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Tessa de Boer | ORCID: 0000-0002-7359-9945
Institute for History, Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands
tessa0710@gmail.com

Eline Ceulemans | ORCID: 0000-0003-0623-2868
Department of History, University of Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium
Eline.Ceulemans@uantwerpen.be

Emma Forsberg
Department of History, Lund University, Lund, Sweden
emma.forsberg@hist.lu.se

Juliette Françoise
Department of History, Economics and Society,
University of Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland
Institute for the Study of Economic and Social Development,
University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris, France
Juliette.Francoise@unige.ch

Mathias Istrup Karlsmose
Department of History, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden
mathias.istrup.karlsmose@historia.su.se

Benjamin Khoo Jun Qi | ORCID: 0000-0001-6615-684X
Independent Researcher, Singapore, Singapore
benjaminkhoojq@gmail.com

Pichayapat Naisupap | ORCID: 0009-0003-3770-3922
Institute for History, Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands
Corresponding author
p.naisupap@hum.leidenuniv.nl

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Anna Pytlowany
Independent Researcher, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
a.pytlowany@gmail.com

Sebastian Rose | ORCID: 0000-0001-6267-640X
Institute for Creative Futures, Loughborough University, London, United Kingdom
s.j.rose@lboro.ac.uk

Sean Silvia
Department of History, Princeton University, New Jersey, United States
ss5643@princeton.edu

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Abstract

A group of young scholars revisit the aims, nature, and purpose of New Diplomatic History.

Keywords

New Diplomatic History – old diplomacy – new diplomacy – epistemicide – globalization

Introduction: Where Does the Field of Diplomatic History End (and Begin Anew)?

How has diplomatic history changed. Both an exclamation point and a question mark would be apt ways to end the previous sentence. In the last decades, scholars in the field have broadened their horizons of inquiry while simultaneously redefining and reconstructing what the study of diplomacy actually entails on a conceptual, methodological, and practical level.[1] Blurring

1 Osborne T., and J.-P. Rubiés. "Introduction: Diplomacy and Cultural Translation in the Early Modern World." *Journal of Early Modern History* 20 (4) (2016), 313–30; Scott-Smith, G. "Introduction: Private Diplomacy, Making the Citizen Visible." *New Global Studies* 8 (1) (2014), 1–7.

the lines of state/non-state, formal/informal, and tangible/intangible, scholars reconceptualized which acts, practices, and spaces fall under the umbrella term of "diplomacy." Essentially, they have asked themselves what "the diplomats' world" – as coined by Markus Mösslang and Torsten Riotte – truly comprised.[2] As a result, rather than only focusing on the political aspects of (inter)state diplomatic relations, scholars adopted more holistic, multidisciplinary approaches. A broader diplomatic world has indeed come into view analyzing "how social structures and cultural practices shape political interactions that are both multiple and flexible," focusing on gifts, architecture, and other forms of material culture; practices, rituals, and other ceremonial aspects; performativity, hospitality, and sociability, emotions, sensory aspects of diplomacy, and beyond.[3] Concurrently, this broader world of diplomacy has been explored through various microhistorical lenses: in specific diplomatic actors, spaces, or rituals, a multifaceted slice of this world becomes apparent.

This revamping of one of the oldest, most reputedly conservative historical fields, with all its much-debated new questions, approaches, and methodologies,

2 Mösslang M., and T. Riotte, eds. *The Diplomats' World: The Cultural History of Diplomacy, 1815–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

3 Lazzarini, I. "Constructing and De-constructing Diplomacy and Diplomatic History in the Pre- and Post-modern Worlds. The New Diplomatic History in Dialogue with the International Relation Studies." *Censura Revista*, 2 (2) (2023), 112. For a non-exhaustive overview of the current state of the field of each of these aspects, see Giudici, G. "From New Diplomatic History to New Political History: The Rise of the Holistic Approach." *European History Quarterly* 48 (2) (2018), 314–24; Biedermann, Z., A. Gerritsen, and G. Riello, eds. *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Floré, F., and C. McAtee, eds. *The Politics of Furniture: Identity, Diplomacy and Persuasion in Post-War Interiors* (London: Routledge, 2017); Rudolph, H. "Entangled Objects and Hybrid Practices? Material Culture as a New Approach to the History of Diplomacy." In *Material Culture in Modern Diplomacy from the 15th to the 20th Century, Jahrbuch für Europäische Geschichte / European History Yearbook,* eds. H. Rudolph and G. Metzig (Oldenburg: De Gruyter, 2016); Sowerby, T., and J. Hennings, eds. *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c.1410–1800* (London: Routledge, 2017); Sowerby, T., and C. Markiewicz, eds. *Diplomatic Cultures at the Ottoman Court, c.1500–1640* (London: Routledge, 2021); Balzacq, T. "Rituals and Diplomacy." In *Global Diplomacy. An Introduction to Theory and Practices,* eds. T. Balzacq, F. Charillon, and F. Ramel (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 111–22; Dittmer, J., and F. McConnell, eds. *Diplomatic Cultures and International Politics Translations, Spaces and Alternatives* (London: Routledge, 2016); Shimazu, N. "Diplomacy as Theatre: Staging the Bandung Conference of 1955." *Modern Asian Studies* 48 (1) (2014), 225–52; Gienow-Hecht, J. *Sound Diplomacy. Music and Emotions in Transatlantic Relations, 1850–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Helmers, H. "Public Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe. Towards a New History of News." *Media History* 22 (3/4) (2016), 401–20; Lamal, N., and K. Van Gelder. "Addressing Audiences Abroad: Cultural and Public Diplomacy in Seventeenth-Century Europe." *The Seventeenth Century* 36 (3) (2021), 367–87.

came to be labeled as New Diplomatic History (NDH).[4] At its foundation lies the steadfast conviction to eradicate the Eurocentric notions still inherent in our common conceptions of "traditional" (read European) diplomacy, which is typically equated to the foundational renaissance diplomacy described by Garrett Mattingly.[5] NDH has been laboring to flip the Mattingly foundation for roughly two decades at the time of writing.[6] Hence, it is time to reflect on the state of the field and, more importantly, where it could be going. This is the exercise to which we, as early career scholars "raised" within the New Diplomatic paradigm (yet from various disciplinary backgrounds), dedicate this manifesto.

This manifesto was conceived in the context of a June 2023 summer school on the theme of socioeconomic diplomacy and global empire building.[7] Various questions arose among us, variably departing directly from NDH, or instead arriving to it from a different historiographical discipline. Have scholars within the field of diplomacy been sufficient in ridding the field of its Eurocentricity? Have they truly bridged divides or left only conceptual confusion? Has the New Diplomatic History pushed the field far enough or conversely too far? How effective and widespread are interdisciplinary collaborations in an increasingly digital and globalized world? These concerns are admittedly not entirely new. Recent scholarship has alerted the field of its many pitfalls: diplomatic culture ought not to be examined in a vacuum nor to regress to simple teleological and macrohistorical biases.[8] Conversely, other researchers stay true to "traditional" or "old" diplomatic histories centered on the foreign policy matters of states and their representatives found in governmental

4 Watkins, J. "Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 38 (1) (2008), 1–14; Sowerby, T.A. "Early Modern Diplomatic History." 14 (9) (2016), 441–56; Osborne T. "Whither Diplomatic History? An Early Modern Historian's Perspective." *Diplomatica*, 1 (1) (2019), 40–45. For a discussion of Old and New Diplomacy and analysis thereof, see Weisbrode, K. *Old Diplomacy Revisited: A Study in the Modern History of Diplomatic Transformations* (New York: Palgrave, 2014).

5 Mattingly, G. *Renaissance Diplomacy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1955).

6 Lazzarini, I. *Communication and Conflict: Italian Diplomacy in the Early Renaissance, 1350–1520* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); van Gelder, M., and T. Krstić. "Introduction: Cross-Confessional Diplomacy and Diplomatic Intermediaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean." *Journal of Early Modern History* 19 (2-3) (2015), 93–105.

7 Jointly organized by Leiden University's Institute for History, the Global Diplomacy Network, and the N.W. Posthumus Institute. The authors would like to expressly thank Birgit Tremml-Werner, Guido van Meersbergen, Lisa Hellman, Eleonora Poggio, Michael Talbot, and Eberhard Crailsheim for their practical support and intellectual input in this project.

8 Alloul, H., and M. Auwers. "What is (New in) New Diplomatic History?" *Journal of Belgian History* 48 (4) (2018), 110–22; Amirell, S. "New Diplomatic History and the Study of the Global Nineteenth Century." *Global Nineteenth-Century Studies* 1 (1) (2022), 27–36.

sources.[9] It seems that broadening and deepening the field has not *linea recta* resulted in great connectivity.

In line with recent scholarship and in response to old and new questions alike, we ask where the field of New Diplomatic History should go. In this manifesto, we identify distinct nodes within diplomatic history (as it is currently theorized and practiced) where greater connectivity could and should be prioritized. The theme of the summer school nudged us to collectively reflect on historians' old dilemmas about the temporal and geographical divides of any historical inquiry. Questioning our shared global approach, we ask ourselves to what extent global inclusivity is tied to the NDH approach and what justifies its historical and methodological relevance. The spread of intertwined flows of commodities, material objects, capital, people, ideas, and knowledge at a global scale, supported by ancient and newly deployed routes, networks, and institutions nurtured ongoing cross-cultural diplomatic encounters from the early modern period onward and encourages us to breach the chronological divide between the early modern and the modern worlds. As we came from different disciplinary backgrounds – diplomatic, social, cultural, and economic history, archeology and anthropology, sociology, and economy – we had to *truly* think about what interdisciplinarity means and how to embrace while practicing diplomatic history. Methodological challenges include starting and cultivating a conversation with non-historical disciplines and collaborating with non-academic expertise, organizations, and institutions. For all these nodes, NDH has made great strides – yet, we argue, further enhanced levels of ambition and application in doing so going forward are a must. Only then can we tackle the foundational level of revision that will go beyond the "new" in New Diplomatic History: the construction of a *conceptual* framework which accommodates diplomacy on a truly global analytical scale.

In this manifesto, we therefore first elaborate on some of the pioneering *historiographical* questioning directed at New Diplomatic History. We build on these recent debates and discussions to subsequently identify some core *conceptual* issues in (new) diplomatic history, and pioneer ideas on how to revise these. To close, we consider the *methodological* innovations necessary to do so.

9 For larger discussions on (the importance of) these traditionalists, see Gienow-Hecht, J. "What Bandwagon? Diplomatic History Today." *Journal of American History* 95 (4) (2009), 1083–86; Weisbrode, K. "Diplomatic History and the Concentricity of Politics." Comment on newdiplomatichistory.org, April 27, 2020 [available at https://newdiplomatichistory.org/diplomatic-history-and-the-concentricity-of-politics/; consulted March 4, 2024].

Historiography: Beyond the "New" in New Diplomatic History

Almost a decade ago, Tracey Sowerby pointed out how "the 'New Diplomatic History,' no longer so new, has become a broad church."[10] As an answer to the emerging and dynamic transformations within the field, a group of scholars established the Network for New Diplomatic History in 2011 as a collaborative, inter-disciplinary and international initiative which focuses primarily on "the historical study of diplomats, their methods, and their cultural, political, and social milieux."[11] Diversity and flexibility are rightly propagated as the main strengths and focal points of the network. No official society or school was thus created, yet during their third conference "Bridging Divides" in 2018, the Network launched *Diplomatica*, a journal to foster and support further inter- and multidisciplinary research.[12] It strives to broaden and connect the study of diplomacy both temporally and geographically and sets out to question, investigate, and explore all aspects of the diplomatic world. But just what is (part of) this diplomatic world? Where did the quest for broadness originate, and – as some scholars now question – where should it draw the line?

The influence of the linguistic, cultural, and global turns and/or postcolonial and feminist studies on diplomatic history is apparent. Accordingly, by highlighting the role of women and subaltern groups within diplomacy, scholars were able to press their beloved field where it hurt the most.[13] Here, diplomatic historians can – as Susanna Erlandsson has eloquently formulated – demonstrate "the ways in which diplomacy was class-bound, gendered and racialized" proving that "historicizing gender and cultural norms is crucial to understanding political and international history."[14] By not solely restricting their gaze to foreign policymakers in the metropoles and/or its ambassadors (the "great men"), the "new" diplomatic history has broadened the definition

10 Sowerby, T. "Early Modern Diplomatic History." *History Compass* 41 (9) (2016) 441–56: 448.

11 New Diplomatic History Network. "About" [available at https://newdiplomatichistory.org/about/; last consulted February 17, 2024].

12 Scott-Smith, G. Opening address at the third New Diplomatic History conference, Middelburg, 2018.

13 McCarthy, H. *Women of the World: The Rise of the Female Diplomat* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); McConnell, F. "Liminal Geopolitics: the Subjectivity and Spatiality of Diplomacy at the Margins." *Transactions* 42 (1) (2017), 139–52; Zondi, S. "A Decolonial Turn in Diplomatic Theory: Unmasking Epistemic Injustice." *Journal for Contemporary History* 41 (1) (2016); Dyrmann, K. "Spa Diplomacy: Charlotte Schimmelmann at Bad Pyrmont, 1789–94." *International History Review* 44 (5) 1035–47.

14 Erlandsson, S. *Personal Politics in the Postwar World. Western Diplomacy Behind the Scenes* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022).

of "diplomat" to include the people in the middle and from below.[15] Scholars have analyzed the roles, practices, and networks of a multitude of actors involved in diplomatic processes, such as interpreters, merchants, soldiers, painters, consuls, missionaries and many others intermediaries typically neglected in historiography.[16] In other words, the diplomats at the – perceived – fringes of diplomacy who were often able "to slip through the cracks … of the state-dominated system."[17] Scholars, however, also questioned what in fact those diplomatic fringes were. Here, they reviewed their own biases and terminologies by including the empirics and epistemologies of other geographical onsets, to discuss and analyze diplomacy that did not (solely) emanate from "the superior West."[18]

An attentive reader might therefore wonder whether going beyond traditional/Western state-centered narratives is not already central to the mission statement of NDH today. In the introduction of their recent special issue on "Gifts and Tribute in Early Modern Diplomacy: Afro-Eurasian Perspectives" in *Diplomatica*, editors Birgit Tremml-Werner, Lisa Hellman, and Guido van Meersbergen strongly asserted the intensified need for "truly global account[s] of the interactive development of diplomatic norms and practices" by examining "the ways in which global entanglements affected the structures, norms, and practices of inter-polity relations on a global scale."[19] By doing so, they emphasized the urgency for (critical) global inclusivity, thematically/epistemologically as well as scholarly/disciplinary. Their plea "for concerted exploration of the conceptual frameworks and terminologies that informed

15 Morieux, R. "Diplomacy from Below and Belonging: Fishermen and Cross-Channel Relations in the Eighteenth Century." *Past & Present* 202 (1) (2009), 83–125.

16 See, among others, Tremml-Werner, B., and D. Goetze. "A Multitude of Actors in Early Modern Diplomacy." *Journal of Early Modern History* 23 (5) (2019), 407–22; Rothman, N.E. *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012); Harrison, H. *The Perils of Interpreting: The Extraordinary Lives of Two Translators between Qing China and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021); Ebben, M.A., and L. Sicking, eds. *Beyond Ambassadors: Consuls, Missionaries, and Spies in Premodern Diplomacy* (Leiden: Brill, 2021); Streets-Salter, H. "Consuls, Colonies and the World: Low-level Bureaucrats and the Machinery of Empire, c. 1880–1914." *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 20 (3) (2019).

17 Fischer, J., and A. Best, eds. *On the Fringes of Diplomacy. Influences on British Foreign Policy, 1800–1945* (London: Routledge, 2011); Scott-Smith, G. "Introduction," 4.

18 e.g., Day, J.H. *Qing Travelers to the Far West. Diplomacy and the Information Order in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

19 Tremml-Werner, B., L. Hellman, and G. van Meersbergen. "Introduction. Gift and Tribute in Early Modern Diplomacy: Afro-Eurasian Perspectives." *Diplomatica* 2 (2) (2019), 185–200: 185.

early modern actors' own plural, shifting, and contested understandings of political authority, hierarchy, and political space" is persuasive. It suggests that solely shifting the settings, actors, and objects we study across temporal divides is not sufficient; a revision of our conceptual lenses and the languages used to describe them is also unavoidable.[20]

Within the field of diplomatic history, more thorough reflections remain limited and hindered by not only geographical, but also chronological and disciplinary compartmentalization. Temporal divides often remain impenetrable, leading to lopsided debates and tenuous academic exchanges. The persisting divide between pre-modern and modern or contemporary histories – Eurocentric classifications in their own right – prevents the development of a more comprehensive, long-durée conceptual view of (what we perceive as) diplomacy and, indeed, modernity. In this light, Stefan Amirell has argued that the long or global nineteenth century, a pivotal era that appears to have attracted less attention from New Diplomatic History, might just be the bridge the field has been waiting for.[21] In their forum article on the state of the field of NDH, Houssine Alloul and Michael Auwers draw the same conclusions while pointing to the current neglect within NDH of politico-economic and financial considerations, and the unwillingness to tackle private-public relations.[22] As "much of the NDH has tended to attach more attention to 'culture' (rather 'softly' defined) than to power dynamics, economic interests, and the capital relation," the idea persists that diplomatic historians have lost their desire and/or ability to analyze power and the various (re)sources it is derived from.[23] As the (long/global) nineteenth century is often associated with the emergence of the modern international world order and the birth of modern diplomacy – intertwined with conventional notions of the Westphalian system, modern nation states, and international (meaning European) law – it is crucial to thoroughly examine this period with a new (global) diplomatic history lens to develop a more integrated and connected narrative of the evolutions in diplomatic norms, concepts, institutions, and practices, past and present.

Although the call to globalize NDH, and to cross chronological, geographical and disciplinary boundaries has certainly arisen, the problem encountered first in realizing these ambitions is often methodological. For example,

20 Ibid., 200. For an example that bridges these temporal divides, see Félicité, I., ed. *L'Identité du diplomate* (*Moyen Âge-XIX siècle*). *Métier ou noble loisir?* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2020), 485–90.

21 Amirell, S. "New Diplomatic History and the Study of the Global Nineteenth Century."

22 Alloul, H., and M. Auwers. "What is (New in) New Diplomatic History?" 121–22.

23 Ibid., 120.

in highlighting cross-cultural exchanges, the field also turned to topics such as the subjects' lived experiences, daily lives and/or the behind-the-scenes practices.[24] Yet these often proved elusive to the current sources and methodologies that (new) diplomatic history – still very much practiced within the Western scholarly paradigm – solicits. Recent strides, however, have been made. Responding to these archival deficiencies in the written record, scholars increasingly incorporated visual, material, and spatial analyses. The inclusion of paintings and photography, for example, illustrated how women (in all their facets) were vital and visible actors within these diplomatic spaces.[25] This again highlights the increasing need for interdisciplinarity, not only in a historiographical or conceptual sense, but also in a methodological one. Historians studying diplomacy have borrowed, exchanged, and collaborated in this regard with various other fields for quite some time.[26]

All in all, the novelty of NDH lies in its commitment to (and success in) broadening the field in multiple directions. As the novelty wears off, however, various voices have questioned the extent to which NDH bridges geographical, temporal, and disciplinary divides. Cutting-edge scholarship, seeking to build these bridges, has run into the limits of the current conceptual and methodological bases of the field. In the next portion of this manifesto, we will scrutinize these bases, and offer suggestions on how to reframe them to re-forge the "new" in New Diplomatic History.

Concepts: Genealogies, Confusion, and Solutions

Breaching geographical, temporal and/or disciplinary divides, coupled with the aspiration to critical global inclusivity (that is, simply said, striving to study diplomacy beyond the formal, political, modern, and the West) poses

24 Hellman, L. *This House is Not a Home: European Everyday Life in Canton and Macao, 1730–1830* (Leiden: Brill, 2019); Shimazu, N. "What is Sociability in Diplomacy?" *Diplomatica* 1 (1) (2019), 56–72.

25 Subrahmanyam, S. *Courtly Encounters: Translating Courtliness and Violence in Early Modern Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012); Shimazu, N. "Diplomacy as Theatre."

26 E.g., the cross-fertilization between history, sociology, and anthropology regarding research on gift exchange, Windler, C. "Gift and Tribute in Early Modern Diplomacy: a Comment." *Diplomatica* 2 (2) (2020), 291–304. For the intricate relationship between diplomacy research and International Relations (IR), see Badel L. "Diplomacy and the History of International Relations: Redefining a Conflictual Relationship." *Diplomatica* 1 (1) (2019), 33–39; Constantinou C., et al. "Thinking with Diplomacy: Within and Beyond Practice Theory." *International Political Sociology* 15 (4) (2021), 559–87.

instrumental conceptual challenges. These challenges all revolve around the almost contradictory injunctions to historicize and socialize the concepts we use, while at the same time going beyond existing boundaries to collectively and multi-directionally explore context-specified diplomatic experiences. Concepts that go even somewhat outside of the "hard" political angle (such as economic diplomacy) remain not only underdeveloped. In instances where they are developed, scholars still rarely question the applicability of concepts hindered by the Western-institutional conceptual toolbox outside the mindset of the West.

These limitations of the conceptual framework manifest most clearly in studies into premodern settings, despite the pervasive presence of – very roughly summarized – economic, private, and non-Western elements in premodern diplomacy. This issue has to some extent been addressed in *Diplomatica's* 2020 forum on Business Diplomacy, where several contributors reflected on broadening the chronological and thematical frameworks of diplomacy.[27] Several of these studies demonstrate that economically-oriented, often semi-formal diplomacy in "the periphery"[28] (a telling terminology in itself) were known to entail what essentially boils down to communication issues: different understandings and interpretations of diplomatic, economic, and economic diplomatic transactions.[29] Although these encounters continue to be compelling laboratories of intra-cultural diplomatic exchange, it spurs the question of the extent to which the concepts of (early modern) economic and business diplomacy survive in settings without a Western or European element entirely. Discussed examples of phenomena in early modern economic or business diplomacy, such as mercantilism, firms, and companies, or "contractualizing privilege" similarly depart from political economic and legal frameworks as institutionalized in the West.[30] Diplomacy to advance economic or business-oriented causes has roots that are as historical as they are global. Perhaps reframing their adjacent conceptual framework

27 Antunes, C. "Early Modern Business Diplomacy: An Appraisal." *Diplomatica* 2 (1) (2020), 20–27; Clulow, A., and T. Mostert. "The Dutch Easy India Company and Business Diplomacy." *Diplomatica* 2 (1) (2020), 28–38; Veevers, D., and W.A. Pettigrew. "Trading Companies and Business Diplomacy in the Early Modern World." *Diplomatica* 2 (1) (2020), 38–47.

28 Antunes, C. "Early Modern Business Diplomacy," 25.

29 Puyo, L. "The Huron-Wendat Wampum Belt at Chartres. Indigenous Negotiations with the Divine." In *Fluctuating Alliances. Art, Politics, and Diplomacy in the Modern Era,* ed. P. Diez del Corral Corredoira (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 57–77; Escribano-Páez, J.M. "Diplomatic Gifts, Tributes and Frontier Violence: Circulation of Contentious Presents in the Moluccas (1575–1606)." *Diplomatica* 2 (2) (2020), 248–69.

30 Antunes, C. "Early Modern Business Diplomacy," 22, 24.

will advance our comparative understanding of the practices, transactions, and understandings that we observe. In this sense, we advocate for further incorporation of Kesteleyn, Riordan, and Ruël's "diplomatic mindset,"[31] a collection of mentalities in which people bring into play to perceive the world around them. The mindset in business/economic and political diplomacy is then to a certain degree entangled with social and cultural spheres where diplomatic practices are forged and conducted. In this way, we should entertain the idea of thinking and doing diplomatic history through a cultural lens. We therefore propose to examine the same striking aspects of diplomacy, while resituating them in specific mindsets that convey different meanings and values. At the same time, we pay attention to the processes that create commensurability to forge mutual understanding, translation, and negotiation inherent to diplomatic encounters.

Interestingly, the underdevelopment of conceptual frameworks does not exclusively pertain to the cultural, the economic, or the non-western. Particularly when weaving insights derived from these spheres into the political realm, more traditional(ly studied) aspects of diplomacy merit conceptual scrutiny, too. Reflecting on the nature of authority and the public exercise of power in diplomacy, evokes the specter of sovereignty, which is usually conceptualized as authority over subjects, territories and definitions of law.[32] Yet it is becoming increasingly clear that the exclusive tryptic of authority, sovereignty, and state appears to be simplistic. In particular, the diversity of actors examined – from official state representatives like ambassadors, consuls, and civil servants, semi-official institutions like religious orders and chartered companies to non-official go-between individual merchants, travelers, doctors or private firms – might not always swear allegiance, conceive of interest, or defer authority to the state(s).[33] Looking at European chartered companies

31 Kesteleyn, J.S., S. Riordan, and H.J. Ruël. "Introduction: Business Diplomacy." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 9 (2014), 304.

32 Bély, L. "Souveraineté et souverains. La question du cérémonial dans les relations internationales à l'époque moderne." *Annuaire: Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de France* (1993) 27–43; Nijman, L. *The Concept of International Legal Personality. An Inquiry into the History and Theory of International Law* (The Hague: T.M.C. Asser Press, 2004) 10–79; for discussions of "sovereignty within sovereignty," see Stern, P.J. *The Company-State. Corporate Sovereignty and the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

33 See, among others, Schaffer, S. et al., eds. *The Brokered World: Go-betweens and Global Intelligence, 1770–1820* (Cambridge: Science History Publications Ltd., 2009); Antunes, C., S. Münch Miranda, and J.P. Salvado. "The Resources of Others. Dutch Exploitation of European Expansion and Empires, 1570–1800." *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 131 (3) (2018) 501–21; Ebben, M.A., and L. Sicking, *Beyond Ambassadors.*

in Asia offers us a point of entry: who provides them with sovereign rights to collect taxes, wage war or sign treaties and does this mandate come from the European state at home or from the local Asian polities they were interacting with? At the same time, do the chartered companies not defer the local privileges acquired in Asia to the benefit of the home state? Is it then about partial, fragmented, overlapping sovereignties? As with "economic diplomacy" or adjacent terms, the issue of concepts explicitly or implicitly departing from Western (institutional) framing similarly plagues the realm of the political. When we flip it to examine these issues from the perspective of non-European/non-Western polities, the concepts of state and sovereignty, and how they relate to law seem even more incongruous and harder to define.[34] To give a case in point, when the Bugis counsellor of a Malay raja signs a treaty with the German representative of the VOC, is it fair to say that the signatories are representing sovereign, authoritative, state-like entities? Is the problem of sovereignty then the next frontier to cross, and is sovereignty even the right word to use in these contexts? As Noe Cornago indicated, perhaps "the widely held view of diplomacy as an exclusive attribute of sovereign states is more an institutionalised political discourse than the product of empirical evidence."[35]

Other factors also hinder the development of a more comprehensive conceptual framework for diplomacy. An immediate question that arose was that of macro-micro scales: the difficulty in striking a delicate balance between larger systems, practices, and mechanisms; and individual lenses. On the one hand, diplomatic history has shifted from an overtly biographical focus, the role of high-profile individuals acting under stress and duress, and their contributions in defining the state. Coming off the high horse of elite diplomacy, the field has shifted in favor of the pragmatics and practicalities of diplomacy, in which relations were maintained and sustained, its performative aspects, and materialities of exchange, paying closer attention to a broader array of actors and aspects, such as the "mundaneness" of diplomacy, the overlooked practices of the everyday and their contribution to the subjective, emotive, and participatory sphere of diplomatic, inter-cultural contacts.[36] This

34 Regarding this discussion, see e.g., Adler-Nissen, R. "Late Sovereign Diplomacy." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 4 (2009), 121–41; Lazzarini, I. "Constructing and De-constructing Diplomacy and Diplomatic History in the Pre- and Post-modern Worlds."

35 Cornago, N. "Diplomacy and Paradiplomacy in the Redefinition of International Security: Dimensions of Conflict and Co-operation." In Aldecoa, F., and M. Keating, eds. *Paradiplomacy in Action. The Foreign Relations of Subnational Governments* (London: Routledge, 1999), 40–57.

36 Hellman, L. *This House is Not a Home.*

reflects a natural thickening of diplomacy to include informal and semi-official channels and actors.

Yet on the other hand, in studying these individual phenomena within various times and contexts, there is also an inclination within the field to try to extrapolate these specific insights to develop a more systematic, macro, and global approach to diplomacy. This ostensibly is to better delineate hierarchical relations between diverse actors and practices of diplomacy and to offer comparison, since juxtaposition is often a bulwark against exceptionalism within diplomatic circles and settings. However, this raises the question of whether such an integration is positive or even coherent. What then would be the underlying principles and conceptual ideas which are elaborated in this system? And would it possibly lead to thinking in terms of monolithic cultures and groups that oversimplify the distinctive cultural settings and push us to misrepresent or falsify the historical realities of diplomatic encounters on the ground? This is its distinctive identity crisis. The continued popular appeal and importance of personalities notwithstanding, opening its analytical aperture means that it not only is shorn of its relevance to inform policy and statecraft, but also indicative of the field's lack of intellectual cohesiveness with its eclectic diversity. In the end, would we end in a vicious cycle where such a mass of diplomatic repertoires contradict the original attempt to thicken and invigorate diplomatic history? As Julia Gebke has recently challenged us: "How can we write a new diplomatic history without being trapped … in the pitfalls of canonising or oversimplifying the multilayered diversity of early modern diplomacy, and without being equally trapped in the pitfalls of myriad completely fractured and unconnected case studies?"[37] In order for the field to develop, and to prevent it from spinning off its own schematic and unfocussed shortcomings, reminiscent of New Historicism, it needs to reckon with its strategic limitations and problematize and steer the course between the two extremes so that it can achieve its ambition and promise. Isabella Lazzarini therefore ends on a more positive note: "comparisons and cross-disciplinary encounters can become challenging – complexity is never easy – but extremely productive. If a rigid and teleological model deemed to become the standard against which every other process must be measured fades away, then comparing different contexts and historical periods becomes more useful and conceptually significant. When finally freed by more or less conscious

37 Gebke, J. "New Diplomatic History and the Multi-Layered Diversity of Early Modern Diplomacy." In *Early Modern European Diplomacy: A Handbook*, eds. D. Goetze and L. Oetzel (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024), 27–48.

definitions as pre- or post- modern/classic/national phenomena, historical processes and dynamics re-acquire their richness, complexity, and meaning."[38]

One important step in this regard is to recover the range of actor-centricity, which remains dominated by outsized personalities. One cannot navigate between practices and personalities when *certain* personalities dominate half of the scene. Some spadework has been done in highlighting the need to move beyond ambassadors, who, as representatives of semi-sovereign companies and states, have often been the focus of traditional diplomatic history.[39] This has motivated several innovative studies into the role of those who operated and circulated on the periphery of diplomatic encounter in official and informal capacities, such as their attendant entourages, tradesmen, translators, merchants, ambassadorial families, and their next of kins, spies, consuls, priests, missionaries, artists, architects, publishers, lawyers, functionaries, and so forth. This perspective, which takes "the margins" as its position, has seen significant uptake. Yet this terrain is highly uneven, with – as noted previously – more attention placed on the sprawling canvas of Western European agents, networks, and institutions. Regions as large as Scandinavia or Eastern Europe are comparatively neglected, and that is not even mentioning the non-European world. Besides the consistent appeal of more analytic work on gender and femininities in the diplomatic sphere, who are emerging as go-between in their own right, the field also seems to demand more than a mere acknowledgement of the "underclasses" from a European point of view. Understandably, indigenous perspectives on these stage often suffer from a reportedly thinner (mainly written) source base; non-European modes of knowledge production rarely leave us with a clear understanding of their internal process at the point of negotiation and resolution. We therefore need a conscious and deep rereading of local and archival narratives to draw out a polyvocal diplomatic agency. This intervention can take the form of examining non-European challenges to European principles and foci, or in the ways Europeans diminished and validated non-European particularities and demands. Therewith, studies of this type evaluate the range of responses on a planetary scale.

Touching on both conceptual and methodological challenges is the issue of language. In our view, the field of diplomacy requires a problematization of language that has hitherto escaped critical attention. Here we center on language as it is used, often abused, and pertinently, language used to describe

38 Lazzarini, I. "Constructing and De-constructing Diplomacy and Diplomatic History in the Pre- and Post-modern Worlds," 131.

39 Ebben, M.A., and L. Sicking. *Beyond Ambassadors.*

diplomatic phenomena or cross-cultural exchanges often mediated by plurality of systems, creed, and faith. Words are never innocent, as the Italians remind us, *traduttore*, *traditore*; the act of negotiating through the medium of language is to open it to possible betrayal. Yet the days of the polyglot historian able to bridge three worlds or more in an age of increasing specialization seem increasingly numbered.

There are several issues at stake there. The first is whether the mediation of verbal communication, necessarily taking place across different languages or among interlocutors of varying capacities, influenced the larger diplomatic processes at play. This is especially relevant since linguistic misunderstandings might be counted as insults or factors in the breakdown of relations. Renewed attention here not only foregrounds the role translators and interpreters play as intermediaries, but it also reframes traditional periodization and highlights significant asymmetries of power at the grassroots level.[40] Since translation is at the core of diplomacy, creating bridges between two cultures, translation requires an element of commonness and commensurability. But what is the role of these intermediaries exactly? To what extent are they in charge? How do/can they alter the message conveyed? As in the case of the North American Indigenous Nations' Wampum belt diplomacy mediated by the Jesuit missionaries, who really owns the message and who benefits from the diplomatic interaction in the end?[41] When languages are at play, they are heavily charged with meanings, functioning together as a complicated act of transmission. Even more so when the verbal becomes written, and texts like treaties, journals, or travel relations are produced, they are in fact passing through many layers of language and become truly hybrid in nature. Unpacking this hybridity here strikes us too as a fruitful avenue to explore, especially as they relate to the terminologies subsequently employed in said conceptual frameworks.

The second is whether these terminologies, which have passed into modern diplomatic and general parlance, are adequate, since they often do not do justice to the complexities of relations, or even to the parties who may or may not understand them on those terms. Similar to sovereignty, as discussed above, other words that have formed part of the linguistic trove of our diplomatic repertoire (states, vassalage, ambassador, gift, treaty) are not always capacious or representative enough. Different words could mean different things to different parties, and when these are codified as treaties of

40 Harrison, H. *The Perils of Interpreting.*

41 Puyo, L. "The Huron-Wendat Wampum Belt at Chartres"; Escribano-Páez, J.M. "Diplomatic Gifts, Tributes and Frontier Violence."

binding effect, existing copies rendered in different languages raise questions of difference and dissimulation. Language, after all, is not a neutral ground and is subject to manipulation. Indeed, there is an increasing body of thought that diplomatic parties were complicit in tweaking linguistic differences to their advantage; studying the outworkings and aspects of each could thus enhance our understanding of the forms these relations took and highlight the agency of resistance and initiative at contact. In other words, we need "a language and terminology which reflects more accurately the realities of power, influence and responsibility."[42] Finally, the hope is that grappling with the complexity of language in different diplomatic settings could spur us toward working cross-continentally and cross-culturally. We would engage diplomatically in academic collaboration to resolve the collaborative worlds of earlier diplomatic engagements, whether rendered in English or otherwise.

Finally, it is not only about verbal language, but also about materiality. Diplomacy involves the perception and expression of asymmetric power relations erected on a reciprocal assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the other party involved. This assessment process requires, however, some commonness and commensurability. In other words, there is an unseen economic language built on mathematics, weights, measures, and valuation systems. This is the key that conveys both commensurability and also symbolic meaning (a monetary unit of account for instance). In this regard, gift-giving practices are extremely interesting as they frame the relationship between two polities as specific objects of exchange. Yet gift-giving practices contain complex mechanisms of valuation to assess, compare, and convey different intertwined values: market value, monetary value, use-value, and symbolic value. Do they all play a part in gift-giving practices? And do these values too overlap? In the case of the VOC's elephant diplomacy in South and Southeast Asia[43] or Danish gunpowder diplomacy in India[44] in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the object of diplomatic cross-cultural exchange (elephants and gunpowder) are fundamentally dual in nature (as gifts and goods), and even can shift between gift and good. These objects pass through several valuation processes and are affected by the different historical settings

42 Otte, T.G. "The Inner Circle: What is Diplomatic History? (And Why We Should Study it): An Inaugural Lecture." *History* 105 (364) (2020) 5–27: 14.

43 Naisupap, P. *The Emblematic Elephant: Elephants, the Dutch East India Company, and Eurasian Diplomacy in the Seventeenth Century*, Master's thesis (Leiden University, 2020).

44 Karlsmose, M.I. "Danish Gunpowder Diplomacy in Asia." Paper Presented at the Summer School on Socioeconomic Diplomacy and Global Empire Building, 16th–19th Centuries, in Leiden, June 26–28, 2023. Mathias Istrup Karlsmose, a co-author of this manifesto, is currently working on this topic for his doctoral dissertation.

in which they take place. How then can we examine more concretely these fluid and complex translations of economic language?

Practices and Methodologies: Scholarly Diplomacy in the Digital Age

The multilayered issues related to language bring us to the pivotal question of how to *express* our research into diplomatic history, both as a process and as an eventual product. As we have read, many of the criticisms leveled at NDH – both in- and outside this manifesto – are legitimate, yet amending them proves challenging within the conventional scholarly and methodological frameworks. Source-related issues are often the first barriers one encounters. Yet we encourage a broader revision of research practices, in order to smoothen out more specific methodological challenges.

To start, moving towards a truly new and global diplomatic history requires broadening the field through the practice of what we designate to be scholarly diplomacy. If diplomacy is no longer simply the product of state-to-state relations and formal procedures, but rather a dynamic and transformative force with cultural, social, and human dimensions, then understanding diplomacy also requires input from all fields that study the past. This is not exclusively the domain of the humanities, but also involves the social and natural sciences.[45] These other fields and their adjacent methodologies can contribute perspectives that allow diplomatic historians to uncover new insights in their source material and breach some of the cultural gaps often created by Eurocentric archives and one-sided source material.[46]

Scholarly diplomacy does not only relate to encounters between disciplines. It is also a call for more comprehensive collaboration within diplomatic history itself – something often proposed, yet only occasionally genuinely executed. Potential for more intensive collaboration is found among the (by now

45 The most common phrase used for such studies is NDH but it has also been coined *cultural approach to diplomatic history* which can be read more about in Lehmkuhl, U. "Diplomatiegeschichte als internationale Kulturgeschichte: Theoretische Ansätze und empirische Forschung zwischen Historischer Kulturwissenschaft und Sociologischem Institutionalismus." *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 27 (3) (2001) 394–423. As well as the German term of *Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte der Aussenbeziehungen* coined by Hillard von Thiessen and Christian Windler in "Einleitung: Außenbeziehungen in akteurszentrierter Perspektive." *Akteure der Außenbeziehungen*, Band 1 (December 2010), 1–12.

46 For examples, see McConnell, F. "Rethinking the Geographies of Diplomacy." *Diplomatica* 1 (1) (2019) 46–55; Mauss, M. *The Gift. The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Routledge, 1990); Shimazu, N. "What is Sociability?," 57.

familiar) axes of chronology and geography. Working hands-on with scholars from different parts of the world is crucial to avoid a continual domination of a West-versus-other framework. This is to innovate new intra-regional and inter-regional frameworks that fully reflect not only the complex diplomatic world outside of Europe, but also an optimal incorporation of different intellectual and epistemological repertoires.[47] Reorientation along non-Western comparative axes can yield fresh solutions to long-existing questions mired in circular debate.[48] Thinking outside Western-centric frameworks provides answers to the existing epistemicide, the deliberate destruction of a society's way of relating to others and to the natural world, and at the most extreme the complete extinction of their knowledge system. Ripple effects from destroyed knowledge systems can ensnare contemporary scholarship. When scholars encounter non-western actors through Western sources, for example, the non-western knowledge system is often subsumed and/or flattened within the epistemology held by the Western source. Acknowledging this perspective is useful for assessing the cultural awareness and agenda of the Western author, but to limit oneself within it is to risk reproducing epistemicides that were committed within the context of imperial violence.[49] Instances of epistemicide are at their most total and pernicious when colonizing actors deliberately destroyed the documents and records of subjugated peoples, an issue that according to Glaire Anderson represents a strong ethical concern for history writing.[50]

47 Mitchell, T. "The Middle East in the Past and Future of Social Science." In *The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines*, ed. D. Szanton (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 74–118, 86, 103–4.

48 For example, comparative studies between the Ottoman Empire, Russia, Japan, and other regions have re-contextualized debates on the paradigm of Ottoman decline or rather "relative decline," Westernization, nationalism, and histories of pan-Islamist and pan-Asianist activity. See Bouquet, O. "From Decline to Transformation: Reflections on a New Paradigm in Ottoman History." *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 60 (2022), 27–60: 31; Ágoston, G. *The Last Muslim Conquest: The Ottoman Empire and Its Wars in Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2021), 12–13; Reynolds, M.A. *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires 1908–1918* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011); Aydin, C. "Beyond Civilization: Pan-Islamism, Pan-Asianism and the Revolt against the West." *Journal of Modern European History* 4 (2) (2006), 204–22.

49 de Sousa Santos, B. *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (London: Routledge, 2014); Padilla Peralta, D. "Epistemicide: The Roman Case," *Classica* 33 (2) (2020), 151–86. For the Foucauldian roots of the idea of "pouvoir-savoir," see Spivak, G.C. *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (London: Routledge, 1993), 25–52.

50 Anderson, G. "Rebuilding Baghdad – In the New Instalment of Assassin's Creed." Interview with Millie Walton in *Apollo Magazine*, October 11, 2023 [available at https://www.apollo-magazine.com/assassins-creed-mirage-baghdad-video-game-islamic-art-architecture/, last consulted March 4, 2024].

Through the practice of scholarly diplomacy, by collaborating on equal terms with scholars from outside one's own scientific paradigm or locality, we are better able to recognize, and then move beyond this trap. Yet despite expansion of diplomatic history beyond the confines of Euro-America as sole practitioners and subjects of analysis, sizable divisions still persist between Euro-American scholarship and the regions and states under examination. Intensified collaborations and wider engagement have been hindered by inequalities of access to resources, incentives for non-collaborative research, and language barriers. We therefore urge scholars based in affluent Euro-American institutes to marshal resources, initiate connections, and build networks across these divisions. Such efforts are not merely inclusive for its own sake, but seek to develop the field by infusing varied historical narratives and perspectives that may challenge hidden orthodoxies and assumptions. One of the most prominent examples is periodization, such as the early modern and modern, so crucial to Euro-American conceptions of history, which is nevertheless conceptualized differently by historians from African and East Asian countries, highlighting the need to revise "our" standardized Eurocentric norms for writing (global) diplomatic history.[51]

Digital technologies might aid in bridging these divisions. Global connections are eased by the growth of digital communication infrastructure, presenting new opportunities for scholars to collaborate across vast distances at diminished cost. We should nevertheless bear in mind that boundary-crossing networks hosted in affluent Euro-American institutions do not replicate the same kind of epistemological homogenization of non-Western knowledges that is often present in the historical record of Western diplomatic sources. Recognizing that digital communications technology remains an additional tool, but not a complete replacement for in-person interactions, research access, and institutional residency, means there lies a utility in our resistance as academics – in a profession already accused of an itinerant and disconnected existence – to resist becoming completely unrooted from placeness, especially when one's work has an environmental aspect.[52]

Beyond communication, increased incorporation of digital infrastructure can serve another important purpose – namely in the realm of quantitative analysis. As noted above, a challenge that historians within the field face is to bridge the gap between the rich narratives embedded in case studies

51 Lorenz, C. "'The Times They are a-Changin.' On Time, Space and Periodization in History." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education,* eds. M. Carretero, S. Berger, and M. Grever (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 109–31.

52 Berry, W. *The Unsettling of America: Culture & Agriculture* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977), 159.

and the broader patterns that emerge from macro- or quantitative analysis. The vast troves of diplomatic archives often present a double-edged sword, either overflowing with intricate stories or (as can especially be the case of non-Western contexts) severely lacking in written documentation. This issue has recently been addressed by Dorothée Goetze and Lena Oetzel, who have stated that research into early modern diplomacy often has a tendency for heterogeneity, with a heavy bias even with Europe for South-Western case studies. This bias has skewed our general understanding of what early modern diplomacy is.[53] We need to understand the macro perspective, to also identify how the case studies connect. To transcend this limitation and more effectively bridge between these two scales, there is potential in increased training in, and incorporation of, quantitative methods, thereby facilitating the construction and analysis of vast datasets to identify patterns across time and space. In our view, the future of new diplomatic history lies not in replacing qualitative analysis, but in complementing it with quantitative rigor. Social network analysis (SNA), Natural Language Processing (NLP), and prosopography, originally not developed for humanities, hold considerable promise for diplomatic history in this regard.[54] Yet to fully understand and harness proficiency of these methods, scholarly diplomacy is imperative.

Emblematic for the most recent developments in technology is the rapid ascension of AI. We plead to not shy away from advances in this area, but rather inform ourselves of its underlying functionalities to better understand its functions, its limitations, and its ultimate potential in facilitating research. This is especially the case as AI has been for some time already the driving mechanism behind other tools commonly used in historical research, such as Handwritten Text Recognition (HTR), translators (DeepL, Grammarly), or data managers. The new elephant in the scholarly room is of course OpenAI's ChatGPT – which, in its own words "has the potential to play a transformative

53 Goetze, D., and L. Oetzel, eds. *Early Modern European Diplomacy*, 10–13.

54 SNA, through its ability to map and visualize relationships, can reveal the intricate webs of diplomacy, highlighting the connections between individuals, institutions, and states/polities. NLP, through its ability to automatically read, analyze, interpret and generate written language, can aid historians to understand their sources (e.g., graph neural networks, statistical parsing, syntax based machine translation, semantic role labeling) and digitally document and disseminate their sources. Prosopography, by systematically analyzing biographical data, can identify common characteristics and experiences among diplomats, providing insights into their collective worldviews and decision-making processes. While these quantitative approaches offer transformative potential, they also present unique challenges. Data availability, interpretation, and the potential for anachronistic assumptions must be carefully considered.

role in helping scholars from different cultural backgrounds collaborate on historical projects. By overcoming language barriers, providing access to vast amounts of data, and enabling new forms of analysis, AI can facilitate more meaningful and productive collaborations across cultures to create a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the past." In the adoption of AI, however, one must take care to avoid unintended plagiarism and other ethical pitfalls. As with communications, AI should be an additional tool rather than a substitute. For now, undigitized and untranscribed sources remain out of its reach, and remain in the traditional historian's custody.

A final venue for digital tools wedded to scholarly diplomacy is in the analysis of material culture. Material practices have always played a significant role in diplomatic communication. These materials include the equipment of diplomatic actors such as clothing, jewelry, weapons, and so on. It applies to artefacts that were handled and exchanged, but also to outdoor and indoor spaces. These too may have carried social, political and legal significance in the course of foreign policy negotiations.[55] Historians have begun to recognize that a huge part of communication in diplomatic history played out as multi-sensorial experiences that included tactile, olfactory, and other sensations, the study of which can better illuminate the enacted and performative side of diplomacy. It is therefore necessary to study not both the verbal language found in textual sources – documents which should *also* be studied as material objects in their own right. In order to make sense of the material culture of diplomacy we need to engage in collaborative work between historians and art historians, archaeologists, museologists, ethnologists, to properly and multidimensionally evaluate its characteristics. Various artefacts have to be studied and contextualized as objects "entangled" in the in-between zone between cultural and political systems, in which the diplomatic actors who had been handling them operated.[56] Recent technological developments, similarly born out of such collaborations, allow us to visualize those objects and spaces in Virtual Reality to unlock the experience to a broader public, introducing them to "unfamiliar histories and unfamiliar cultural heritage" while raising awareness to the often unequal access to these objects, spaces,

55 Rudolph, H. "Entangled Objects and Hybrid Practices? Material Culture as a New Approach to the History of Diplomacy." In *Material Culture in Modern Diplomacy from the 15th to the 20th Century*, eds. H. Rudolph and G.M. Metzig, 1–28.

56 Um, N. *Shipped by Not Sold: Material Culture and the Social Protocols of Trade during Yemen's Age of Coffee* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017); Flood, F.B., and B. Fricke. *Tales Things Tell: Material Histories of Early Globalisms* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023).

sources, and the knowledge they contain.[57] Even if we can only get access to comparative material and not extant objects as models, the VR experience partially remedies the poor survival rate of the historic material culture, especially in non-Western contexts. VR experiences do not materialize on their own, and often require academics to collaborate with industry professionals. The creation of these tools allows for a comparatively close approximation of a lived experiences in historical diplomacy. This is a multidimensional scene that activates the senses, and gives way to a deeper (or alternative) understanding of our ultimate object of study.

In general, the expansion of tools, methods, and sources available to diplomatic historians has led to (or promises) increased engagement with experts transcending the borders of disciplines, academia, and regions of the world. Scholarly diplomacy should extend more sustained collaborations with archivists, museum curators, IT experts, and many others who contribute to and reinforce an infrastructure that supports the creation of new global histories. This engagement is fundamental to diplomatic history, as it reforges the intellectual, practical, and methodological repertoires, which promise to confront current challenges in NDH.

Conclusion: Global Diplomatic History Practitioners of All Countries – Unite!

As a "new" cohort of scholars, we thus solicit the need to go beyond the "new" in New Diplomatic History as an open invitation to all our colleagues, embracing aspirations to "go global" and trying to genuinely bridge their fields' temporal, spatial, and disciplinary divides while consequently redefining, deconstructing, and (re)positioning what diplomatic history should (want) to be. No actor nor action is too small to impact diplomacy. When enlarging the scope of research, it is necessary to specify what exactly we are researching, why we define an actor, practice, or space as diplomatic, and which methods we choose to utilize to that end. So, what do we mean when we posit to go beyond NDH or even provincialize its core? Scholars have demonstrated how traditional accounts are insufficient and unsatisfactory on multiple levels.

57 See e.g., the recent UNESCO project "Virtual Museum of Stolen Cultural Objects." ID 505GLO4000, funded by Saudi-Arabia, https://core.unesco.org/en/project/505GLO4000, last consulted June 11, 2024; or the 2016 exhibition "The Lost Garden: Digital Interactive Exhibition of Yuanmingyuan" in Beijing.

However, we believe there is a need to revise these histories from the ground up. With this manifesto, we hope to have pointed to several avenues where we like to take it further, drawing attention to what has been left out and why. By scrutinizing the heterogenous origins of diplomacy not solely linked to the foundation of the modern state system, scholars within the field are thus able to decentralize the West, yet we also stipulated which languages, terminologies, epistemologies, and methodologies are taken as the (diplomatic) norm. By reconceptualizing what we perceive as diplomacy (who/what we investigate) and which scholarly collaborations we engage in, scholars can indeed broaden, deepen, and connect the field and perhaps genuinely revise how we perceive the (diplomats') world.

Scholars studying diplomacy have borrowed, exchanged, and collaborated with various other fields for quite some time, yet only together, collectively and transdisciplinary, through intersectional, multilingual research can we become truly global. The strength of new diplomatic history thus lies not in its (already disputed) novelty, but in the way it sets out to bridge multiple temporal, geographical, and disciplinary divides, and in its potential to reconceptualize how we perceive relations throughout history to today.