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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# 'Diplomacy is a feminine art': Feminised figurations of the diplomat

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**Abstract**

The aim of this article is to examine whether and how diplomacy may be gendered, symbolically and rhetorically, using US representations of diplomacy as a case. Prior scholarship on gender and contemporary diplomacy is sparse but has shown that the symbolic figure of 'the diplomat' has come to overlap tightly with 'man' and be associated with traits often attributed to masculinity. Inspired by queer international relations methods, relying on the concept of 'figuration' and focused on US news media and biographies of diplomats from the past decade, this article uncovers and examines a palette of feminised figurations also at play in US representations of diplomacy, including the diplomat as 'the "soft" non-fighter', 'the relationship builder', 'the gossip', 'the cookie-pusher', and 'the fancy Frenchman'. These feminised figurations alternate between configuring the diplomat as a woman and – more commonly – a (feminised) man. The analysis complicates rather than displaces existing claims, highlighting the importance of attention to slippages and challenges to dominant masculinised subject positions.

**Keywords:** Diplomacy; Gender; Figuration; Masculinisation; Feminisation; Hierarchy; Masculinity; Femininity

## Introduction

'Female is not our default image of the diplomat', *Washington Post* (2019)[1]
'Diplomacy is a feminine art', Ambassador Clare Boothe Luce (1976)[2]

How is diplomacy, a central institution of international politics, gendered? This question remains fundamentally and unjustifiably understudied in International Relations (IR) and the social sciences more broadly. Like the military, diplomacy has a history of male domination. Whereas women played important roles as international negotiators and communicators in early modern inter-dynastic European diplomacy and non-Western diplomacy, diplomacy became codified as a masculine profession in the early nineteenth century.[3] Women were thus prohibited from occupying official diplomatic positions in virtually all states until the early to

[1]Ruth Marcus, 'Marie Yovanovitch's femininity is her superpower', *Washington Post* (16 November 2019).

[2]Ann Miller Morin, 'Do women make better ambassadors? Study of 50 years of female envoys shows gender can be an advantage', *Foreign Service Journal* (December 1994), pp. 26–30.

[3]James Daybell, 'Gender, politics and diplomacy: Women, news and intelligence networks in Elizabethan England', in Robyn Adams and Rosanna Cox (eds), *Diplomacy and Early Modern Culture* (Basinstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 101–19; Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James (eds), *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500* (London: Routledge, 2016).

mid-twentieth century.[4] Once these general bans on women were lifted, marriage bans for women diplomats were often put in their place, forcing women to choose between a diplomatic career and marriage until the 1970s, while male diplomats were expected to enter a heterosexual marriage.[5] Most Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) have indeed been elite male bastions, populated by men whose diplomatic careers in large part depended on wives to follow their moves and perform unpaid diplomatic labour.[6] Today, although the number of women in formal diplomatic positions have recently increased, 85 per cent of ambassadors and 91 per cent of negotiators present as men.[7]

As in the military, the sexual classification of those who occupy diplomatic roles has become implicated in gendered language giving meaning to diplomacy and the diplomat. Cynthia Enloe and Iver Neumann have both argued that the symbolic figure of 'the diplomat' has come to overlap tightly with 'man', associated with traits and characteristics often also attributed to men and masculinity.[8] Strategic negotiation skills, a transactional use of language, emotional restraint, and a willingness to turn to force if necessary have all been understood as 'masculine' traits and dispositions in diplomacy. Participation in male homosocial diplomatic networks and a 'male' appearance have also been expected. As an editor of *the Washington Post* commented recently on the US congressional testimony of Ambassador Marie Yovanovich in the 2019 impeachment inquiry against President Trump, 'female is not our default image of the diplomat'.[9] Diplomats are indeed often conceived of as men and in masculinised terms.

However, as this article will argue and show through an analysis of US policy discussions of diplomacy, while possibly dominant in many contexts, masculinised representations of the diplomat and diplomacy are contested and unstable. In US foreign policy discussions, diplomacy is regularly differentiated from the military as a 'soft' and putatively 'feminine' alternative to military force. US policymakers and political pundits seeking to sideline diplomatic solutions recurrently disparage diplomacy through feminisation, drawing connections between denigrated allegedly 'feminine' traits and diplomacy and diplomats. Not all feminisation serves to downgrade diplomacy, however, as there are also appreciative depictions of diplomacy as a 'feminine' practice. Clare Boothe Luce, the first US woman appointed to a major ambassadorial post abroad (Italy in 1953), contended that 'diplomacy is a feminine art' in order to legitimate her presence as a woman in diplomacy.[10] Similar claims have since been reproduced by former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and a number of women diplomats and are currently repeated among some of those advocating for larger numbers of women in diplomacy. How, then, should we understand the symbolic and rhetorical gendering of diplomacy and the diplomat?

Departing from Enloe's and Neumann's groundbreaking work on gender and diplomacy, the aim of this article is to further interrogate the symbolic figure of the diplomat and to complicate claims about how gender is articulated. Virtually all contemporary feminist IR scholarship approaches gender as relational and hierarchising processes. However, there is some tension between analyses such as Enloe's and Neumann's that aim to expose and analyse the (re)creation and reification of predominant gender constructions and studies that aim to unsettle such

[4]Karin Aggestam and Ann E. Towns (eds), *Gendering Diplomacy and International Negotiation* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018).

[5]Ibid.

[6]See, for example, Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

[7]Ann E. Towns and Birgitta Niklasson, 'Gender, international status and ambassador appointments', *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 13:3 (2016), pp. 521–40; Karin Aggestam and Isak Svensson, 'Where are the women in peace mediation?', in Aggestam and Towns (eds), *Gendering Diplomacy and International Negotiation*, pp. 149–68.

[8]Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*; Iver B. Neumann, 'The body of the diplomat', *European Journal of International Relations*, 14:4 (2008), pp. 671–95; Iver B. Neumann, *At Home with the Diplomats* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012).

[9]Marcus, 'Marie Yovanovitch's femininity is her superpower'.

[10]Morin, 'Do women make better ambassadors?', p. 30.

constructions by focusing on ambiguities and indeterminacies of gender. Without seeking to resolve this tension – there is great value in both approaches – this article tends towards the latter, aiming to display the multiple ways in which diplomacy and the diplomat are also feminised. To draw attention to and critically examine complex and shifting gender representations of 'the diplomat', I draw inspiration from Cynthia Weber's recent elaboration of queer International Relations methods and rely on the concept of figuration. Figurations are 'figures of speech', schemes of representation in the form of characters or subjectivities.[11] I argue that the concept of figuration helps draw attention not just to the plural character but also to the continual refiguration and sometimes quickly changing representations of figures central to international politics. Theoretical tools that are attentive to potentially ambivalent, plural and shifting constructions of gender help to answer the question of how diplomacy is gendered in novel ways, I contend. Such tools are necessarily also attentive to the intersectional character of gender and the ways in which, for example, class, race, sexuality, and nationality help produce particular gendered figurations.

More concretely, the analysis centres on representations of diplomacy and figurations of the diplomat in US mainstream news media and biographies of diplomats. Anna Agathangelou and L. H. M. Ling have connected the US militarised stance with masculinities, using the concept of 'hypermasculinity' to describe the resurgence of militarised self-representations in US discussions of foreign affairs post-9/11.[12] Diplomacy may be particularly prone to feminisation in such contexts of masculinised militarism, making the contemporary US an interesting case to explore for those interested in depictions of diplomacy. However, diplomacy is a sited practice,[13] situated and variable in its multiple locations around the world. Whereas it is likely that other contexts characterised by masculinised militarism also see feminised figurations of the diplomat, I make no claims about the concrete form of those feminised figurations. What the article provides with general implications are theoretical tools for similar analyses in other contexts, and the empirical findings can be used as a platform for comparison across space and time.

In short, the analysis uncovers and examines a palette of feminised figurations variously at play in US representations of diplomacy, including the diplomat as 'the "soft" non-fighter', 'the relationship builder', 'the gossip', 'the cookie-pusher', and 'the fancy Frenchman'. Each of these points to different dimensions of the complex set of practices referred to as diplomacy. These feminised figurations furthermore alternate between configuring the diplomat as a woman and – more commonly – a (feminised) man. Thus, whereas there is no reason to doubt Enloe's and Neumann's general conclusions about the diplomat as a masculinised figure, I contend that these conclusions need to be complicated and that in contexts such as the contemporary US, the diplomat is also regularly feminised in a variety of ways. These feminisations may have important implications for diplomacy and the lived experiences of diplomats, a point that I will address in the concluding discussion.

The analysis relies on a broad reading of elite US representations of diplomacy in mainstream US news media and biographies of diplomats from the past decade (though sometimes also digging farther into the past). I have sifted through hundreds of articles in major mainstream newspapers such as *Washington Post* and *the New York Times*, online news media such as *Politico*, *Fox News*, and *Public Radio International*, widely-read policy magazines such as *Foreign Policy*, *the New Republic*, and *Policy Review*, and recent biographies of prominent diplomats. From this broad reading, texts in which feminised figurations of the diplomat appeared were then selected for closer analysis and critical interrogation – two dozen articles and a few biographies are quoted

[11]Cynthia Weber, 'Queer intellectual curiosity as International Relations methods: Developing queer International Relations theoretical and methodological frameworks', *International Studies Quarterly*, 60:1 (2016), pp. 11–23 (p. 15).

[12]Anna Agathangelou and L. H. M Ling, 'Power, borders, security, wealth: Lessons of violence and desire from September 11', *International Studies Quarterly*, 48:3 (2004), pp. 517–38.

[13]Iver B. Neumann, *Diplomatic Sites: A Critical Enquiry* (London: Hurst, 2013).

and referenced in the analysis, then listed as primary sources at the end of the article. The default assumption guiding the selection of texts is that the diplomat is masculinised, as Enloe and Neumann have already shown, but that the diplomat might also be feminised. A broad survey to identify texts with feminising representations coupled with a subsequent closer reading of the identified texts is thus suitable. Had the aim instead been to establish whether masculinised or feminised figurations are currently most common, how often each feminised figuration appears, whether feminised figurations have become more or less frequent over time, or in what kinds of media outlets (for example, conservative or liberal) the diplomat is feminised and how, then a more systematic sampling of texts and a more principled justification of the selection of texts for closer interrogation would have been required. But since my aim is to show that 'the diplomat' is not only a masculinised figure and to provide a rich analysis of a range of shifting feminised figurations, an initial broad survey coupled with a closer reading of texts illustrative of each feminised figuration is fitting. In the close reading, I systematically pose a set of analytical questions to the texts. What is 'diplomacy' and 'the diplomat' made to be in this text – what kind of being, with what kinds of traits and capacities for action? What is 'femininity' and/or 'masculinity' made to be? How is 'femininity' represented in relation to 'the diplomat'? In what ways do class/race/nationality/sexuality shape this figuration? Such a reading enables an inductive identification of feminised figurations of the diplomat in the US context.

The rest of the article proceeds in four parts. The next section discusses existing scholarship on gender and diplomacy and sets out the value added of this study. After that, the discussion turns to the theoretical premises of the analysis, drawing on feminist scholarship to define and grapple with processes of feminisation and the concept of figuration. To set up the critical empirical interrogation, I then start with three illustrations: figurations in a recent US biography of an ambassador posted to DC, in the media coverage of the ambassadors testifying in the 2019 impeachment inquiry against President Donald Trump, and in a recent exchange between two foreign policy analysts over the nature of US and European presence in the world. The analysis then examines four sets of feminised figurations of 'the diplomat': (1) as 'the "soft" non-fighter'; (2) as the 'relationship-builder' and 'gossip'; (3) as the 'cookie-pusher'; and (4) as the 'Fancy Frenchman'. The article concludes with a discussion of the implications of feminised figurations not just for diplomacy scholarship but also for diplomatic practice and the embodied experiences of US diplomats.

## Prior scholarship on the gender of diplomacy

Diplomacy has become a lively field of study within IR.[14] Although very little of this IR scholarship has adopted a gender-sensitive lens to examine contemporary diplomacy, there are two important bodies of work that have emerged to address questions about gender and diplomacy. First, diplomatic historians have provided important insights into how gender was understood and practiced in diplomacy in the past few hundred centuries, often by focusing on the remarkable lives of individual women who – while not officially designated as diplomats – have historically filled crucial diplomatic functions as letter-writers, behind-the-scenes negotiators, unofficial envoys, and wives in charge of receptions and dinners.[15]

[14]See, for example, Rebecca Adler-Nissen, *Opting Out of the European Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Aggestam and Towns (eds), *Gendering Diplomacy and International Negotiation*; Vincent Pouliot, *International Pecking Orders: The Politics and Practice of Multilateral Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Ole Jacob Sending, Vincent Pouliot, and Iver B. Neumann (eds), *Diplomacy and the Making of World Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Paul Sharp, *Diplomatic Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Neumann, *At Home with the Diplomats*.

[15]Frank Costigliola, 'Pamela Churchill, wartime London, and the making of the special relationship', *Diplomatic History*, 36:4 (2012), pp. 753–61; Daybell, 'Gender, politics and diplomacy'; Katie Hickman, *Daughters of Britannia: The Lives and*

Second, a number of studies have focused on gender and/or women within specific ministries of foreign affairs.[16] While generally not focused on how the diplomat as a figure or professional has been portrayed, a few of these studies offer cues. For instance, according to Biltekin, Swedish diplomats and government officials continued referring to diplomats as 'men' until the 1970s, decades after the bar on women from entering the diplomatic career was lifted.[17] And being classified as of male sex was presumed to align with certain traits and dispositions, such as an ability to focus on a career rather than a family and traits of adaptability, dispassion, and prudence.[18]

Neumann's wonderful diplomatic ethnographies, exploring the internal workings of the Norwegian MFA in the 2000s, make similar claims about the diplomat being scripted male, with 'masculine' characteristics.[19] However, he points to three distinctive masculinities within the Norwegian MFA, which he suggests to be operative in Western diplomacy more broadly: a hegemonic bourgeois masculinity (economically privileged, cultivated, intellectually independent), a numerically dominant *petit bourgeois* masculinity (diligent, straight-laced, rule-following) and the more unconventional troublemaker.[20] With male and masculinised diplomatic scripts, 'there was an inherent tension between the statuses "women" and "diplomat"', with little value placed on putatively 'feminine' traits in diplomacy.[21] Indeed, that which is made 'feminine' is also made foreign to diplomacy, in Neumann's account.

The externalisation of allegedly 'feminine' characteristics and practices from official diplomacy is also the subject of Cynthia Enloe's forceful and classic examination of diplomacy.[22] She contends that 'men are seen as having the skills and resources that the government needs if its international status is to be enhanced. They are presumed to be the diplomats.'[23] This can only be so, she continues, if we disregard the work of diplomatic wives, wives who perform feminised functions that – while made invisible – are absolutely central to diplomacy. For instance, diplomatic wives have been establishing domestic contexts in which trust and confidence between male government officials from diverse countries could develop. The ability of men from different states to get to know one another 'man to man' thus partially rests on the domestic duties of diplomatic wives, who create an atmosphere where male diplomats can establish closer ties over meals and drinks in the comfort of a home. (Male) diplomacy has thus depended 'on a certain kind of marriage and on the ideology of wifely duty'.[24] Enloe vividly exposes the centrality of the invisible

*Times of Diplomatic Wives* (London: HarperCollins, 1999); Amelia Kiddle, 'In Mexico's defense: Dueling, diplomacy, gender and honor, 1876–1940', *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, 31:1 (2015), pp. 22–47; Helen McCarthy, *Women of the World: The Rise of the Female Diplomat* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Sluga and James (eds), *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500*; Molly M. Wood, '"Commanding beauty" and "gentle charm": American women and gender in the early twentieth-century foreign service', *Diplomatic History*, 31:3 (2007), pp. 505–30; Molly M. Wood, 'Diplomacy and gossip: Information gathering in the US foreign service, 1900–1940', in Kathleen Feeley and Jennifer Frost (eds), *When Private Talk Goes Public* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), pp. 139–59.

[16]See, for example, Aggestam and Towns (eds), *Gendering Diplomacy and International Negotiation*; Nevra Biltekin, *Servants of Diplomacy: The Making of Swedish Diplomats, 1905–1995* (Stockholm: Department of History, 2016); Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *Changing Differences: Women and the Shaping of American Foreign Policy, 1917–1994* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995); Helen McCarthy, 'Petticoat diplomacy: The admission of women to the British Foreign Service, c. 1919–1946', *Twentieth Century British History*, 20:3 (2009), pp. 285–321; Nancy E. McGlen and Meredith Reid Sarkees, *Women in Foreign Policy: The Insiders* (London: Routledge, 1993); Neumann, 'The body of the diplomat'; Neumann, *At Home with the Diplomats*; Claire Turenne Sjolander, 'Adding women but forgetting to stir: Gender and foreign policy in the Mulroney era', in Nelson Michaud and Kim Richard Nossal (eds), *Diplomatic Departures* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2001).

[17]Biltekin, *Servants of Diplomacy*, p. 136.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Neumann 'The body of the diplomat'; Neumann, *At Home with the Diplomats*.

[20]Neumann, *At Home with the Diplomats*, pp. 153–9.

[21]Ibid., p 162.

[22]Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases*.

[23]Ibid., pp. 97–8.

[24]Ibid., p. 102.

work women do in diplomacy, calling on us to recognise this work as diplomacy. She also highlights that the construction of official diplomacy as 'masculine' necessitates consideration of feminisation, paying attention to how women and their 'feminine' practices and qualities are banished from what is considered diplomacy to the realm of the private. Feminisation is thus part and parcel of the construction of masculinities in Enloe's account, with a masculinised realm of formal diplomacy and a feminised realm of informal support work not recognised as diplomacy.

As a whole, this sparse but interesting body of scholarship on the gender of diplomacy is unequivocal: the diplomat is scripted male and what is formally recognised as diplomacy consists of masculinised practices. Women and femininities are thus represented relationally as 'Other' to the male and masculinised diplomat – neither women nor what are considered 'feminine' qualities and conduct fit the mould. There is little reason to doubt the validity of these general claims. However, in shifting our focus from how diplomats themselves understand and practice diplomacy to how policymakers and media portray and represent them, I will show that official diplomacy may also regularly be feminised. The concluding discussion will return to the implications of such feminisation for how diplomats practice diplomacy.

## Gender, feminisations, figurations

The article takes as its point of departure standard feminist assumptions about the primacy of language in the production of human subjectivities.[25] Actors exist as gendered and sexed beings in and through language – as socially shared and intersubjective, language expresses the meaning and form not only of gender, as is generally accepted, but also of sex, the interpretation and classification of material bodies in terms of sexual categories. As Judith Butler argues, sexual categories are made to appear natural through enactments of gender and sexuality, so that gender and expressions of sexuality come to be productive of sex.[26] To say that sex is socially constituted is not to deny the materiality of bodies but rather to highlight the complexity of those bodies and the many ways in which they could be and have been classified and inscribed in terms of sex. To denaturalise binary constructions of sex that rely on assumptions of men and women as biological givens, much feminist work now asks questions about the social criteria used to classify sexes and the mundane enactments that make sexual categories appear natural, examining how sexual differentiation and classifications shift across time and place.

While closely related to sexed bodies, gender, in turn, concerns differentiations that are recognised as being social and malleable, used to denote norms, scripts, and ideas that differentiate between masculinities and femininities and help constitute identities. In Joan Scott's classic snappy formulation, gender is 'a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes'.[27] Gender is a process, one of generating, structuring, and hierarchically ordering subjectivities and identities – but also practices, traits, and objects – resting on the ongoing creation and reproduction of difference in particular ways in speech, text, and/or practice.[28]

Giving meaning to, differentiating between and hierarchically ordering femininities and masculinities conceptually is one central dimension of gender processes. As femininities and masculinities are not anchored in biological givens, they can come to mean virtually anything and vary considerably across time and space. Importantly, femininities and masculinities are produced

[25]See, for example, Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, 'Doing gender', *Gender & Society*, 1:2 (1987), pp. 125–51; Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011 [orig. pub. 1994]); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

[26]Butler, *Gender Touble*.

[27]Joan Scott, 'Gender: A useful category of historical analysis', *The American Historical Review*, 91:5 (1986), pp. 1053–75 (p. 1067).

[28]West and Zimmerman, 'Doing gender'.

relationally, with each concept taking on meaning partially in relation to the other – a 'feminine' attribute or behaviour is presumed to be in contrast with a 'masculine' equivalent; each is made to be what the other is not. Each is also produced in relation to alternative femininities and/or masculinities. Indeed, hierarchies among different forms of masculinity have received an enormous amount of scholarly attention in the past two decades.[29]

As gender intersects with other power-laden differentiations, such as class and race, there is often a range of masculinities and femininities at play in any given text or discursive field.[30] While domination is a recurring theme in the construction of hegemonic masculinities, physical domination by physical strength and size often competes with economic-technological-intellectual domination in valued forms of manhood.[31] These competing masculinities are often classed, taking the form of contestations between working class and elite masculinities. Class subordination may thus be resisted by invoking physical strength as a valued form of masculinity.[32] Upper class traits and activities – including activities such as frequent foreign travel and forms of dining and conversing that display wealth and privilege – may be ridiculed by being feminised as 'unmanly'.[33] Indeed, such intersections of class and gender are repeated in figurations of the diplomat, as the analysis below will show.

The attribution of femininity and/or masculinity to actors, object,s or other phenomena is a second central dimension of gender. I refer to such attributions as feminisation and masculinisation.[34] In turn, feminisation and masculinisation processes are often centrally about power, about hierarchising actors, policies, and practices. Whether feminisation or masculinisation serves to denigrate or legitimise depends on the context, however. As Enloe underscores, 'feminization provokes anxiety when particular forms of masculinity are culturally, academically, politically, or economically privileged … So long as any culture remains patriarchal, then, feminization can be wielded as an instrument of intimidation.'[35] Under different circumstances, feminisation can serve to validate and commend actors, practices, or institutions.[36]

Importantly, feminisation and masculinisation help sort and designate not just individuals but also collective actors, institutions, or practices as distinctive, superior, and inferior. Virtually any actor, figure, or practice can be feminised and/or masculinised. Indeed, 'masculinity and femininity and their constructed relationship to each other are an available rationale for practice and a referent with which to interpret and judge, not just the gender displays and practices of individuals, but all social relations, policy, rules, and institutional practice and

[29]See, for example, R. W. Connell, 'The big picture: Masculinities in recent world history', *Theory and Society*, 22:5 (1993), pp. 597–623; R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1995); R. W. Connell, 'On hegemonic masculinity and violence: A response to Jefferson and Hall', *Theoretical Criminology*, 6:1 (2002), pp. 89–99, and all the scholarship their work has influenced.

[30]Kimberle Crenshaw, 'Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989); Jane Parpart and Marysia Zalewski (eds), *Rethinking the Man Question: Sex, Gender and Violence in International Relations* (London: Zed Books, 2008); Marsha Henry, 'Problematizing military masculinity, intersectionality and male vulnerability in feminist critical military studies', *Critical Military Studies*, 3:2 (2017), pp. 182–99.

[31]See, for example, Cliff Cheng, 'Marginalized masculinities and hegemonic masculinity: An introduction', *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 7:3 (1999), pp. 295–315; Charlotte Hooper, *Manly States: Masculinities, International Relations and Gender Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

[32]See, for example, Natasha Slutskaya, Ruth Simpson, Jason Hughes, Alexander Simpson, and Selçuk Uygur, 'Masculinity and class in the context of dirty work', *Gender, Work and Organization*, 23:2 (2016), pp. 165–82.

[33]Anna Cornelia Fahey, 'French and feminine: Hegemonic masculinity and the emasculation of John Kerry in the 2004 presidential race', *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 24:2 (2007), pp. 132–50.

[34]See, for example, Cynthia Enloe, *Globalization and Militarism: Feminists Make the Link* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), p. 102; Laura Sjoberg, 'Gender, the state and war redux', *International Relations*, 25:1 (2011), pp. 108–34.

[35]Enloe, *Globalization and Militarism*, p. 102.

[36]See, for example, Steve Niva, 'Tough and tender: New world order, masculinity and the Gulf War', in Marysia Zalewski and Jane Parpart (eds), *The 'Man' Question in International Relations* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 109–28; Ann E. Towns, *Women and States: Norms and Hierarchies in International Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

structure'.[37] Institutions such as diplomacy and institutional figures such as 'the diplomat' can thus be given meaning and assessed through gendered language and symbols.

As stated previously, masculinities and femininities are produced relationally. In Enloe's and Neumann's accounts of diplomacy, 'the diplomat' was scripted masculine in relation to a feminised 'Other' made external to official diplomacy. They thus analyse the construction and reproduction of dichotomies that separate 'masculine diplomacy' from 'feminine' spheres, practices, and subjectivities. This is a productive approach when aiming to show how, despite the potential for gender diversity, predominant binaries between masculinity and femininity are produced and sustained in international politics. It is but one way to approach the relational nature of feminisation and masculinisation, however. Another is to explore the ways in which feminisation is involved in differentiating between masculinities (or masculinisation in producing femininities), when feminisation functions to designate an actor or institution as 'less manly', more appropriately manly or differently manly. Enloe has approached feminisation this way in other works.[38] In IR, there is indeed a large and rich body of such analyses focused especially on military masculinities and peacekeeping masculinities.[39] In military discourse, what is coded as 'feminine' characteristics – for example, being designated as physically weak, unwilling to use violence, emotional or wanting to be the object of male sexual desire – has been shown to be central in the hierarchical ordering of masculinities. Feminisation thus simultaneously signifies femininity *and* lesser masculinities.

### *Figurations*

As the discussion above should have made clear, the production of gendered subjects is complex. Much work – including a significant amount of the IR work on military masculinities referenced above – has been inspired by R. W. Connell's notion of hegemonic masculinities and the plurality and hierarchy of masculinities this entails. The concept of hegemonic masculinity developed as an attempt to account for the intersectional, complex, and changing character of masculinities and gender more broadly.[40] While treating gender and masculinities as ongoing processes rather than as character types, and while attentive to context and change, this body of work is generally concerned with identifying long-standing ideals and predominant practices (accompanied by

[37]Mimi Schippers, 'Recovering the feminine other: Femininity, masculinity and gender hegemony', *Theory and Society*, 36 (2007), pp. 87–102. See also Sjoberg, 'Gender, the state and war redux', p. 110.

[38]See, for example, Enloe, *Globalization and Militarism*.

[39]See, for example, Niva, 'Tough and tender'; Zalewski and Parpart (eds), *The 'Man' Question in International Relations*; Carol Cohn, 'Missions, men and masculinities', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 1:3 (1999), pp. 460–75; Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Hooper, *Manly States*; Agathangelou and Ling, 'Power, borders, security, wealth'; Meghana Nayak, 'Orientalism and "saving" US identity after 9/11', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 8:1 (2006), pp. 42–61; Parpart and Zalewski (eds), *Rethinking the Man Question*; Annica Kronsell, 'Gendered practices in institutions of hegemonic masculinity: Reflections from feminist standpoint theory', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 7:2 (2011), pp. 280–98; Aaron Belkin, *Bring Me Men: Military Masculinity and the Benign Façade of American Empire, 1898–2001* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Paul Kirby and Marsha Henry, 'Rethinking masculinity and practices of violence in conflict settings', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 14:4 (2012), pp. 445–9; Claire Duncanson, 'Forces for good? Narratives of military masculinities in peacebuilding operations', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 11:1 (2009), pp. 63–80; Claire Duncanson, *Forces for Good. Military Masculinities and Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013); Claire Duncanson, 'Hegemonic masculinity and the possibility of change in gender relations', *Men and Masculinities*, 18:2 (2015), pp. 1–18; Matthew Hurley, 'The "genderman": Renegotiating militarized masculinities when doing gender at NATO', *Critical Military Studies*, 4:1 (2016), pp. 72–91; Marysia Zalewski, 'What's the problem with the concept of military masculinities?', *Critical Military Studies*, 3:2 (2017), pp. 200–05; Marsha Henry, 'Parades, parties and pests: Contradictions of everyday life in peacekeeping economies', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 9:3 (2015), pp. 372–90; Henry, 'Problematizing military masculinity'.

[40]R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept', *Gender & Society*, 19:6 (2005), pp. 829–59.

analyses of subordinated and marginalised masculinities and femininities). Hegemonic masculinities and the broader gender orders they are part of can indeed be surprisingly stubborn, consisting of reified practices that are slow to change.

Motivated by Cynthia Weber's recent call for the integration of insights from queer IR frameworks,[41] I instead rely on the concept of *figuration* to examine how 'the diplomat' as a figure in speech and text is gendered/sexed/sexualised. Figuration is a concept most closely associated with feminist philosophers Rosi Braidotti and Donna Haraway,[42] and it is generally deployed to draw attention not just to the plural character but also the continual refiguration and more quickly shifting character of subject positions.[43] To be sure, while both Braidotti and Haraway are centrally concerned with embodiment and materiality, they have developed slightly different conceptions of figuration. Haraway underscores the semiotic dimension, with figurations – in Weber's rendering of Haraway – understood as 'distillations of shared meanings in forms or images' and 'figures of speech'.[44] As such, 'figurations are performative images that can be inhabited'.[45] Drawing on Haraway, this is also how Weber uses figurations, investigating how 'figurations powerfully attach to – and detach from – material bodies'.[46] To Braidotti, on the other hand, the inhabited performance *is* the figuration: 'figurations are not figurative ways of thinking, but rather materialistic mappings of situated, i.e. embedded and embodied, social positions'.[47] 'Schemes of representation' are nonetheless important components in and for embodiment and they thus remain central for Braidotti's mappings of figurations. In this article, I am primarily concerned with what 'the diplomat' is made to be in written and spoken text, the shifting schemes of representation, and I only attend to the embodiment of these figurations briefly at the end of the article. The concept of figuration – even if limited to schemes of representations and figures in and of speech – is nonetheless analytically helpful, as it helps grasp the shifting gendering of the figure of the diplomat.

So why are figurations plural and with shifting meaning – what keeps them pluralised and in motion? First, as multiple axes of differentiation – for example, class, race, nationality – intersect with gender in schemes of representation, figurations are necessarily multiple and in motion.[48] As we will see below, gendered figurations of 'the diplomat' are variably also classed and sexualised. Second and relatedly, people's complex, contradictory and changing lived experiences as gendered subjects do not align very well with the often simplified tropes and narratives in spoken or written discourse. Performative enactments are thus rarely perfect enactments, and each iteration may thus shift figurations if ever so slightly.[49] To be clear, I do not rely on figuration to question the utility of studying diplomacy in terms of hegemonic masculinity – there are no doubt enduring and dominant masculinity scripts in diplomacy, as Enloe and Neumann have convincingly demonstrated. I use figuration in order to draw attention to challenges to these dominant scripts, to capture the simultaneously shifting and changing gendering of 'the diplomat'. Focusing primarily on various ways in which the diplomat is also feminised, and on how these feminisations intersect with classing and sexualisation, the analysis approaches 'the diplomat' as a moving subject. As Mona Lilja emphasises, the aim of such an analysis is not to identify figurations in order

[41]Weber, 'Queer intellectual curiosity as International Relations methods'.

[42]Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*; Donna Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium: Female.Man_Meets_OncoMouse* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

[43]See, for example, Mona Lilja, '(Re)figurations and situated bodies: Gendered shades, resistance, and politics in Cambodia', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 41:3 (2016), pp. 677–99; Weber, 'Queer intellectual curiosity as International Relations methods'.

[44]Weber, 'Queer intellectual curiosity as International Relations methods', p. 15.

[45]Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium*, p. 11.

[46]Weber, 'Queer intellectual curiosity as International Relations methods', p. 11.

[47]Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, p. 4.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Butler, *Gender Trouble*; Weber, 'Queer intellectual curiosity as International Relations methods', p. 16.

to 'lock in' a few additional subject positions but rather to examine them as socially emergent and shifting.[50]

## Gendered figurations of 'the diplomat' in the US

Diplomacy and diplomats have been subject to much interest in US media and policy journals, and a large number of biographies about and autobiographies by diplomats have been published in the past few decades. Browsing this material, it quickly becomes clear that the figuration of the diplomat is often masculinised in a variety of ways. The acclaimed biography *The Ambassador: Inside the Life of a Working Diplomat* by US diplomacy analyst John T. Shaw works well as an illustration, providing a compelling profile of former Swedish ambassador to the US, Jan Eliasson. Eliasson is hailed as the quintessential diplomat, well equipped to handle the multiple, complex challenges of the contemporary world. Using Eliasson as a vehicle, Shaw aims to provide 'a unique inside view of … modern diplomacy', and he has thus opted to portray a man who 'looks and acts like an ambassador from central casting'.[51] Not surprisingly, Shaw's portrayal not only involves a male diplomat but it also makes certain adjectives male and relies on gendered metaphors. Eliasson is described as 'tall and lean, friendly and forceful'.[52] He is furthermore represented as 'aggressive', 'intensely driven and very ambitious', but also as 'charming and exuberant and [a man who] laughs easily'.[53] Describing Eliasson's keen sense of what each situation requires, Shaw writes that 'he can take over a room or fade into the background … With equal skill, he can play Clark Kent or Superman.'[54] Indeed, in Shaw's rendering, Eliasson undoubtedly fits the masculinised mould of the diplomat, following the diplomat-as-male scripts described in prior research on gender and diplomacy.

If we fast-forward a decade, to the media commentary of US diplomats Marie Yovanovitch and Fiona Hill testifying before Congress in the 2019 impeachment inquiry against President Donald Trump, we find similar depictions of diplomacy and diplomats. For starters, a number of pundits expressed surprise at seeing women in diplomatic positions. Viewers had to adjust their expectations of the sex of diplomats, a *Washington Post* editorial claimed, arguing that Ambassador Marie Yovanovitch's 'role as "the woman" loomed over the proceedings' and that 'female is not our default image of the diplomat'.[55] Many contended that Yovanovitch played the part perfectly, however, displaying the deep knowledge of foreign affairs, emotional restraint, political impartiality and courage represented to be characteristic of effective diplomats.[56] For instance, the *Washington Post* editorial claimed, Yovanovitch resisted the emotional responses expected of women, thus sticking to the script of a diplomat: 'this ambassador – "the woman" – was not going to give Trump or anyone else the satisfaction of seeing her cry'.[57] Yovanovitch was also represented as someone who had shown courage when faced with violence. A *Fox News* columnist called her a 'heroine', pointing out that she had served in no less than five hardship posts and concluding with 'that was the steel I saw in her spine as I watched her testify. Yovanovitch's posture is that of a woman who has faced down bullets to live her values.'[58] By disassociating

[50]Lilja, '(Re)figurations and situated bodies', p. 679.

[51]John Shaw, *The Ambassador: Inside the Life of a Working Diplomat* (Washington, DC: Capital Books, 2004), cover and p. 2.

[52]Ibid., p. 2.

[53]Ibid., p. 6.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Marcus, 'Marie Yovanovitch's femininity is her superpower'.

[56]See, for example, Marcus, 'Marie Yovanovitch's femininity is her superpower'; Donna Brazile, 'In impeachment hearings, Marie Yovanovitch is a heroine wrongly attacked', *Fox News* online (20 November 2019); David Brooks, 'In praise of Washington insiders', *New York Times* (14 November 2019).

[57]Marcus, 'Marie Yovanovitch's femininity is her superpower'.

[58]Brazile, 'In impeachment hearings'.

Yovanovitch from what was made into 'feminine' traits – for example, an inability to contain one's emotions; cowardice in the face of violence – she was represented as a model diplomat who embodied the values and dispositions of diplomacy. As David Brooks of the *New York Times* explained, 'if you are a Foreign Service officer long enough, you learn to think like a Foreign Service officer. You absorb the skills, practices and moral codes you need to do the work well.'[59]

Many of the accounts of the Congressional testimonies indeed construed diplomacy as a masculinised domain, but one that women can enter and command if they shed what is made to be 'feminine' qualities. A Foreign Service that is open to anyone with the (masculinised) professional traits and skills, male or female, would thus best ensure an effective cadre of diplomats. As former CBS news anchor Dan Rather weighed in with a tweet:

> There was a time when the American diplomatic corps was an old boys club. Watching Marie Yovanovitch and Fiona Hill, I am so thankful that is no longer the case. These two women embody the best ideals of the nation they have served.[60]

In the Eliasson biography as well as in many accounts of Yovanovitch's Congressional testimony, the skills and dispositions associated with diplomacy were represented as masculine and traits such as lack of emotional constraint or cowardice were simultaneously made feminine and external to diplomacy.

The abilities and practices widely associated with diplomacy have also been construed as 'feminine', however. To get a first taste of how, consider the exchange on transatlantic relations between the foreign-policy analysts Robert Kagan and Parag Khanna in the early 2000s. In 2002, Kagan published the essay 'Power and Weakness', which sparked a great deal of debate on both sides of the Atlantic. Kagan's main contention was that it was time 'to stop pretending that Europeans and Americans shared a common view of the world'. The essay set out to contrast the post-Cold War strategic cultures of the US and Europe and to claim that their distinctive strategic dispositions derive from their relative power positions: Europe is weak, whereas the US is strong. Kagan contends that a weakening Europe is 'moving beyond power into a self-contained world of laws and rules and transnational negotiation and cooperation', a stance that is directly related to Europe's decreasing ability to rule by force.[61] The US, in contrast, is more willing to go to war and embraces the view that 'true security and the defense and promotion of a liberal order still depend on the possession and use of military might'.[62]

To make these points, Kagan drew on John Gray's 1992 bestseller *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, equating Europe with a woman and the US with a man, locked into a marriage in which neither really understood the other's worldview. In an infamous passage, he claimed that 'on major strategic and international questions today, Americans are from Mars and Europeans from Venus'.[63] What is less frequently noted are the ways in which diplomacy and negotiation were drawn into the construal of femininity and the depiction of Europe as a woman:

> Europeans insist they approach problems with greater nuance and sophistication. They try to influence others through subtlety and indirection. They are more tolerant of failure, more patient when solutions don't come quickly. They generally favor peaceful responses to problems, preferring negotiation, diplomacy, and persuasion to coercion. They are quicker to

[59]Brooks, 'In praise of Washington insiders'.

[60]Dan Rather tweet, @danrather (21 November 2019), available at: {https://twitter.com/danrather/status/1197644347224641538}.

[61]Robert Kagan, 'Power and weakness: Why the US and Europe see the world differently', *Policy Review*, 113 (June and July 2002), pp. 3–28 (p. 3).

[62]Ibid.

[63]Ibid.

> appeal to international law, international conventions, and international opinion to adjudicate disputes.

In this passage, Kagan lists a set of traits allegedly associated with women: peaceful, patient, persuasive, subtle and indirect. By favouring negotiation, persuasion, and diplomacy, Kagan then suggests, Europe should metaphorically be conceived of as woman. A different set of traits allegedly characterise both men and the US: forceful, aggressive, impatient, direct, and a preference for the use of force to settle disputes.

Kagan's essay and subsequent book on the same title were far from unchallenged. In the rivers of ink that flowed on the transatlantic rift, a response essay by Parag Khanna is of particular interest. Khanna, then a US fellow at the New America Foundation and a prolific policy analyst, objected strongly to the portrayal diplomatic Europe as a woman. Khanna suggests another metaphor for Europe in a 2004 *Foreign Policy* article, entitled 'The Metrosexual Superpower'. Drawing on Michael Flocker's 2003 bestseller, *The Metrosexual Guide to Style: A Handbook for the Modern Man*, Khanna agrees that diplomacy, negotiation, and persuasion are 'feminine' practices. However, he contends, Europe's way of being in the world better represents modern manhood than does the 'old-fashioned' US reliance on force. In fact, although Europe engages in putatively 'feminine' behaviours, this does not warrant equating Europe with a woman.

> The trendsetting male icons of the 21st century must combine the coercive strengths of Mars and the seductive wiles of Venus. Put simply, metrosexual men are muscular but suave, confident yet image-conscious, assertive yet clearly in touch with their feminine sides … by cleverly deploying both its hard power and its sensitive side, the European Union (EU) has become more effective – and more attractive – than the United States on the catwalk of diplomatic clout. Meet the real new Europe: the world's first Metrosexual Superpower.[64]

Khanna ends his essay by stating that 'Europe has revealed its true 21st century orientation. Just as metrosexuals are redefining masculinity, Europe is redefining old notions of power and influence.'[65] His points are clear: diplomacy indeed consists of a 'feminine' set of practices, but rather than a woman, diplomatic Europe is better conceived of as a metrosexual male. He thus defends a feminised Europe by restoring Europe to the metaphorical status of a (more modern) man.

Kagan's intervention and Khanna's response are both clearly partially tongue-in-cheek, although their basic messages on the strategic cultures of the US and Europe are made in earnest. Both essays rely on a shared notion of diplomacy and negotiation as 'soft' and 'feminine' forms of exercising influence, though drawing different conclusions about the metaphorical sex of diplomatic Europe. Crucially, this illustrates that diplomacy is also feminised in US discourse, with central diplomatic skills and traits rendered 'feminine'.

If linking diplomacy with 'soft' power and then 'soft' power with femininity served as the primary vehicle for feminising diplomacy in Kagan's and Khanna's accounts, other aspects of diplomatic practice have also been feminised in the US, resulting in shifting gendered figurations of 'the diplomat'. Below, I draw attention to and critically interrogate a range of these.

### *'The "soft" non-fighter' – figurations through contrasts with military force*

One recurring figuration of the diplomat in US discourse is that of 'the "soft" non-fighter', including portrayals of diplomats as 'weak' and 'soft' men who are afraid of turning to violence. Such representations often rely on contrasting diplomacy with the military, where the former is associated with peace and the latter with force. War and peace, military and diplomacy, hard power

[64]Parag Khanna, 'The metrosexual superpower', *Foreign Policy*, 143:July/Aug (2004), pp. 66–8 (p. 66).
[65]Ibid., p. 68.

and soft power, these are all familiar binaries at work in discussions of international affairs. Indeed, representations of diplomacy as the 'soft' alternative to 'hard power' abounds in US media and among US policymakers and academics, as we saw in the illustrations above.

Through familiar webs of social meaning, gender dualisms are easily made to align with the diplomacy/military distinction. In broader discourse, the controlled use of violence and the threat of force are often interpreted as 'masculine', as is physical courage and being ready and able to kill.[66] This is coupled with coding of dispositions and practices such as physical weakness or an inability or unwillingness to use force as 'feminine', with the effect of those displaying such behaviours being feminised and often taunted. Femininity and non-violence are thus pervasively linked, differentiated from 'hard power' and readily connected with the 'soft power' of diplomacy.

With both diplomacy and femininity represented as peaceful and an alternative to force, engagement in diplomatic interactions can quite easily be represented as a 'feminine' alternative to the 'masculine' pursuit of force and 'hard power'. Such feminisation of 'the diplomat' has a long history in US politics. For instance, President Kennedy repeatedly represented career diplomats as 'weak and effeminate'.[67] Presently, the Trump administration's increased reliance on military options and dramatic sidelining of the State Department have time and again been described as a return to 'hard power' and a 'muscular' foreign policy.[68] The Trump administration itself referred to its March 2017 budget proposal, with major cuts proposed to the funding of diplomacy, as a 'hard power' budget.[69]

To be sure, the gendered figuration of the weak and feeble diplomat has emerged in tension with celebrations of Trump's engagements in diplomacy. In some analyses, distinctions are made between 'tough' and 'muscular' diplomacy and a 'weak' and delicate diplomacy, with the latter allegedly symptomatic of career diplomats and the State Department. Supporters of Trump's 'hard power' policy stance thus alternately feminise and denigrate diplomacy as such and alternately distinguish between a celebrated 'muscular' diplomacy and a denigrated feeble diplomacy. As an illustration, editor-in-chief emeritus Wesley Pruden of *the Washington Times* recently praised the Trump administration's rejection of 'the lace-panty language beloved by diplomats' in favour of military threats against North Korea.[70] He elaborates:

> When a Russian official offered the usual quibble and cavil, questioning whether the North Korean missile fired Tuesday was actually an intercontinental missile, or merely an intermediate range missile, the tough-talking lady late of South Carolina [UN Ambassador Niki Haley] replied firmly: 'If you see this as a threat, if you see this for what it is, which is North Korea showing its muscle, then you need to stand strong. If you choose not to, we will go our own path.'
>
> This is exactly the honest dialogue the rest of the world needs to hear, and which it rarely has in the precincts of the fearful and accommodating over these past few decades with both Democrats and Republicans in charge. The lace-panty diplomacy of the Obama years echoed again this week in the advice of Danny Russel, a senior expert on Asia at Obama's National Security Council. 'What the [Trump] administration needs to do', he says, 'is get China and Russia around an approach, even if it is not as testosterone-rich and muscular as the United States would like.' Indeed, testosterone and manly muscles frighten the timid and the irresolute.

[66]See, for example, Connell, 'On hegemonic masculinity and violence', p. 94; Cohn, Missions, men and masculinities'.

[67]Philip Nash, *Breaking Protocol: America's First Female Ambassadors, 1933–1964* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2019).

[68]See, for example, Bloomberg Market, 'Trump Touts Muscular US Foreign Policy in Speech' (18 December 2017); Rebecca Kheel, 'Trump flexes foreign policy muscle as new year begins', *The Hill* (7 January 2018); Jonathan Stevenson, 'Trump's national security Yes Man is in for a bumpy ride', *New York Times* (18 September 2019).

[69]Russell Berman, 'President Trump's "hard power" budget', *The Atlantic* (16 March 2017).

[70]Wesley Pruden, 'At last, wide awake at the White House', *Washington Times* (6 July 2017).

In this elaboration, the gendered status of diplomacy is ambiguous – there is a tough version (headed by Trump and Niki Haley) and a lace-panty version (headed by Obama). The diplomacy of the past few decades is feminised and disparaged as the choice of the fearful, the timid and the irresolute. It is the choice of those lacking in testosterone and manly muscles, whether men or women. In describing the language and practice of diplomacy as 'lace-panty', the author furthermore conjures up images of sheer and delicate under-garments worn by effeminate women (unlike the 'tough-talking' ambassador Haley) or perhaps men in drag. Regardless, the manhood of such diplomacy is clearly found wanting. However, whether the preferred alternative is a testosterone-rich, muscular, and threatening *diplomacy* or whether such alternative would be to abandon diplomacy for military engagements is less clear.

### *The 'relationship-builder' and 'the gossip' – figurations through gendered representations of language use*

In the US, as in many other places, conversation and the use of language are widely understood and represented in gendered terms. Certain ways of listening, talking, and interacting are regularly represented as 'masculine', and as I will show below, such representations recur in discussions about diplomacy. In broader US discourse, some contend that 'for most men, talk is primarily a means to preserve independence and negotiate and maintain status in a hierarchical social order'.[71] Conversational practices such as listening strategically in order to extract central information are thus made to be 'masculine'. So is the exercise of restraint in conversation, the careful control over what is uttered so that no crucial information is accidentally disclosed that might compromise the pursuit of status and national interest.

'The diplomat', when masculinised thusly, is configured as a strategic and controlled communicator.[72] Henry Kissinger, heralded by critics and admirers alike as 'a very skilled American diplomat' often personifies this figuration of the diplomat.[73] Allegedly a master networker who deployed a range of strategic communication tactics, Kissinger-the-diplomat is also masculinised through the association of diplomatic communication with war and the military in descriptions of his efforts. 'Wars are indeed won and lost at the negotiation table', as one *New York Times* article on Kissinger states, depicting how he 'participated in marathon haggling sessions with some of the most battle-hardened figures of the 20th century, including Zhou Enlai, Leonid Brezhnev, Anwar Sadat, Yitzhak Rabin, Hafez al-Assad and Ian Smith'.[74]

If strategic, hierarchical, and controlled use of language is often depicted as 'masculine', this is in turn regularly contrasted against a 'feminine' use of language that is allegedly more interactive and relational and that is represented as more common among women.[75] Women are also regularly depicted as listening more attentively to try to understand the other's point of view,[76] allegedly engaging in less competitive and more empathetic conversations.[77] Such representations of 'feminine'

[71]Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), p. 77.

[72]Neumann, *At Home with the Diplomats*.

[73]Jeremi Suri, 'Learning from Henry Kissinger', *New York Times* (2 August 2018). See also Jane Harman, 'How the US and China can reset relations and achieve results', *Washington Post* (24 December 2018); Niall Ferguson, *Kissinger 1923–1968: The Idealist*, Vol. 1 (London: Penguin Books, 2016); Niall Ferguson, 'The secret to Henry Kissinger's success', *Politico Magazine* online (20 January 2018).

[74]Suri, 'Learning from Henry Kissinger'. To be sure, Kissinger's 'masculine' control over information is far from always celebrated. Whereas discretion may be crucial in diplomacy, Kissinger's 'obsessive secrecy' is widely represented as a problem that compromised US national interests and values. In such renderings, Kissinger might be read as displaying a masculinity that needs to be contained.

[75]See, for example, Tannen, *You Just Don't Understand*.

[76]Janet Holmes and Meredith Marra, 'Relational practice in the workplace: Women's talk or gendered discourse?', *Language in Society*, 33:3 (2004), pp. 377–98.

[77]Mary Talbot, 'Gender stereotypes: Reproduction and challenges', in Janet Holmes and Miriam Meyerhoff (eds), *The Handbook of Language and Gender* (Maiden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp. 468–86 (p. 474).

language use and their connection to women also appear in discussions of diplomacy. At times, this serves to briefly inferiorise both masculinity and men in diplomacy. In part paralleling mainstream Anglo discourse that expresses anxieties about 'the problem of the inarticulate, linguistically unskilled man',[78] some draw links between the social nature of diplomatic work and the allegedly superior conversation skills of women. US women diplomats have claimed for decades that their communication skills are an advantage, making them better suited for diplomacy than men. Several US women ambassadors interviewed by Morin in the early 1990s expressed such sentiments, equating 'feminine' practices with female sex in stating that women 'have the ability to notice details and to listen carefully to another person'.[79] Certain feminised conversation and listening skills were thus normalised as 'natural' to women, with the implication that women would be better suited for diplomatic work.

Such representations also circulate in US media,[80] with women attributed feminised core communication competencies central for diplomacy. In a 2012 *Huffington Post* article entitled 'Diplomacy XX: When Women Lead, the World Improves', Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is represented as particularly effective 'for being an empathetic listener and a fully engaged diplomat'.[81] Madeleine Albright's similar statements over the years that 'women are particularly good at diplomacy' have also been widely circulated.[82] Again, in these renderings, women are differentiated from men to appear more apt for the kinds of conversations central to diplomacy, in part by naturalising certain listening and conversation skills as 'feminine' and attributing 'feminine' skills to women.

Representations connecting talking as such with femininity and women have furthermore been pervasive in the Anglo world for centuries.[83] Indeed, in contrast with ideas about 'masculine' verbal restraint, loquaciousness is often also construed as 'feminine' and there are prevalent stereotypes of women as the 'talkative sex'.[84] There are also prevailing representations in the US of talkative men as effeminate.[85] When femininity is connected with female sex, such representations sometimes invoke women who cannot or will not shut up, who cannot keep a secret since they feel compelled to pass information on. Indeed, gossip is widely represented as a feminine practice and a 'female pursuit',[86] so much so that 'gossip and women have assumed an almost inviolable link in popular consciousness'.[87]

Gossip and information-gathering are central to diplomacy,[88] and these practices are gendered. Diplomatic wives have long been expected to network and engage in informal information gathering, in part by serving as the 'eyes and ears' at diplomatic social functions.[89] US male diplomats

[78]Deborah Cameron, 'Gender and language ideologies', in Holmes and Meyerhoff (eds), *The Handbook of Language and Gender*, pp. 447–67 (p. 454).

[79]Morin, 'Do women make better ambassadors?.

[80]See, for example, Carl Guittard, 'Diplomacy XX: When women lead, the world improves', *Huffington Post* (4 September 2012); Talyn Rahman-Figueroa, 'Celebrating the rise of women in diplomacy', *Diplomatic Courier* (8 March 2012); Joyce Hackel, 'Madeleine Albright: "Many of the best diplomats are women"', *Public Radio International*, PRI online (25 January 2018).

[81]Guittard, 'Diplomacy XX'.

[82]See, for example, Hackel, 'Madeleine Albright'.

[83]See, for example, Michele Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2002); Cameron, 'Gender and language ideologies'; Talbot, 'Gender stereotypes'.

[84]Mary Crawford, *Talking Difference: On Gender and Language* (London: Sage Publications, 1995); Vicky Helgeson, *Psychology of Gender* (London: Psychology Press, 2015).

[85]Stephanie Madon, 'What do people believe about gay males? A study of stereotype content and strength', *Sex Roles*, 37:9/10 (1997), pp. 663–85.

[86]Lorraine Code, *In Rhetorical Spaces: Essays on Gendered Locations* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

[87]Giselle Bastin, 'Pandora's voice-box: How woman became the "gossip-girl"', in Melissa Ames and Sarah Himsel Burcon (eds), *Women and Language: Essays on Gendered Communication Across Media* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2011), pp. 17–29 (p. 17).

[88]Neumann, *At Home with the Diplomats*; Wood, 'Diplomacy and gossip'.

[89]See, for example, Molly M. Wood, 'Diplomatic wives: The politics of domesticity and the "social game" in the US foreign service, 1905–1941', *Journal of Women's History*, 31:3 (2005), pp. 505–30; Wood, '"Commanding beauty" and "gentle charm"'; Wood, 'Diplomacy and gossip'.

have in turn been feminised as gossipy and unable to hold their tongue when sharing information.[90] Such feminising representations present diplomacy as teetering on the brink of the superficial and undignified (women's) business of gossip. The flurry of writing following the mass of diplomatic cables leaked by Wikileaks in 2010 is a case in point. A number of critics expressed frustration about the communication style and content of the State Department cables. In an article in *The New Republic*, entitled 'Wikileaks and the Art of Shutting Up', the author expresses his dismay about 'our gossipy diplomats' who 'can't control themselves' and who communicate 'banally' about trivia such as a 'Dagestan wedding'.[91] He continues: 'One would think that the antidote would be a measure of discretion on the part of our diplomats. Diplomats are supposed to be diplomatic, not to be gossips.'[92] In a defensive response to the barrage of outrage, Christopher Meyer, former British Ambassador to the US, states that critics are 'giving an impression that American diplomats and the State Department itself are more interested in gossip and personalities than geopolitics and international relations'.[93] He also contends that 'as the leaks of U.S. diplomatic cables reveal, a big chunk of diplomacy invariably includes tittle-tattle about people in high places. It always has done.' Like it or not, he concludes, gossip is essential to diplomacy. To be sure, these passages make no explicit connections between gossipy diplomats and women or femininity. However, in light of the prevalent gendering of gossip and the inability to keep quiet as female, it is not a stretch to read these as articulations of a feminising subtext. Gossip, weddings, and personalities are hardly made to be the stuff of 'manly' international politics.

### *'The cookie pusher' – figurations through gendered representations of food*

Much diplomatic work takes place through representation, organised in terms of receptions, luncheons, and dinner parties that are permeated by upper-class conventions.[94] Particularly for ambassadors, much of the diplomatic workweek consists of an endless stream of lunches, teas, receptions, dinners, and galas. Since cooking and eating food, as well as planning dinners and receptions, are gendered practices that constitute ways of 'doing gender',[95] and since these food events are shaped by upper-class scripts, it is perhaps not surprising that media depictions of the food-related events of diplomacy are feminised and masculinised in multiple ways. Indeed, the food-oriented dimension of diplomatic work has led to dismissive representations of diplomats as elite 'cookie-pushers' engaged in putatively trivial women's matters. Allegedly coined in 1924 by a US diplomat, the term now has its own Wikipedia entry, which defines cookie-pushers as 'diplomats in general and members of the US Foreign Service specifically'.[96] The phrase makes regular appearances in US media.[97] A 1988 *Washington Post* article in defence of diplomats as 'Heroes in Striped Pants' begins by asserting that 'to Washington's cognoscenti, they are cookie pushers. To the public, they are effete and striped-pants bureaucrats'.[98] The term appears frequently enough to elicit irritated responses from the US Foreign Policy community. For instance, in 2004, Secretary of State Colin Powell stated that

> I get annoyed when someone says, 'Oh, they're pin-striped cookie pushers.' You tell that to Ambassador Khalilzad in Kabul, who spent all of last week and all of last Saturday criss-crossing

[90]Wood, 'Diplomacy and gossip', p. 148.
[91]Richard Posner, 'Wikileaks and the art of shutting up', *The New Republic* (3 December 2010).
[92]Ibid.
[93]Christopher Meyer, 'WikiLeaks: Titter ye not, but gossip is the key to diplomacy', *Daily Mail* online (30 November 2010).
[94]Neumann, *At Home with the Diplomats*, p. 136.
[95]Jeffery Sobal, 'Men, meat and marriage: Models of masculinity', *Food and Foodways*, 13:1–2 (2005), pp. 135–58.
[96]Wikipedia, 'Cookie Pusher', available at: {https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cookie_pusher} accessed 20 December 2018.
[97]Diplopundit, 'A week of Wikileaks and not one mention of the State Department's "cookie pushers"', *Diplopundit* (4 December 2010).
[98]Julia Moore, 'Heroes in striped pants', *Washington Post* (2 October 1988). See also Karen DeYoung, 'State dept. to order diplomats to Iraq', *Washington Post* (27 October 2007).

> the country, at personal risk to himself, in order to encourage the Afghan people to vote. You tell that to Ambassador Negroponte tonight in Baghdad, who is facing a challenging situation.[99]

Tellingly, he attempts to reassert the dignity of the diplomat by making connections between diplomatic work, risks, and violent conflicts. Similar attempts to reconfigure the diplomat appear in writings on the diplomats who testified in the Trump impeachment hearings of 2019. As a Fox News commentator noted, 'people often think of serving in an embassy is a non-stop party, constantly hosting leaders, business executives and civic groups'.[100] To defend the institution of diplomacy and the character of Ambassador Yovanovitch, the commentator continues by attributing her with a range of familiar masculinised features of valor in the face of violence:

> She served in Russia during an attempted coup where she was literally caught in the crossfire. She needed to get to the embassy while there was gunfire in the streets. She had to try three times to get to her car, dodging bullets without the benefit of body armor or even a helmet.

Facing violence, not hosting luncheons and dinners, is made to be the dignified and admirable work of diplomats.

### *'The fancy Frenchman' – figurations through gendered representations of class and nationality*

A fourth set of figurations of the diplomat pivot around the feminisation of the elite and French foundations of diplomacy. Diplomacy has its origins in the royal courts of Europe, and diplomats used to derive from the aristocracy. While this has obviously changed, diplomacy still relies on mostly European upper-class conventions[101] and the social composition of career diplomats of the State Department are still overwhelmingly white men from elite universities.[102] Contemporary diplomacy also has French foundations, and diplomatic terminology is full of French terms, such as *Chargé d'Affaires*, *agrément*, *attaché*, and *demarché*. In US media, the French dimensions of diplomacy are regularly connected with its elite character in depictions of the diplomat as a feminised and 'effete' elite figure. In the US, the French language itself is frequently represented in gendered terms, with French portrayed as a 'feminine' language associated with empty chatter.[103] Such representations of the vacuous, superficial, and elite character of French have made it into depictions of diplomacy. In remarks about the profession to the *American Foreign Service Association* (AFSA) in 1995, US ambassador Chas Freeman thus tried to dispel what he characterised as common misconceptions about diplomacy, such as the notion that 'diplomacy is to speak French, to say nothing, and to speak falsehoods'.[104] There are furthermore recurring narratives that connect France, French and Frenchness to 'snobbery, elitist arrogance, and military impotence'[105] with French men characterised as 'intellectual and effete'.[106] The French elements of diplomacy are thus made to reinforce the notion that diplomats belong to an elite and 'effeminate' club of talkers, detached from the general public and from the allegedly 'manly' tasks of war.

Indeed, the figuration of the diplomat as a Frenchified (or at least foreign) aristocrat appears with some regularity in US representations. This has not passed US diplomats by, and there are regular attempts to defend the institution of diplomacy against such charges. Three decades before Freeman, in 1961, George Kennan, US ambassador and president of the *American Foreign Service Association* (1950–1), expressed concerns about the perception of diplomacy as elite and effete in his remarks on

[99]Colin Powell, 'Remarks to the U.S. Global Leadership Campaign', US Department of State Archive online (14 October 2004).
[100]Brazile, 'In impeachment hearings'.
[101]See, for example, Neumann, *At Home with the Diplomats*.
[102]Josh Rogin, 'The State Department just broke a promise to minority and female recruits', *The Washington Post* (18 June 2017).
[103]Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity*.
[104]Chas Freeman, 'Diplomacy as a Profession', Remarks to the American Foreign Service Association (11 January 1995).
[105]Fahey, 'French and feminine', p. 133.
[106]Ibid., p. 137.

diplomacy as a profession. Diplomacy, Kennan explained, suffered from being 'associated in the public mind with luxury, with personal ingratiation, with deception and intrigue, with cunning and insincerity'. Elaborating on US popular views of diplomacy, Kennan continued

> Somehow or other, to many Americans, the idea of residing permanently [abroad] in a profession at the seat of other governments and of trying patiently to understand these governments and to mediate between their minds and ours is repugnant.

He then spells it out quite clearly:

> *These people find such an occupation unmanly.*[107]

Casting the elite and foreign dimensions of diplomacy as 'unmanly' clearly has a relatively long tradition in the US. And this figuration of diplomats, as an effete and Frenchified social elite, continues to appear in US discourse. Turning back to the exchange between Kagan and Khanna discussed in the beginning of the analysis, both depict diplomacy as a feminine practice. However, they also both represent diplomacy as a *European* preference, largely foreign to the traditionally 'manly', martial, and 'common man' disposition of the US. Consider Figure 1, the illustration *Foreign Policy* used to emphasise Khanna's point about Europe as the metrosexual superpower.

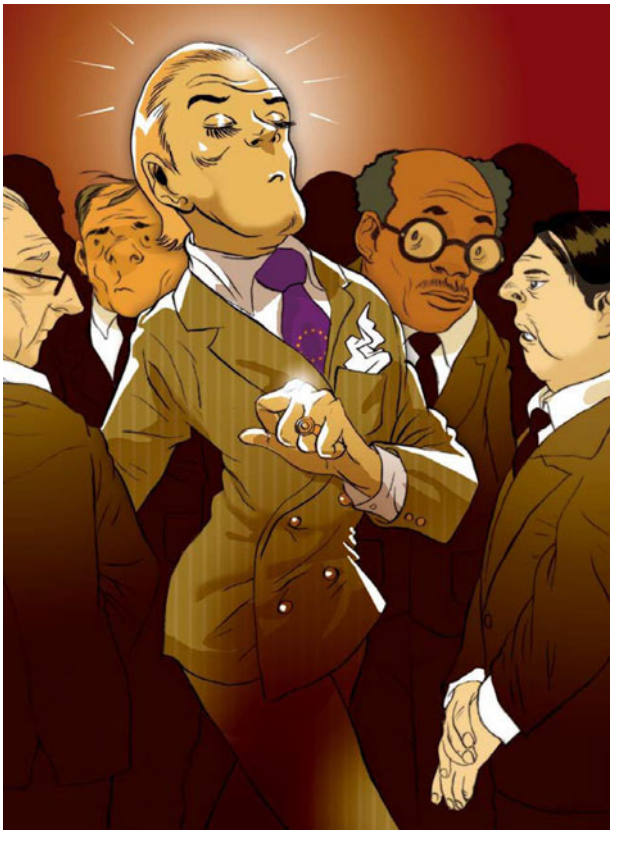

**Figure 1.** Image by Tomer Hanuka from Khanna'a article 'The Metrosexual Superpower', which appeared in *Foreign Policy* in 2004.

[107]George Kennan, 'George Kennan on diplomacy as a profession', *Foreign Service Journal*, July/August (2015 – original speech in 1961), emphasis added.

The diplomat is portrayed as a European elite fop, impeccably dressed in a fitted suit with an accentuated waist and feminine curves. His slicked-back blond hair, long lavish eyelashes, turned-up nose and general posture convey the image of a white, effeminate, and snobbish upper-crust man. This figuration is a far cry from that of the empathetic and relational listener. This diplomat radiates elitism and glamour, likely eliciting both envy and scorn.

## Conclusions: 'the diplomat' as a plural figuration

Several, shifting, and sometimes contradictory gendered figurations of 'the diplomat' appear in contemporary US discourse, the prior analysis has shown. It is furthermore worth underscoring that feminisations and masculinisations do not necessarily align with sexual classification in these representations. In her recent elaboration of Queer IR methods, Weber proposes that IR scholars turn their attention to the operation of 'plural figures', that is, figurations that defy either/or categorisation.[108] The figuration of the diplomat can certainly be read as a plural, or queer, figure that defies easy classification through either/or logics of sexes, genders, and sexualities. However, in contrast with a figure such as the 2014 Eurovision Song Contest winner Conchita Wurst, who functions as an empirical illustration in Weber's discussion, 'the diplomat' rarely seems to *simultaneously* be configured as man *and* woman, masculine *and* feminine in the same text. Instead, the diplomat shifts form between texts, alternating between a variously masculinised or feminised figure, whether man or woman. The diplomat can thus also be conceived of as a 'nomadic subject', involving mobile and impermanent figurations.[109]

How the diplomat is configured is consequential. Policymakers may deploy gendered figurations in attempts to determine whether 'diplomacy' is a legitimate and viable policy option. In patriarchal contexts, feminisation has clearly been used to delegitimise diplomacy and diplomatic policy options in favour of 'hard' power or military alternatives. Figurations can furthermore be inhabited by material bodies, by people who thus come to live and practice as diplomats in particular ways. Historically, feminised figurations have indeed been implicated in disturbing treatment of diplomats. For instance, the (unpaid) involvement of diplomatic wives to serve as eyes and ears at social functions was encouraged and expected by the Department of State in the first half of the twentieth century. However, there were simultaneously anxieties about the discretion of these wives. A 1909 Foreign Service manual issued a warning about women's 'well-known inability to keep secrets'.[110] Such gendered notions of language use likely helped keep women out of the Foreign Service in the past century.

There is furthermore a sordid US history of stigmatising homosexuality and with connecting putatively 'feminine' traits in men with homosexuality. The Cold War persecution of gays and lesbians in federal government took aim specifically at the Department of State rather than other federal agencies, resulting in the dismissal of approximately one thousand individuals from State for alleged homosexuality during the 1950s and 1960s.[111] Feminised figurations of the male diplomat seem to have come together forcefully with celebrations of particular forms of masculinity in these purges.[112] For one, State was seen as a place for peaceful interactions in contrast with force. Johnson contends that 'with a natural inclination toward negotiation and appeasement rather than action and war, diplomats were seen as ineffectual and unmanly'.[113] As such, diplomats were represented as '"pink pansies", who "shriek, scream, cry and break down

[108]Weber, 'Queer intellectual curiosity as International Relations methods', p. 13.

[109]Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*.

[110]Wood, 'Diplomacy and gossip', p. 148.

[111]David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004), p. 76.

[112]Robert Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001); Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*.

[113]Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, p. 70.

into hysterical states of psychoses when they are called upon to carry arms to defend our shores from the enemy"'.[114] Second, the purges were characterised by a fear of gossip and by representations of gossip as a feminine and thus 'homosexual' practice. As Johnson elaborates, 'government security officers routinely characterized homosexuals as so gregarious that they were unable to keep secrets. Their great desire to talk, officials asserted, meant they were quick to confess and name names. It was said that information passed through homosexual networks with astounding speed.'[115] Third and fourth, diplomats were dismissed as 'cookie pushers in striped pants', and they were represented as foreign and 'sissy' aristocrats, 'effete members of the East Coast establishment' and an 'Internationale of the People-you-meet-at parties'.[116] While contemporary US representations of diplomats may not be as aggressively homophobic, figurations of the diplomat drawing on similar discursive materials continue to appear.[117]

However, feminisations of diplomacy may also open up space in official diplomacy for actors who may lay claim to such 'feminine' traits. Invoking feminised traits as valuable, and connecting feminised traits with both female sexual classification and diplomacy, a number of women argue that their womanhood is an asset and advantage in practicing diplomacy. For instance, the feminised and celebrated figuration of the 'relationship-builder' regularly appears in attempts to legitimise a greater presence of women in diplomacy. In a recent interview, Audrey Marks, Ambassador of Jamaica to Washington DC, argues that as a diplomat, 'there's no advantage to being one of the boys. There's far more advantages to being a woman who understands the power of being a woman.'[118] Elaborating, she claims that 'we have some natural advantages. I find that most women who are in tune with themselves are naturally intuitive. In a situation, we'll pick up nuances. We have high levels of emotional intelligence.' Former US ambassador Barbara Bodine has similarly argued that the art of building relationships rests on skills that come 'naturally' to women:

> One, diplomacy is the art of building relationships to deal with issues that you don't even know you're going to have. There's a lot of time spent talking with people, not necessarily on what the issue is. It's not always transactional. Women, I think, we are more comfortable with nonlinear conversations, we're more comfortable in trying to get to know the person that we're dealing with, 'Tell me about your wife, your kids, the dog', kind of conversation. We tend to deal more holistically with the people that we work with and are more comfortable with that. And to a certain extent, we're more empathetic, or we're more comfortable being empathetic. And so, a lot of these skills that we have translate almost perfectly into diplomacy. And then, you add to that that we are as smart, if not smarter, than our male colleagues, so my point, my view [*laughter*] always was, 'I have every advantage that you have. I'm just as smart as you are. I'm just as educated as you are. I can write just as well as you can. I can come up with policy, so I've got all the intellectual skills that you've got. Plus, I have personal skills, that you really don't, or you don't have them as naturally as I do.'[119]

While other diplomats may object that such accounts are essentialist and problematic, the takeaway point for present purposes is that feminisations of diplomacy may be implicated not only in stigmatisation and even expulsion from diplomacy of those feminised – feminisation may also

[114]Ibid., p. 37. See also Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*, p. 83.

[115]Johnson, *The Lavender Scare*, pp. 8–9.

[116]Ibid., pp. 70–1.

[117]See, for example, the feminisation in right-wing US circles of US ambassador Christopher Stevens after he was killed in an attack by militants on the US Special Mission in Benghazi, Libya, described in Jillian Rayfield, 'Rumor-mongering surrounds Chris Stevens' death', *DemocraticUnderground.com* (18 September 2012).

[118]Author's interview, Embassy of Jamaica in Washington, DC, 16 March 2018.

[119]Author's interview, Georgetown University, 16 November 2017.

legitimise those feminised as official diplomats. By making certain traits 'natural' to women, and by associating such traits with effective diplomacy, some women craft arguments about the desirability of more women in diplomacy that rest heavily on feminised figurations of the diplomat. This could be read as a form of 'reverse discourse',[120] whereby feminisation is seized to serve new and different aims. The multiple and complex ways in which feminisations and masculinisations materialise, are embodied and practiced in diplomacy are a fruitful avenue for future research, deserving a great deal more scholarly attention.

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[120]Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1980).

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