic bond. French trading posts symbolized French protection and asserted territorial claims. However, the French faced challenges in meeting their allies' material needs, leading to tensions and re-evaluations of their role as protectors.

Shifts in Power Dynamics

The evolving geopolitical environment increased pressure on protection relationships. Indigenous polities frequently reassessed their alliances, sometimes shifting their protection based on strategic interests. The failure of a protector to fulfil its obligations often led to the termination of the relationship. For instance, the French Governor General's harsh treatment of a Meskwaki diplomat alienated indigenous allies and shifted alliances.

Throughout the 18th century, the principle of protection continued to shape North American politics, adapting to changing power dynamics and mutual needs.

Conclusion

Professor Belmessous highlighted that the legal principle of protection was central to inter-polity relations in pre-1800 North America. Rooted in both indigenous and European traditions, this principle facilitated a system of mutual support that regulated diplomatic relations. The keynote underscored the importance of understanding these historical dynamics to appreciate the intricate and reciprocal nature of early North American diplomacy.

Discussion

The discussion following the keynote was vigorous, with attendees exploring the complexities of inter-polity relations and the role of protection in various contexts. Topics included the challenges of integrating diverse diplomatic systems, the implications of protection on territorial claims, and the evolution of these relationships over time. Professor Belmessous's address offered valuable perspectives for further research and understanding of historical diplomacy.

6. SESSION 1, DAY 2 – ORDERING EMPIRE

The second day of the conference began with a session titled "Ordering Empire." This session featured presentations from Deborah Besseghini, Tom Long, and a joint presentation by David M. Anderson and Jonathan M. Jackson. Each speaker provided a deep dive into the diverse aspects of global diplomacy, exploring how historical contexts and diplomatic practices shaped international relations.

Deborah Besseghini: "Imperial Agents' in South America: Limits and Opportunities of Informal Diplomacy during the Independence Process (1800s-1820s)"

Deborah Besseghini from the University of Turin discussed the role of informal diplomacy during the disintegration of the Spanish empire, spanning from the Napoleonic Wars to the recognition of new republics. She emphasized that relations between autonomous Spanish-American governments and Western powers were primarily maintained through exchanges of informal agents. These agents, representing European and U.S. interests, held significant bargaining power due to the emerging republics' need for diplomatic and military protection.

Besseghini highlighted that historiography has largely overlooked the informal negotiations conducted by these agents with Spanish-American governments. She pointed out that their influence was often effective in securing favourable conditions

for the imperial interests of the powers they represented, particularly Britain. Her research aimed to understand how foreign "imperial agents" adapted to the political dynamism in Hispanic America and what were the limits of such actions in cases like Río de la Plata, Chile, and Mexico. By analysing European and American sources, she provided a detailed examination of the methods, timings, contents, and rules of their informal mediation.

Tom Long: "Seeing Berlin from Bogotá: Latin American Reactions to European Imperial Expansion in the late Nineteenth Century"

Tom Long from the University of Warwick explored Latin American reactions to European imperial expansion during the late nineteenth century, focusing on the 1884-85 Berlin Conference. This conference marked a pivotal moment for European colonialism and the growth of inter-imperialism. Long highlighted that while the ramifications for African and European politics have been studied extensively, the impact on Latin America has received scant attention.

Long argued that Latin America's prolonged exposure to imperial intervention made it a wellspring of early anti-imperialism. However, reactions to the Berlin Conference included both alarm and ambivalence. Concerns about defending territoriality norms like *uti possidetis* were tempered by short-term interests in maintaining relations with imperial powers. Long's research, drawing on multinational archival sources, sought to understand Latin American responses to imperialism and the broader global echoes of the Berlin Conference and the "scramble for Africa."

David M. Anderson and Jonathan M. Jackson: "African Diplomacy on the Zambezi: Lewanika, Count von Caprivi, and the Helgoland-Zanzibar Treaty of 1890"

David M. Anderson from the University of Warwick and Jonathan M. Jackson from the University of Cologne presented on the contested territory of Caprivi Zipfel (now Namibia) in the late nineteenth century. Their focus was on the Helgoland-Zanzibar Treaty of 1890, which saw Caprivi Zipfel awarded to Germany. This diplomatic wrangling also involved the strategic archipelago of Helgoland passing back to German sovereignty and Zanzibar coming under British protection.

Anderson and Jackson highlighted that typical of European treaty-making of the time, neither the Sultan of Zanzibar nor any African ruler were consulted in the settlement. They examined how African polities, particularly the Lozi leader Lewanika, were also engaged in making territorial claims that rivalled European empires. Lewanika signed his own treaty with the British South Africa Company shortly after the Helgoland-Zanzibar deal, asserting sovereignty over vast territories and learning the arts of European imperial claim-making. The presentation underscored the dynamic interplay of history and pragmatic politics in legitimizing territorial claims.

Discussion Highlights

The discussion which followed the presentations emphasized the importance of understanding diplomatic documents and practices within their specific cultural

contexts. Besseghini's analysis of informal diplomacy and Anderson and Jackson's focus on African-European interactions highlighted how cultural norms and practices shaped diplomatic artifacts and treaties. Furthermore, the role of diplomatic documents as tools for negotiating power and territory was discussed. Long's presentation on the Berlin Conference illustrated how territorial norms and imperial strategies were codified, impacting regions far beyond Europe and Africa. Additionally, the need for interdisciplinary approaches in diplomatic history was underscored. Combining insights from history, international relations, and cultural studies can provide a more nuanced understanding of diplomatic interactions and their broader implications.

7. SESSION 2, DAY 2 – TEXTUAL PRACTICE

The second session on the second day of the conference, titled "Textual Practice," featured compelling presentations from Shounak Ghosh and Ariel Lopez. These scholars explored the intricacies of diplomatic correspondence and the roles of envoys in early modern diplomacy, emphasizing the importance of textual practices in shaping diplomatic interactions and international relations.

Shounak Ghosh: "The Art of Emissary among Persianate Courts: Querying the Figure of the Early Modern Envoy"

Shounak Ghosh from Vanderbilt University presented a nuanced analysis of the figure of the envoy (*ilchī*) in Persianate courts, arguing for a global history of diplomacy from a non-European perspective. Ghosh highlighted how envoys in the Mughal state in South Asia, the Deccan sultanates, and Safavid Iran were often members of a diasporic Iranian community. These envoys operated within trans-imperial networks, navigating the mediation processes that lay at the heart of diplomatic practice.

Ghosh emphasized that the professional toolkit of these envoys, combined with their embeddedness in both Iranian and South Asian courtly systems, allowed them to perform their roles effectively. Through a historical and contextual analysis of diplomatic correspondence, Ghosh reconstructed the dynamic profile of the envoy. He argued that Persian chancery records, especially epistolary compositions (*inshā'*), offer a conceptual framework for studying early modern diplomacy. This approach challenges the applicability of European categories like "resident ambassador" and highlights the flexible nature of diplomatic service in the Islamic world.

Ghosh's presentation included a case study of a Safavid envoy who was sent to the court in Golconda by Shah Abbas I. The detailed analysis of the envoy's role and the accompanying diplomatic letter illuminated the performative and symbolic aspects of diplomacy, showcasing how textual practices shaped diplomatic identities and interactions.

Ariel Lopez: "Malay Diplomatic Correspondences at the National Archives of the Philippines c. 1750-1800: Connections and Comparisons"

Ariel Lopez from the University of the Philippines Dilliman examined Malay diplomatic correspondences stored at the National Archives of the Philippines, focusing on letters from the rulers of the sultanates of Johor, Brunei, Sulu, and Maguindanao to Spanish authorities in Manila and Zamboanga between 1750 and 1800. Lopez highlighted that these correspondences, written mainly in Jawi (Arabic script) and various regional languages, remain an untapped resource for understanding diplomatic history in Southeast Asia.

Lopez analysed the intentions and diplomatic approaches of different rulers as revealed through these letters, noting changes over time and comparing these practices with other Malay diplomatic correspondences. He underscored the role of translators and intermediaries, such as the Sama-Bajau, who facilitated communication between the sultanates and Spanish authorities. The presentation also discussed the political and military implications of these correspondences, particularly in the context of regional dynamics and European colonialism.

Lopez provided an intriguing example of a letter intercepted by Spanish authorities, written by the Sultan of Sulu to the Sultan of Maguindanao. This letter, interpreted as evidence of treason, highlighted the complexities of translation and the strategic use of diplomatic correspondence. Lopez argued that these documents, when closely examined through transcription, translation, and contextualization, offer valuable insights into the diplomatic strategies and regional interactions of Southeast Asian polities.

Discussion Highlights

The discussion emphasized the importance of understanding diplomatic documents within their specific cultural contexts. Ghosh's analysis of Persianate envoys and Lopez's examination of Malay correspondences highlighted how cultural norms and practices shaped diplomatic interactions. Moreover, the role of translators and intermediaries was a significant topic. Lopez discussed how the Sama-Bajau community facilitated diplomatic communication, while participants noted the importance of accurate and context-sensitive translation in diplomatic history. The performative nature of diplomacy was another key theme. Ghosh's focus on the symbolic and performative roles of envoys in Persianate courts demonstrated how textual practices and rituals were integral to diplomatic exchanges. Finally, the discussion underscored the need for interdisciplinary approaches in studying diplomatic history. Combining textual analysis with insights from cultural studies, history, and linguistics can provide a more nuanced understanding of diplomatic documents and their broader implications.

8. PANEL 4 – TRANS-LOCALITY

Sixiang Wang – “Korean Diplomacy and Imperial Transitions: From Identity to Isomorphism (1400–1900)”

Sixiang Wang's presentation delved into the dynamics of Korean diplomacy over several centuries, emphasizing the transitions between different imperial regimes. The focus was on how diplomatic practices could transcend cultural identities and

become standardized norms across different empires. By examining Korean interactions with the Mongol, Ming, and Qing dynasties, as well as with Western powers in the late 19th century, Wang argued that these practices often prioritized interoperability over identity. This concept of "isomorphism" was key to understanding how certain diplomatic practices could persist and adapt through various political changes. The presentation also highlighted methodological challenges in separating identity from practice in historical analysis.

Gül Şen (Universität Bonn) – “From Captive to Diplomat: Representing the Ottoman State in War and Peace in the Eighteenth Century”

Gül Şen's paper explored the evolution of Ottoman diplomatic practices in the eighteenth century through the experiences of former war captives who became diplomats. Focusing on the cases of Osman Agha and Necati Efendi, Şen illustrated how their first-hand knowledge of European courts and cultures, gained during their captivity, was leveraged by the Ottoman state. These individuals exemplified the trans-imperial mobility of knowledge and practices. Osman Agha, after spending fourteen years as a captive in Austria, served as an interpreter and diplomat in Belgrade. Necati Efendi, after his captivity in Saint Petersburg, wrote detailed accounts of his experiences, providing valuable insights into early modern inter-imperial diplomacy. Şen applied Juri Lotman's model of semiosphere to understand these dynamic interactions and the creation of cognitive spaces beyond political borders.

Discussion:

The presentations sparked a discussion on the role of identity in diplomatic history. The idea of isomorphism proposed by Wang was particularly intriguing, suggesting that diplomatic practices could be viewed independently of their cultural origins. The members of the audience questioned how these historical practices might inform current diplomatic strategies, especially in contexts where cultural identity is heavily emphasized. The concept of trans-locality was examined through the lens of mobility and knowledge exchange, as demonstrated by Şen's analysis of Ottoman diplomats. The experiences of war captives turned diplomats illustrated the permeability of cultural and political boundaries.

9. CLOSING ROUNDTABLE: WRITING GLOBAL DIPLOMATIC HISTORY

Chair: Birgit Tremml-Werner, Stockholm University

Panellists:

- Stefan Eklöf Amirell, Linnaeus University
- Saliha Belmessous, University of Oxford/University of New South Wales
- Ariel Lopez, University of the Philippines Dilliman
- Tracey Sowerby, University of Oxford
- Michael Talbot, University of Greenwich

Discussion Summary:

The roundtable, chaired by Birgit Tremml-Werner, addressed the complexities and challenges inherent in writing a global history of diplomacy. The session began with reflections on the conceptual frameworks and methodologies essential for such a scholarly pursuit.

Conceptual Frameworks

A key theme was the necessity of broadening the definition of diplomacy to encompass various forms of political communication and negotiation beyond traditional Eurocentric models. Participants debated whether to retain the term 'diplomacy' or to adopt alternative terms like 'political negotiations' that might better capture the diverse practices across different cultures and historical contexts. There was a consensus that diplomacy should be viewed as more than just document-centric activities, recognizing that many diplomatic practices rely on oral traditions and other non-written forms of communication.

Methodological Approaches

The discussion emphasized the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to global diplomatic history. Insights from anthropology, material studies, and gender studies were highlighted as ways to enrich the field. The use of regional norms and indigenous terminologies was proposed as a means to avoid imposing Eurocentric models on non-European contexts. The panellists agreed on the importance of clarity in defining diplomatic practices while remaining adaptable to different historical and cultural settings.

Challenges and Recommendations

One significant challenge identified was the risk of anachronism when using modern terms to describe historical practices. The panellists stressed the need for balance between using familiar terms and accurately representing the diversity of historical diplomatic practices. They also discussed the potential benefits of comparative studies to reveal commonalities and differences in diplomatic practices across various regions and periods.

Discussion

The audience engaged actively with the panel, raising questions about the implications of terminology and the potential for interdisciplinary collaboration. The discussion underscored the necessity of a flexible and inclusive approach to writing global diplomatic history. The consensus was that such an approach should acknowledge and respect the diversity of diplomatic practices worldwide.

10. GENERAL INSIGHTS GAINED

The conference successfully addressed the core questions posed in its introduction, providing rich insights into the development of inter-polity relations, the influence and evolution of diplomatic norms, the emergence and decline of diplomatic practices, and the significant role of non-Western communities and concepts.

The sessions and discussions identified several key agents and processes driving the development of inter-polity relations. For instance, Meng Zhang highlighted the Qing Empire's 'inner and outer' framework, influenced by cultural, ethnolinguistic, and religious factors, while Peter Kitlas emphasized the role of Moroccan scribes as ethical mediators in 18th-century diplomacy. Michael Talbot described the global reach of the Ottoman consular network, and Deborah Besseghini discussed informal agents in Spanish-American diplomacy. Saliha Belmessous focused on indigenous and European actors and the principle of protection in North American inter-polity relations.

Diplomatic norms, structures, and practices of varying cultural origins were shown to influence each other and evolve through global interactions. Céline Carayon illustrated the adaptation of French and Indigenous diplomatic norms in the Americas, while Ulfatbek Abdurasulov explored differing interpretations of diplomatic rituals between Russian and Central Asian participants. Sâqib Bâburî and Nandini Chatterjee discussed the cultural exchanges reflected in Timurid and Mughal diplomatic documents, and Tom Long highlighted Latin American responses to European imperialism.

Several presentations showcased emerging and declining diplomatic practices forged through inter-regional interactions. Ghosh's analysis of Persianate envoys and Lopez's study of Malay diplomatic correspondences revealed new practices from trans-imperial networks. David M. Anderson and Jonathan M. Jackson demonstrated how African leaders like Lewanika engaged in European-style treaty-making, adapting to or resisting imposed practices. Belmessous highlighted the dynamic nature of protection agreements in response to changing power dynamics.

Non-Western contributions to global diplomacy were prominently featured. Kitlas's work on Moroccan scribes and Talbot's study of Ottoman consuls underscored the roles of non-Western actors in shaping diplomatic practices. Carayon's exploration of Indigenous-French alliances and Abdurasulov's examination of Central Asian-Russian diplomacy highlighted the importance of local customs and norms. Belmessous emphasized indigenous legal principles like protection, integral to North American diplomacy.

In conclusion, the conference provided a comprehensive exploration of global diplomatic history, integrating diverse intellectual traditions and perspectives. It demonstrated the dynamic and multifaceted nature of diplomatic practices across different cultures and regions, offering valuable insights into the development of inter-polity relations from c.1400-1900. This conference underscored the importance of moving beyond Eurocentric narratives to acknowledge the formative contributions of actors and traditions from around the world.