Performing Diplomatic Decorum: repertoires of "appropriate" behaviour in the margins of international diplomacy

> "I encourage everybody to show respect for others' views while inviting all participants to exercise decorum, avoid abusive language or disrespectful language or derogatory or inflammatory remarks and to uphold UN standards when referring to UN countries and territories" (Chair, UN Forum on Minority Issues, November, 24-25 2015).

> "The case then standing that discretion must chiefly guide all those businesse …. But by reason of the sundry circumstances, that mans affaires are as it were wrapt in, this [*decencie*], in respect of the person who speakes: another of his to whom it is spoken: another of whom we speake: another of what we speake, and in what place and time and to what purpose…. And there is a decencie, that euery speech should be to the appetite and delight, or dignitie of the hearer & not for any respect arrogant or vndutifull, as was that of *Alexander* sent Embassadour from the *Athenians* to th'Emperour *Marcus"* (Puttenham [1589 Book 3, Ch 23] cited in Wigham and Rebhorn 2007, 349, 351)

This paper interrogates the notion of diplomatic decorum in order to shine new light on the power relations that underpin performance, rhetoric, and emotional labour in international politics. As the conducting of "relations between peoples who regard themselves as distinctive and separate from one another" (Sharp 2004, 361), diplomacy is a communicative act that is underpinned by codified and uncodified rules of behaviour, from set forms of address to elaborate protocols surrounding diplomatic events, and long-established expectations regarding the tone of oral and written exchanges. At first glance, the notion of "acting diplomatically" appears self-apparent. As modern guides to the practice of diplomacy have outlined, being a diplomat means being civil, tactful, modest, loyal, and discerning (e.g. Satow 1922; Nicolson [1939] 1963). Yet adherence to such codes of behaviour has varied considerably, not least in the present geopolitical environment as illustrated by the rise of social media's less scripted modes of communication, and President Trump's flagrant disregard for the conventions of diplomatic protocol. It is thus timely to assess what we mean by diplomatic decorum and how "appropriate" behaviour in the diplomatic realm is learnt, adhered to and subverted.

In interrogating the notion of diplomatic decorum, I focus on a specific cohort of diplomatic actors for whom adopting social behaviour appropriate for the spaces of international diplomacy takes on a heightened importance. These are individuals who are on the fringes of the official diplomatic community, and who have neither the formal training nor the legal standing of official state diplomats, but who nevertheless perform diplomacy in conventional diplomatic arenas. Specifically, I draw on research I conducted between 2012 and 2017 with representatives of minority communities, indigenous peoples and stateless nations who seek to engage in conventional diplomatic arenas at the UN and EU, and with representatives of foreign ministries.[1] Through focusing on the diplomatic performances of these liminal geopolitical actors (McConnell 2017) I draw on and contribute to postcolonial critiques of diplomacy that expose the plural and contested character of modern diplomacy, the power-relations of domination that underpin it, and the possibility of agency and resistance that diplomatic practice opens up (Opondo 2010, 2016). I do so by examining how and by whom particular behaviours are deemed to be (in)appropriate, how the mores of

[1] The research that underpins this paper includes interviews with representatives in London, Geneva, Brussels, New York and Washington DC and those who train these 'diplomats', as well as participant observation at the UN Forum on Minority Issues, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), training workshops for 'unrepresented' diplomats, and advocacy meetings.

diplomatic culture are learned, and the implications of unofficial diplomats using their agency to deviate from the norms of diplomatic decorum, persuade audiences of their legitimacy, and carve out their own diplomatic style. As such, I bring to the fore the politics behind the perceived need to adopt a particular kind of language and self-presentation in order to persuade key audiences that an individual ‘belongs’ in the diplomatic world.

Beyond prescriptive guides to the practice of diplomacy (Satow 1922; Nicolson [1939] 1963), decorum is a concept that is surprisingly overlooked and poorly analysed within diplomacy studies. In light of this, my starting points for examining diplomatic decorum draw on other sources, as exemplified by the two quotations cited above. The first is an extract from a statement made by the Chair of the Eighth Session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues, where he reminded the delegates in Room XX of the Palais des Nations in Geneva – representatives of member states, UN agencies, NGOs, and minority communities – of the codes of conduct to be adhered to when making their oral interventions. With its focus on the language used, and specifically terminology related to states and disputed territories, what is indicated in this first quotation is a rather technical and “thin” understanding of decorum.

A richer interpretation of decorum is offered in the second quotation. This is taken from English writer and literary critic George Puttenham’s 1589 treatise on poetry – in a chapter that draws largely on examples from European diplomacy – in which he states that decorum is dictated not only by who speaks, but to whom they speak, of whom and of what they speak, and the time, place and purpose of the speech.[2] Here we see resonances with an understanding of decorum as behaviour that is aligned with what is deemed to be good taste, manners, and propriety. Essentially it is conduct that is judged to be appropriate within a

[2] Puttenham uses the term “decencie” in the passage quoted here but, at the start of Book 3, Chapter 23, sets out the following: “The Greekes call this good grace of euery thing in his kinde, poripon, the Latines [*decorum*] we in our vulgar call it by a scholasticall terme [*decencie*] our owne Saxon English terme is [*seemelynesse*]” (Wigham and Rebhorn 2007, 347-348).

particular social and spatial setting. However there are important underpinnings of Puttenham's presentation of decorum that are often lost in its common usage today. Puttenham presents decorum as a principle of classical rhetoric, poetry, and theatre. To interrogate decorum is to ask how appropriate a particular style is to a (theatrical) subject. This framing of decorum in terms of Aristotelian rhetoric and dramaturgical principles points to two particular aspects of diplomatic practice – diplomacy as performance and the art of persuasion – that have, to differing degrees, been under-theorised in contemporary diplomacy studies. In addition to engaging with postcolonial critiques of diplomacy in order to tease out the relationship between power and decorum, I seek to redress this balance by forging a dialogue between increasingly well-established practice approaches and literature on performance, rhetoric, and emotional labour.

First, as an act of communication, mediation, and negotiation, diplomacy is always done in front of an audience, whether that be one other individual with whom a diplomat is negotiating, or a potentially global audience via social media communications and televised diplomatic events. With diplomacy thereby consisting of a speaker, a subject, and an audience, and in which the character of the speech is adapted to the character of the audience (Kennedy 1991 [Aristotle *Rhetoric* Book 2, Ch 12-17]), it is not only a rhetorical situation but an inherently *performative* practice. Performance has become a pervasive metaphor in the social sciences. Within the political realm scholarship has ranged from engagement with dramaturgical metaphors to analyse the ritual elements of political ceremonies (Rai 2010; Spary 2010; Alexander et al 2006) and everyday state practices (Jeffrey 2013; McConnell 2016), to critical assessments of performativity that draw on Butler's work to examine repertoires of behaviour (Glass and Rose-Redwood 2014; Weber 1998), and Rancière's notion of aesthetic politics (Edkins and Kear 2013; Grayson 2017). This scholarship on performance and politics has, with a few exceptions (e.g. Alexander 2011), tended to coalesce around a particular theorists' ideas with few connections drawn between different interpretations of performance. With regards to diplomacy it is primarily practice theory, derived from the work of Pierre Bourdieu, that has been the focus of sustained conceptual engagement (e.g. Pouliot 2010; Adler-Nissen 2014; Pouliot and Cornut 2015; Wiseman 2015). In turning attention to the dramaturgical and rhetorical principles of decorum my aim here is to widen the theoretical framings that scholars of diplomacy engage with and recover the theatrical aspect of diplomacy in order to bring to the fore the role of place in the performance of diplomatic decorum, and questions of impression management (Goffman 1959).

Second, in further interrogating the relationship between speaker, topic, and audience in the field of diplomacy, and bringing to the fore the key role that emotions play, Aristotle's treatise on the art of persuasion is instructive. In addition to the "truth and logical validity of what is being argued [*logos*]", persuasion also depends on the "speaker's success in conveying to the audience the perception that he or she can be trusted [*ēthos*]; and the emotions that a speaker is able to awaken in an audience to accept the views advanced and act in accordance with them [*pathos*]" (Kennedy 1991, ix). Using this tripartite frame as a starting point I interrogate the connection forged between speaker and audience by turning attention to the structure and narrative of diplomatic interventions, and the oft overlooked role of emotions in presenting both a persuasive and a decorous engagement with the other. With regards the latter, particular attention is paid to emotional registers (Hall 2015) and the emotional labour (Hochschild 1983) behind the need to control emotions, but still manage perceptions and persuade.

The paper proceeds in three parts. The following section sets out the conceptual framing, attending to questions of diplomatic culture, practice theory, sociological models of dramaturgy, and the role of emotions. Attention then turns to two distinct configurations of performative style and political subject. First I examine the extent to which ‘unofficial’ diplomats choose to, or are persuaded to, perform behaviour fitting to a particular diplomatic space and how they seek to enact a diplomatic style that will be deemed appropriate to their subject position as both outsiders and as aspirant diplomats. Second, I examine what it means to break the unwritten rules of diplomatic decorum, both in terms of incidences where individuals use their agency to push the boundaries deliberately in order to perform otherness and harness emotional labour to enhance the persuasiveness of their argument, and examples of where diplomatic performances go awry; where there is a misjudging of the “time, place and purpose of the speech”. I conclude by considering how, in shining a spotlight on how particular bodies and behaviours are deemed appropriate or inappropriate, decorum is a useful lens through which to view the colonial configurations that shape contemporary diplomatic spaces and performances, and thereby reassess the power relations underpinning diplomacy.

Approaching Diplomatic Decorum: practices, performances, emotions

How has the notion of diplomatic decorum evolved? And how have we reached a stage where there are seemingly universally accepted modes of rhetoric and behaviour in the diplomatic sphere? In order to answer these questions it is instructive to turn to the notion of diplomatic culture. If diplomacy is understood as “an ensemble of practices, power struggles, and truth contestations that develop into a dominant discourse for dealing with the other” (Constantinou 1996, 110) then diplomatic culture is the mechanism through which this estrangement is mediated (Der Derian 1996). However, what is now regarded as a universal set of practices that facilitate interactions between distinctive peoples has geographically and culturally specific origins (Dittmer and McConnell 2016).

James Der Derian (1987) has traced the roots of diplomatic culture back to Judeo-Christian theology and its subsequent solidification through the development of the modern state system in Western Europe. Diplomats were primarily members of the aristocracy who developed a fraternity based on shared cosmopolitan values. The gradual transition from an aristocratic to a professional diplomatic culture emerged alongside the Westphalian state system. From a Western perspective, this mode of diplomatic engagement then diffused beyond Europe via processes of colonisation and de-colonisation, and the codification of diplomatic culture in the form of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations was prompted by the perceived need to train representatives from the "large numbers of new, post-colonial, states who had no experience of the essentially de facto rules operated by the older states system" (Hamilton and Langhorne 1995, 2). From the perspective of colonised others, however, such codification can be read as an attempt to sediment the European order in the face of a potential overturning by the post-colonial states, thereby giving the imperial powers an in-built advantage in the diplomatic realm.

With the rules and conventions of modern diplomacy being established through Western initiated protocol and institutionalisation, these were, in turn, underpinned by a particular set of values and mores. As a result, the mannerisms of European aristocracy – "a social context that privileges careful, controlled and cautious behaviour" (Oglesby 2016, 243) – in effect became the guiding principles of interstate negotiation. The most pervasive norms in diplomatic culture are those associated with civility and discernment. These are key both to Satow's definition of diplomacy as "the application of intelligence and tact to the conduct of official relations between the governments of independent states" (1922, 1) and Nicolson's assertion that an ideal diplomatist should embody the qualities of "Truth, accuracy, calm, patience, good temper, modesty, loyalty" in addition to what he notes are taken-as-given diplomatic virtues of "intelligence, knowledge, discernment, prudence, hospitality, charm, industry, courage and even tact" (1963 [1939], 126). Indeed, the ubiquity of such 'virtues', certainly in Western contexts, is illustrated by the emphasis placed on decorous behaviour in student simulations of diplomatic scenarios, most commonly in 'Model UN' exercises (Crossley-Frolick 2010).[3]

In addressing the question of how diplomatic culture is reproduced and sustained scholars have increasingly turned to the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and applied his concepts of practices, habitus, and social fields to the realm of diplomacy (e.g. Adler-Nissen 2014; Pouliot and Cornut 2015; Wiseman 2015; Kuus 2015; Jones and Clark 2015). When diplomacy is understood as a social field based on a set of knowledges and symbols, the seeming stability of diplomatic culture can be explained in terms of practices that, whilst "always subject to evolutionary change", are also codified and thus "tend to inhibit global transformation and reproduce the existing order" (Cooper and Pouliot 2015, 334). Using Bourdieu's terms, this is the accretion of shared social practices that result in a diplomatic habitus, taken for granted ways of behaving that professional diplomats internalise, thereby reproducing particular norms. Given its focus on the scale of the everyday, the site of the body, and on behaviour and taste, a practice approach is a logical place to start to interrogate the notion of diplomatic decorum, albeit the concept of decorum itself is surprisingly not specifically attended to in the literature on diplomacy. Rather, decorum is a notion that is mentioned in passing, or is implied in discussions of diplomatic skills, mores or tacit knowledge (e.g. Jones and Clark 2015; Kuus 2015; Neumann 2012).

A practice approach brings to the fore the distinction between cohorts of individuals based on their experience of and exposure to habitus, and the power relations that underpin such distinctions (Bourdieu 1977). In other words habitus is a "sense of one's place" that results in the reification of social boundaries. In the diplomatic field the charm, discernment

[3] For example: http://bestdelegate.com/mun-etiquette-101-how-using-everyday-manners-can-win-you-best-delegate/

and suaveness that underpins diplomatic culture can, as noted above, be traced back to the aristocratic origins of diplomacy. Despite increasing professionalization and meritocracy within diplomacy, these class-based distinctions remain, with Neumann asserting that there is a "lingering expectation that diplomats will hail from the upper echelons of their societies, and will have the easy social ways of the naturally superior" (2012, 11). It is those individuals for whom the intangible 'feel for the game' does not come naturally, that are often the most revealing subjects of investigation. As I detail in the following sections, marginalised groups who have been denied access to "a social familiarity that is achieved best through specific educational pedigrees, professional training, and habitual consumption patterns" (Kuus 2015, 374) find the effective articulation of diplomatic decorum an alienating experience. In turn, attending to how such non-elite diplomats seek to navigate diplomatic culture brings into sharp relief the construction of who are, and are not, legitimate subjects of international politics. Here there are distinct parallels with Sam Okoth Opondo's call to decolonise diplomacy whereby he argues that we need to "raise questions about the conditions under which colonized subjects and peoples are considered diplomatic or non-diplomatic and the differential treatment accorded to peoples or places that were considered external to the European diplomatic milieu" (2016: 41).

The lens of practice theory is thus productive in terms of foregrounding the power relations and categories of political subjectivity that underpin diplomacy as a profession. However, I want to suggest that we also need to look beyond the practice turn in order to gain a more comprehensive insight into the dynamics of diplomatic decorum. If we return to Puttenham's description of decorum cited at the start of this paper, what is striking is its grounding in the principles of rhetoric and dramaturgy (see also Hariman 1992). Common to both of these traditions is a heightened awareness of the role of audiences vis-à-vis performances and a foregrounding of emotional registers in affecting how particular behaviours and linguistic styles are presented and received.

Thinking of politics in terms of theatre can be traced back to Aristotle and Plato's work on spectator-citizens, mimesis, and participation, wherein they perceived the same rhetorical skills to be needed to move an audience in both domains (Parkinson 2015, 20). Today the theatre continues to provide the social sciences "with a rich set of… metaphors through which to narrate the complexity of social and political life" (Jeffrey 2013, 26) and scholars have drawn on the language of performance to analyse a range of geopolitical phenomena, from how statecraft is rehearsed (McConnell 2016), to the public show of "key metonymic images of nationalism" (Hansen 2001, 226) and the symbol-laden nature of "imagineered" ceremonies such as meetings of state leaders (Sidaway 2002). The focus on the theatricality of formal politics speaks to the pomp and ceremony of the ritual side of diplomacy in revealing ways yet, to date, there has been surprisingly little work by scholars of diplomacy that has interrogated the dramaturgical underpinnings of diplomacy. Exceptions to this include Constantinou's (1996) analysis of the relationship between theatre, theory and diplomacy and work on diplomatic conferences and summits as sites of public performance that highlights the actions of individuals as performers and the role played by audiences, both in the vicinity of the conference and 'back home' (Shimazu 2014; Craggs 2014; Constantinou 1998).

The importance of the visual field to diplomacy is key to this theatrical framing. Pioneering in analysing the choreographing of modern diplomacy is Raymond Cohen's 1987 book *Theatre of Power* in which he argues that diplomats should be seen as dramatists and, in the era of television, diplomatic events are deliberately staged for their visual impact. In his explanation of diplomatic events in terms of the logic of performance, Cohen engages with the work of Erving Goffman who used the language of the stage – "of performers and audience, of routines and parts; of performances coming off or falling flat; of cues, stage settings and backstage" (1959, 246) – to explore the strategies through which individual conduct is managed vis-à-vis particular audiences. Whilst Goffman's dramaturgical analogy has been subject to critique regarding the assumption that, pre-existing any performance, there are conscious, motivated agents, his work nevertheless has productive resonances with the notion of decorum. Central to this is the idea of impression management whereby an individual attempts to shape how others perceive them by modifying their behaviour, appearance, and manner. Not only does this bring to the fore the dynamism of the performer-audience relationship, but it alerts us to the fact that there is more to theatre than the visual and more to diplomacy than non-verbal signalling. Rather than fixate solely on the theatricality of formal diplomatic pomp and protocols, we also need to turn attention to the linguistic codes and the emotional registers that an individual needs to perfect in order to pass as a diplomat (Constantinou 1996).

When individuals project particular emotions in the context of their professional conduct we can think of it in terms of emotional labour. Building on Goffman's ideas, sociologist Arlie Hochschild coined the term "emotional labour" to describe "the management of feeling to create a publically observable facial and bodily display" (1983, 7) and the concept has since been explored in relation to, for example, emotive performances in the service sector whereby professionals cultivate a caring atmosphere (e.g. McDowell 1997). Impression management and emotional labour bring to the fore the effect of emotions on how an individual is perceived by others, and how that perception is managed. As such, it speaks in revealing ways both to the idea of diplomacy as relational (Sending et al 2015) and the role that an individual diplomat's character plays vis-à-vis such "interactive work" (Leidner 1999). That said, emotions often overlooked in the field of diplomacy. An exception is Todd Hall's recent work on "emotional diplomacy", which he defines as "coordinated state-level behaviour that explicitly and officially projects the image of a particular emotional response toward other states" (2015, 1). Emotional diplomacy is thus presented as a tool of statecraft: emotional rhetoric and gestures are strategically and instrumentally invoked by state actors to frame issues, justify motives for policy choices, and influence particular audiences. With his focus on official rather than personal emotion and on mapping discrete emotions – guilt, anger, and sympathy – onto diplomatic events, Hall's notion of emotional diplomacy can offer insights into relations between states, but it fails to speak to the everyday mores and nuanced emotional cadences that constitute diplomatic decorum.

Arguably one reason why the emotions associated with decorum have proved elusive in the diplomacy literature is because diplomatic decorum is an emotional performance characterised by neutrality (Traynor 2017). Whereas other political actors might seek to evoke emotions in order to further a particular cause, whether that be international originations using guilt and empathy to encourage humanitarian intervention or nationalist leaders fostering fear of the other and passion for the nation (Crawford 2000), diplomats have traditionally seen "their role as one of tamping down emotions and contributing reasonableness and rational thought to the process of communication between states" (Oglesby 2016, 245). This emotional restraint is most apparent in the linguistic styles adopted by diplomats as, in seeking not only to advance the interests of their state but also to safeguard the international diplomatic system more generally, they favour a smooth and conciliatory manner of communicating constituted of a moderated vocabulary and controlled tone. It is here, again, that we see resonances with Aristotle's notion of rhetoric. As Timothy Hampton has argued in his study of diplomacy and literary culture in early modern Europe, with diplomacy entailing "the investment of language with multiplicities of nuance, densities of sense, 'a whole world'", it is a practice contingent on rhetoric as "the demonstration of discernment and virtue through language" (2009, 5, 16). Crucially it is a practice whereby the art of persuasion is perfected by being attuned to emotional registers (*pathos*) as well as the logical validity of what is being argued (*logos*) and the projection of the speaker's character (*ēthos*). In the following section I weave together insights from the principles of rhetoric, the notion of emotional labour, dramaturgy, and practice theory to explore how representatives of minority communities and stateless nations seek to perform diplomatic decorum and establish a relationship between style and subject that is deemed appropriate to the official diplomatic corps.

Conforming to diplomatic culture: speaking the same language and performing humility

Cognizant of the increasingly diverse range of actors engaging with diplomacy today (Wiseman 2004) and the varied histories of diplomacy within and beyond western Europe (e.g. Beier 2010), the minimalist reading of diplomatic culture as an elite set of values established, articulated and policed by a professional state-based diplomatic corps, has been productively critiqued. Scholars in recent years have argued for a broader and more inclusive interpretation of diplomatic culture that is an aspect of, even a function of, social life more generally (Constantinou 2016). That said, whilst the existence "on the ground" of a universal diplomatic culture may be more myth than reality, it nevertheless serves as a hegemonic norm and powerful ideal that non-state actors feel obliged to draw legitimacy from and aspire to (Dittmer and McConnell 2016). The principle is that if you want to be taken seriously as a diplomatic actor you need to be seen to be "playing the game" in the appropriate register.

With the diplomatic corps being the primary repository of this "gold standard" diplomatic culture (Sofer 2007), for those formally excluded from this professional "club" by virtue of not representing a recognised state there is a socio-political expectation that they will learn to act diplomatically, and thus attempt to pass as a diplomat.. As Bourdieu notes, technical competence “depends fundamentally on social competence and on the corresponding sense of being entitled and required by status to exercise this specific capacity, and therefore to possess it” (1984: 409). Translating this into the field of diplomacy, for those who have not had the privilege of formal diplomatic training, let alone primary socialisation in the upper echelons of a given society, acquiring a “feel for the game” of diplomacy is challenging but, as I argue here, not impossible. Rather than focus on the practical mechanisms by which “unofficial” diplomats learn the ropes of diplomatic culture – from ad hoc training to role play exercises and acculturation to the UN environment – this section approaches the appropriateness of style to subject in the diplomatic field by examining the pressures that individuals from minority, indigenous, and stateless communities experience to enact a diplomatic style that is deemed fitting to their subject position as liminal geopolitical actors: outside the formal diplomatic corps but aspiring to represent their peoples and communicate their cause to the international community. Returning to the two quotations cited at the start of this paper I start by discussing the importance of technical knowledge and skills, and then turn to diplomacy as an art, with an examination of the role of rhetorical style, tone, and emotional register.

There is, of course, a long history of “outsiders” either seeking to fit into the transnational diplomatic corps, or being actively encouraged and/or coerced to do so, and a number of strategies have been deployed to facilitate this assimilation. Conforming to perceived dress codes is an obvious case in point and, as Cohen (1987) points out, representatives of new states often unquestioningly follow existing conventions in dress in order to be seen to follow existing precedent. More pervasive, however, has been the adoption of a particular manner of communication. This entails sharing a common script, and speaking the same diplomatic language, not just one of the limited number of lingua francas of diplomacy, but also using the language of international law and knowing what terms are appropriate for formal diplomatic settings (Müller 2013).

It is at the UN that regulations regarding appropriate language and behaviour are perhaps most obvious and prescriptive. Detailed instructions are issued in advance by the UN secretariat to those registered to attend and make oral interventions at UN forums and, as noted at the start of this paper, are often reiterated by the chair of the session when delegates are in the room. These instructions set out the basics of parliamentary procedure, guidelines as to the content of interventions and the tone of debate that should be fostered:

> *"Please note that abusive or disrespectful language or derogatory and inflammatory remarks by any participant will not be tolerated during the Forum. All participants should ensure that a sense of respect and tolerance permeates the discussion"* (OHCHR 2015, 2. Emphasis in the original).

However, despite such directives, there is no set list of "abusive or disrespectful language" that must be avoided. Whilst common sense can be applied, some terminology that is not acceptable at the UN can be surprising to outsiders. The following is an exchange at a training workshop for representatives from minority communities and stateless nations organised by the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), an umbrella organisation of polities who do not have a formal presence at international fora. Participants, who all had some experience of advocacy at the UN, were asked to think of words and phrases that they should avoid, or that have got them into trouble in the past:

> Participant A: if we use 'regime' then we get into trouble… no matter if you believe it is a regime or a dictatorship, you cannot say that at the UN. For example in my speech I had to say in the end, 'please pressure the government [X] or administration under [President Y].' Otherwise the representative of the country they can get a point of order and stop you. So it's part of the rules I guess.

> Participant B: ‘Terrorist country’. This ‘terrorism’ is a dangerous word in the UN – well it’s dangerous for us to use!
>
> Lots of voices: ‘independence’
>
> Trainer: ‘Recognition’ sometimes as well.
>
> Participant A: ‘Genocide’.
>
> Participant C: Yeah, they are so strict about when to use that word. They stopped me when I spoke about genocide of our people. The Chair, he said this was a controversial and difficult term (September, 2015)

It is not just vocabulary related to international law and politics that representatives need to be careful about. Within the physical spaces of the UN member states dictate that they also need to use “appropriate” – i.e. state-sanctioned – terms for the territories in which they live. State diplomats at the UN Forum on Minority Issues occasionally interrupt speakers from minority communities to challenge what they deem to be the use of inaccurate or provocative names for parts of their territories. For example in her oral intervention to the ninth Forum on Minority Issues, a representative of the Ahwaz Human Rights Organisation stated that “the Ahwazi Arab minority lives in the province of Khuzestan, or also called by its indigenous name Al-Ahwaz or Arabistan….” She was then interrupted by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran rapping his name card on his desk. In being given the floor the Iranian diplomat appealed to the Chair that:

> “it is a principle criteria that any participant in the UN fora should use the recognised reference to the geographical names and regions of UN members and to observe the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the states. Please remind the speaker to respect this issue and to refrain from using the fabricated names regarding the Iranian territories” (November 2016).

Such policing of terminology through disruptive, and in many ways intimidating, interruptions compellingly illustrates Feldman's assertion that diplomacy reproduces structural inequalities between the national majority and national minorities in a context where, as "Others in the nation-state, national minorities [are perceived to] threaten the inter-state system as they destabilize any given nation-state's identity as a diplomatic actor" (2005: 219). As I discuss in the following section, a number of my research respondents were frustrated by having to modify how they referred to their homeland and exercised agency in conforming to such prescribed diplomatic norms, Others, however, were pragmatic about adapting their terminology, seeing diplomacy as a game played out in the rarefied spaces of international diplomacy, the rules of which need to be mastered. As a Tibetan representative explained:

> "Part of our education in diplomacy is knowing what terminology to use – you can't submit a report with the title 'our grievances about Tibet' at the UN….Instead you have to learn another language – to use terms like TAR or Tibetan prefectures. I've become really good at writing reports and statements for UN bodies – I know what language to use, what will have an impact, what will be read and listened to… for me, I listen carefully to the language the Chinese use and I then use this back to them! So, they talk about 'respect for the rule of law' and then we also talk about how their actions go *against* the respect for the rule of law" (September 2014).

Such strategic mimicry of "appropriate" diplomatic language was a recurrent theme in my interactions with research respondents. As colleagues and I have argued, Bhabha's (1984) notion of mimicry can productively be applied to diplomatic discourse. In Bhabha's reading, "colonial mimicry (that is, the strategic adoption of metropolitan manner and practices) necessitated the emergence of new discourses of unalienable difference (often racial)" (McConnell et al 2012, 806)). In the context of the diplomacy of unrepresented nations, this can be understood as “mimicry of a colonial (and colonizing) discourse of legitimacy; the mimicry can approach its referent asymptotically but never match it, never gaining full recognition as equal” (*Ibid*).

Beyond emulating specific vocabulary used, respondents also took strategic and pragmatic actions to perform diplomatic decorum through moderating the structure and content of speeches. Drawing both on observation of persuasive and effective interventions, and NGO-led training in delivering timed oral interventions, the more experienced of my research respondents had honed the Aristotelian art of logic: organising thoughts so that others will understand the point of view being put across. A set formula can be traced, with the speaker starting by either acknowledging improvements that their ‘occupying’ state had recently made or noting that state’s signatory of UN treaty before highlighting areas of ongoing concern – backed up with facts and figures – and relating those concerns directly to relevant articles of the state’s own constitution and/or international legal treaties, and finishing with items for the Forum’s final recommendations.

This strategic approach of moderating the content of oral interventions and adopting a non-abrasive style demonstrates the extent to which representatives of non-state communities are seeking to follow the same script – sharing “a certain set of preconceptions about what constitutes political life and political virtue” (Hampton 2009, 19) – as their audience. They are packaging up their national cause in order to mimic and thereby be seen to “fit in” as a member of the diplomatic community and, by extension, to seek legitimacy for their community and cause. Just as important as getting “of whom and of what they speak” right is knowing the audience for your speech, tailoring your diplomatic intervention to that audience, and judging the right “time, place and purpose of the speech” (Puttenham 1589). As a number of respondents noted, even with limited time, resources and access, “doing your homework" before meeting with a diplomatic mission is key. As an experienced representative explained:

> "we need to know their particular interests, what issues and what communities they've supported in the past… and then we match our narrative and reports and requests to them specifically. So for example, the Japanese will only be interested in particular issues so there's no point asking them to support all our reports. They will get fatigue on our issue if you do" (January 2015).

Being attentive to the recipients of your diplomatic intervention also extends to putting them at ease. Indeed, if decorum is about reading a situation and behaving and speaking in ways designed to convey "respect and tolerance", then knowing when and how to be discreet is key. In this context, place matters. Respondents from a number of disputed territories spoke of meeting diplomats from states that might be sympathetic to their cause in cafes and their missions rather than the public spaces of the UN in order that their presence did not compromise that state's relations with the occupying state. As one respondent put it:

> "Ours is a sensitive question so some diplomats, they are cautious and they have to deal with us quietly. They don't want [state Y] to see them meeting with us, so we suggest that we meet outside the UN. We need to respect this, we don't want to put them in an awkward position. We consider their side also, they have a need to feel comfortable and then they will listen to us more seriously" (September 2016).

The fact that such discretion takes on heightened importance in the cases of representatives from contested territories points to the fact that such individuals are not always – or only – expected to mimic diplomacy: there is also an expectation that they will perform their subordinate position vis-à-vis the official diplomatic corps. As noted above, it is consistently representatives of minority and stateless groups who are reprimanded for using incorrect or "inflammatory" terminology at the UN, and are instructed not to attack the policies of member states or challenge states' territorial integrity or sovereignty (OHCHR 2015, 2). Double standards abound: member states effectively establish the rules of procedure within the spaces of the UN and ensure that those rules are adhered to by non-members, with, for example, only member states allowed to interrupt a speaker to make a point of order, and their labelling of civil society groups as "separatists" and "terrorists" allowed to go uncontested (McConnell 2017).[4] In seeking to understand why subordinate actors often accept the terms of their own subordination, diplomacy scholars have usefully turned to field theory (Adler-Nissen 2014; Sending 2015). Whilst in bilateral negotiations there is a long tradition that correlates the "visitor with the supplicant" (Cohen 1987, 119), in the case of representatives from minority communities and contested territories these individuals are perpetual visitors in the spaces of formal international diplomacy. As actors who are deemed to be out of place, these representatives need to demonstrate that they know their position in the diplomatic hierarchies by not only following the script set by members of the club and but also aligning style to subject accordingly. They do so by performing humility and compliance. In the words of an experienced indigenous representative, "you have to play *their* game. The states and the UN, they control our access, so with them we have to be grateful and humble" (September 2016).

As I have sought to demonstrate in this discussion, considerable effort goes into meeting expectations regarding diplomatic decorum; on the one hand learning the ropes of diplomacy and then performing accordingly – mimicking appropriate language, tailoring narratives, moderating tone, and style – and on the other hand performing self-effacement. Yet there is a danger that this paints too neat a picture of diplomatic decorum, and one that downplays the agency of representatives from minority and stateless communities. As I

[4] Beyond the spaces of the UN, U.S. President Trump's description of North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un as 'little rocket man' is a compelling illustration of how some geopolitically powerful actors perceive themselves as not beholden to diplomatic decorum (https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/video/2017/sep/23/trump-little-rocket-man-kim-jong-un-video).

explore in the following section, performances can go awry and individuals can choose to go "off script"; to perform a subjectivity and style that is deliberately out of sync with the setting.

Breaching the boundaries of diplomatic decorum: "passionate people" and performances going awry

> [Presentation on the threat of cyber security for NGOs at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs]. A few rows ahead the delegation of young men from Aceh are rustling pieces of paper. At the end of the presentation the Dutch official asks if there are any questions. One of the Acehnese delegates immediately stands up and, visibly nervous, reads a prepared speech which outlines how Aceh has been let down by their former colonial power and calls on the Dutch Government to intervene regarding human rights abuses perpetrated by Indonesia. It's a heartfelt appeal for help for his community back home, but the tone is somewhat confrontational, and the language emotive. The speech is evidently not what the representative from the foreign ministry was expecting. His flustered reassurances to pass on grievances to colleagues and attempts to return to issues of cyber security are met with further requests for Dutch political action from the floor. (Field-notes from training event for community leaders from unrepresented nations, The Hague, 2012)

This incident demonstrates what can happen when a performance falls flat (Goffman 1959), and when the "time, place and purpose" of a diplomatic intervention is misjudged. Viewed through the framing of rhetoric, both the *logos* of the Acehnese representative's argument – portraying the tragedy of the situation in their homeland and seeking to instil a sense of postcolonial guilt in their audience – and the *pathos* displayed – an emotional intensity of indignant frustration – were out of sync with this particular audience and situation.

Scholars drawing both on practice theory and on sociological models of dramaturgy argue that we can gain an enhanced insight into political subjectivity and the values that underpin political cultures when we turn attention to examples of when rules of behaviour are broken, when norms are transgressed, and when "practices go awry, where they are not executed competently, or appear as exceptional in specific geographic contexts" (Jones and Clark 2015, 3. See also Spary 2010; Bueger 2014). In the field of diplomacy the norm of civility is often acutely apparent in its violation. Research to date has focused on high-profile state actions, such as Hall's (2011) examination of overt expressions of anger by China during the 1995-96 Taiwan Straits crisis, and more mundane disruptions to diplomatic procedure through the transgression of norms governing the appropriate use of speech and gestures (Müller 2013).

It is not only the assumptions underpinning diplomacy that are brought into sharp relief by attending to transgressions and disruptions. By highlighting who is permitted to break the rules – and indeed who gains in status from rule violations – we can also acquire insights into the hierarchies and social boundaries that are inherent to both the diplomatic profession and that are legacies of colonial relations (Opondo 2016). This section uses the lens of the performative, rhetorical and emotional dynamics of diplomatic decorum to examine what happens when those on the fringes of the diplomatic community break the rules of diplomatic decorum – either accidently or deliberately – through enacting behaviour deemed unfitting to a particular setting and audience. In so doing I highlight the agency that is to be found in this "unruly" behaviour and the emotional labour expended in seeking to tame it.

The example of the Acehnese intervention described above highlights a particular disjuncture of performative style to political subject that was a recurrent theme in my interviews. The content of diplomatic interventions by minority, indigenous, and stateless communities are often tragic in nature: statement after statement at the Forum on Minority Issues and the UNPFII detail long-standing cases of discrimination, persecution, forced disappearances, and human rights abuses. Yet tragedy is a challenging narrative trope in the world of diplomacy, and one that is at odds with the norms that underpin diplomatic decorum. As Kuus (2014) has noted in her work on the relationship between "newcomer" Eastern European states and the EU, too much emphasis on human rights abuses and persecutions under, for example, the Soviet regime, can lead to "pencils down syndrome" in forums of international diplomacy. Likewise, as those who have studied war crimes tribunals have noted, when witnesses show explicit images of torture and make emotional appeals within the spaces of court rooms this is deemed out of sync with "the desire for legal processes to become detached from wider social and political life" (Jeffrey and Jakala 2014, 658). In the case of representatives from stateless communities, international audiences have arguably grown blasé to tales of woe and fervent nationalist causes. As one respondent put it, "if you talk too much about your nation's suffering and negative things from the past your audience glazes over… they won't take you seriously" (September 2016). This disconnect between the speaker, topic and audience was apparent from observations at the Forum on Minority Issues where there was a jarring disconnect between the content of many of the statements from minority representatives and the behaviour of other delegates – state diplomats, UN officials, NGO representatives – in the room. Members of this audience frequently failed to pay attention to the speaker, wandering around the back of the room during interventions, continuing conversations with colleagues and preparing their own speeches (see also Freedman 2014).

This disconnect can partly be attributed to the spatial dynamics of the UN. The headquarter buildings in Geneva and New York are rarefied spaces of formal diplomacy that are both literally and figuratively detached from the situations that the speaker is narrating.

However the rhetorical style of the interventions also plays a role. As the extract from the guidance note for participants cited above indicates, in such settings the expectation is that representatives of minority and indigenous communities will focus on constructive ways forward, rather than detailing grievances with particular states. There is also an unwritten expectation that they will constrain and moderate their emotions. As noted in the previous section, part of this involves framing their case in the ostensibly neutral language of international law. This entails translating their community's experiences of human rights abuses and claims to independence in ways which strip away emotion and passionate nationalism.

A significant investment of emotional labour (Hochschild 1983) is required in demonstrating such restraint and ensuring that an appropriately 'unemotional' rhetorical style is performed. In Goffman's terms these representatives need to "manage" their front-stage emotional behaviour by taming their unruly gestures, an act that Opondo argues is integral to the diplomacy-colonialism nexus whereby "modern diplomatic discourse proposes the application of a variety of grooming and conversion practices to inculcate desirable habits in the colonized… subject as a means of ridding him of his degeneracy or bring him/her up to par with pre-established European standards" (2010: 117). This perceived need to curb excessive enthusiasm and rhetorical energy (Hampton 2009) is apparent in these reflections from a representative from a minority community in Southeast Asia:

> "The formula is that we should not be over excited in our speeches. We should not over-provoke the audience. We have to be more like diplomats. We have to control feelings and emotions. We shouldn't be too emotional about our cause and so rise up the audience emotions. I think it does not work for a diplomat. We can't give speeches like at a political rally" (January 2016).

Writing about the relationship between inclusion and democracy, Iris Marion Young makes a powerful argument that the norms of deliberation "implicitly value certain styles of expression as dispassionate, orderly, or articulate" which has the effect of devaluing "embodied forms of expression, emotion, and figurative expressions" and thus has exclusionary implications (2002, 6, 56). We can see this playing out in the field of diplomacy. One mode of exclusion is the fact that "etiquettes of speaking, acronyms, and an intense haggling around terminology and word choice lead to heavily coded, and often opaque and 'technical' texts" (Müller 2013, 12), and thus fundamentally restrict what can be articulated in the spaces of formal diplomacy and thus, ultimately, what requests and recommendations can be made. A further mode of exclusion is evident in the fact that, by privileging certain styles of speech and delivery, dominant, elitist mode of diplomatic culture are reinforced. Again we can trace resonances with Young's work wherein she observes that:

> "The speech culture of white, middle-class men tends to be more controlled, without significant gesture and expression or emotion. The speech culture of women, racialized or ethnicized minorities… often is, or is perceived to be, more excited and embodied, values more the expression of emotion, uses figurative language, modulates tones of voice, and gestures widely" (2002, 39).

As I have demonstrated above, in the social field of diplomacy the persistence of masculinist, Eurocentric ideals dictates the norms of language, behaviour and emotional expression and thereby circumscribes the appropriateness of particular bodies and political subjectivities in diplomatic spaces.

Yet this discursive and material practice of othering not only leads to "internal exclusion" (Young 2002) in diplomatic spheres, nor solely to 'others' needing to conform to the conventions of western-influenced diplomatic culture. There is also an expectation that representatives of stateless communities will perform otherness and difference. This is particularly the case with regards to the participation of indigenous communities at the UN (Bellier 2013). Such a performance of otherness includes wearing traditional clothing, beginning oral interventions with traditional greetings – in indigenous languages, and sometimes sung – and employing local customs of gift exchange at diplomatic meetings. A striking concession to indigenous cultural practices is the acceptance of applause and ululations at the end of speeches made at the UNPFII, a concession that is notably not made at the Forum on Minority Issues where state diplomats took to the floor to complain about the use of applause during the 2016 session.

Such performances of difference emphasise the distinction between members and non-members at the UN, and thereby reinforce social hierarchies and boundaries (for parallels with the relationship between ritual and power relations in parliaments see Rai 2010). Yet there is also agency being articulated in these theatrical expressions of otherness. Perhaps most striking is the implied resistance to wholeheartedly adopting a Eurocentric diplomatic style, and, specifically, to adopting a neutral, "dispassionate" tone when writing and delivering interventions. As a young representative from a minority in the Middle East put it:

> "why do we do this [advocacy at the UN]? Because we're passionate people. But then they try to dilute us by saying like [mimics an affected English accent] 'Oh, I think article number 4 does not correspond with…' I think that we should also be aware of the contribution that our passion gives to our cause. We should never lose it and just use this sterile language which is so detached from what our struggle is. We need to bring in emotion" (November 2015).

Underlying this frustration at having to translate narratives into the restrictive and decorous language of diplomacy is an anxiety that it will have the effect of self-censorship and even a betrayal of the cause. Being "passionate people" having to restrain emotions in the diplomatic field thereby points to two key tensions: between the personal and the political, and between activism and diplomacy.

As feminist scholars have argued, focusing attention on questions of emotional registers and emotional labour has the potential of dissolving the traditional distinction between personal and political, public and private (e.g. Pain 2009). Attending to the dynamics of rhetoric, in particular the roles of *ēthos* and *pathos,* reinforces this intertwining of the personal and political whereby it is the character of the speaker that is key to forging an emotional connection with the audience. Crucially emotional labour in diplomacy is also a two way exchange, as a representative of a minority in China explained:

> "You always have to remember that diplomats are also people, they have a heart and they should be touched by our stories because it's not only about legal articles it's about human lives. Diplomacy is about connecting with people… emotionally as well as socially and politically. I say to some of the diplomats, 'I'm meeting you and appealing to you human being to human being'. The reports are important but you also need to do things differently in order to properly connect with people" (November 2016).

There is also a potentially powerful performative element to foregrounding the personal in the diplomatic field, particularly within highly ritualised spaces (Rai 2010) such as UN conference rooms. For example at the Forum on Minority Issues in 2015 a young, female Yazidi activist who had escaped from Daesh used her allocated three minutes to read out a series of personal testimonies. As another delegate described it "the whole room went quiet. And you know her tears were so, I'm still shaking because it was one of the most *amazing* statements I've heard." This was an example where *not* mimicking formal diplomacy – not using technical terms, moderating emotions, or adhering to set formulas for speeches – proved to be highly effective. In narrating personal testimonies the Yazidi delegate broke with the norms of the diplomatic setting, disrupted the affective atmosphere in Conference Room XX and spoke in a voice that was read as authentic and legitimate. The audience believed in the speaker and thus connected emotionally with their “script” (Anderson 2011, 83). Whilst the effectiveness of such a personal intervention would be greatly diminished if the majority of speakers adopted this approach, in isolation this was a performance that was personal, timely, dramatic, and thus persuasive.

This style of intervention arguably has closer resonances with the social field of activism than that of diplomacy. Indeed, like many diplomats from postcolonial states in the mid-20th century and post-communist states in more recent decades, in many cases representatives of minority, indigenous, and stateless communities see themselves as both diplomats – bona fide representatives of their communities and skilled negotiators – *and* as activists – advocating change through campaigning (McConnell 2017). Making the transition from activism to diplomacy, especially when the latter is engaged with in an ad hoc and very part-time basis, throws up particular challenges when it comes to shifting emotional cadences. In addition to the all-consuming emotional labour involved in being an activist for your community in situations of conflict, persecution and discrimination entails, this is a mode of politics that at its core is about both “a ‘sense’, ‘feeling’ and that inexplicable desire to ‘do something’” (Askins 2013, 535; Pickerill 2008) and a strategy for engaging the emotions of target audiences and ‘moving’ them into action (Eyerman 2006). Yet, as I have sought to demonstrate, there are distinct limits to how far the emotional repertoires associated with activism can be effectively enacted in the field of diplomacy. Whilst narratives of tragedy and persecution may occasionally elicit action – though more usually receive a “pencils down” reaction – narratives of resistance are a step too far from the norms of diplomatic decorum and are rarely tolerated. This has distinct resonances with bell hooks’ (1990) assertion that, if the margins receive any attention from the colonisers it is as sites of repression: emotional articulations of resistance are not welcome. As she puts it, “Forces that say speak, tell me your story. Only do not speak in the voice of resistance. Only speak from that space in the margin that is a sign of deprivation, a wound, and unfulfilled longing. Only speak your pain” (1990: 343).

Conclusion

In examining how liminal geopolitical actors, specifically representatives of stateless, indigenous, and minority communities, have learnt, adhered to and resisted appropriate diplomatic behaviour I have sought to tease out connections between the profession and culture of contemporary diplomacy, ideas of theatrical performance, and the role of emotional registers. In this concluding section I summarise the theoretical contributions of the paper and set out how the notion of diplomatic decorum – specifically an understanding of decorum as a principle of classical rhetoric and theatre – opens up a number of productive areas of scholarly enquiry.

First, this paper has demonstrated that paying attention to diplomatic decorum has the potential to broaden and enliven the conceptual frameworks we use to interrogate contemporary diplomacy. I have argued that the notion of decorum can both act as a catalyst for forging productive connections between practice-based theories, dramaturgical approaches and rhetorical strategies, and can bring the oft overlooked realm of emotions centre-stage. The question of what are deemed to be permissible emotional registers within diplomatic spheres highlights not only the dynamics of relationships between audiences, speakers and topics, but also the emotional labour that underpins diplomatic practice

Second, with decorum encouraging us to think about the fitness or otherwise of a style to a subject and to a setting it is a concept that elucidates the nature of diplomatic subjectivity. Apparent from the cases discussed above is that decorum is dictated by *who* speaks: who you are matters when it comes to adhering to and breaking the rules of diplomatic behaviour. By focusing on decorum we gain insights into the colonial underpinnings of diplomacy: the construction and reification of social boundaries in the diplomatic field, power relations between diplomatic actors of different statuses, and how certain groups appear as legitimate subjects of international politics while others do not (Opondo 2016). With regards to the liminal geopolitical actors that were the focus of this study, what emerges is a challenging balancing act that these unofficial diplomats have to play: between having the confidence to engage in what are daunting diplomatic fora, and yet also performing humility; and between being seen to conform to the conventions of diplomatic culture and also performing otherness and difference. As a result there is an inherent ambivalence to this subjectivity.

Third, and relatedly, I have argued that the notion of decorum shines new light on the tension between stability and change within the diplomatic field. In highlighting how particular bodies and behaviours are deemed appropriate or inappropriate decorum is a useful lens through which to reassess the norms underpinning diplomatic culture and how these rules are shaped by their European and colonial lineages. As I discuss above we can trace how the normative assumptions of diplomatic culture are perpetuated by prescribed modes of address, the control of language used, and the policing of behaviour that is deemed to be inappropriate to diplomatic settings by state diplomats seeking both to advance their national interests and to protect the system as a whole (Sharp 2009). On the one hand if, by mimicking particular modes of behaviour, linguistic styles, and tones, the aim of “unofficial” diplomats is primarily an attempt to fit in to the transnational diplomatic corps, then arguably this leads to the reinforcement of the norms and social hierarchies of international diplomacy (Kuus 2015). As Finlayson argues:

> "To learn to perform as a political actor is also to learn about the community and thus to become tied into it. That can, of course, generate only a politics of conservation dedicated to celebrating, maintaining and policing the borders of the community – of who is in it and of what can be thought and said within its world" (2015, 100).

On the other hand, what has also emerged from the practices of unofficial diplomats is the instability of diplomatic decorum and the potential for change within the diplomatic community. As a number of scholars have noted, the evolution in the nature and function of diplomacy is emerging from the increasingly heterogeneous cast of diplomatic actors (Sending et al 2011; Wiseman 2004). What is often overlooked is the impact of the range of interpretations of diplomatic codes and conventions that these actors bring with them. In contrast to minimalist approaches to diplomatic culture as constituted by values that reflect the interests of states we can think instead of a broader and more inclusive interpretation of diplomatic culture which reflects and is shaped by the agency of a plurality of diplomatic actors. Here the rhetorical and aesthetic dimensions of diplomatic decorum are key for, just as poetry breaks with the grammatically determined order and function of words, there is a radical potentiality when diplomatic decorum misfires, is deliberately disrupted, or is deemed out of place. In addition to being read as moments of *pathos* or resistance, such non-decorous diplomacies are also glimpses of an alternative way through which polities can relate to one another.

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