



# Virtual Venues and International Negotiations: Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic

Corneliu Bjola<sup>1</sup> | ORCID: 0000-0003-3609-4240

Department of International Development, University of Oxford,  
3 Mansfield Road, Oxford, OX1 3TB, United Kingdom  
[corneliu.bjola@qeh.ox.ac.uk](mailto:corneliu.bjola@qeh.ox.ac.uk)

Michaela Coplen<sup>2</sup> | ORCID: 0000-0001-5182-8391

Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford,  
Lincoln College, Turl Street, Oxford, OX1 3DR, United Kingdom  
[michaela.coplen@politics.ox.ac.uk](mailto:michaela.coplen@politics.ox.ac.uk)

Received 1 February 2022; accepted 19 April 2022

## Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has altered international diplomacy, with many negotiations now conducted in ‘virtual venues’ facilitated by videoconferencing platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Webex, and Interprefy. Drawing on a survey of diplomats with experience in virtual venue negotiation, we analyze respondents’ perceptions of efficacy, tactics, and legitimacy in these venues. We find that virtual venues not only affect the format, but also the substance of negotiations. In general, perceptions of efficacy are related to diplomats’ ability to ‘read the room’. Virtual venues also impact negotiations at the tactical level. We find that coercive approaches (including novel tactics)

- 1 Corneliu Bjola is Associate Professor in Diplomatic Studies at the University of Oxford, and Head of the Oxford Digital Diplomacy Research Group. He has published extensively on issues related to the impact of digital technology on the conduct of diplomacy with a recent focus on public diplomacy, international negotiations, and methods for countering digital propaganda. His recent co-edited volume, *Digital Diplomacy and International Organizations: Autonomy, Legitimacy and Contestation* (Routledge 2020), examines the broader ramifications of digital technologies on the internal dynamics, multilateral policies, and strategic engagements of international organizations.
- 2 Michaela Coplen is a DPhil candidate in International Relations at the University of Oxford. A Marshall Scholar, Coplen received her MPhil in International Relations from the University of Oxford and her BA from Vassar College.

are more common than persuasive approaches. Overall, these venues are afforded the same legitimacy as face-to-face negotiations. We conclude that, as virtual venues will be a feature of international diplomacy for the foreseeable future, further research is required to inform increased diplomatic adaptation and hybridity.

### Keywords

virtual venues – COVID-19 – digital diplomacy – international negotiation – hybrid diplomacy

The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the practice of international negotiation: summits have convened via video call and trade negotiations have been conducted online, while the UN General Assembly has adopted a hybrid format.<sup>3</sup> Virtual venues are increasingly employed for the purposes of statecraft – as ‘stop-gap’ measures, procedural supplements, and longer-term substitutes for face-to-face meetings. Platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Webex, and Interprefy have not only allowed negotiations to continue despite COVID-19 travel restrictions, but they have also created opportunities to increase the inclusivity, transparency, and efficiency of these negotiations. Yet generations of diplomatic scholarship stress the importance of physical proximity and informal interaction for relationship- and consensus-building among negotiators; body language, emotional expression, and casual conversation are understood to be crucial in developing the interpersonal trust and understanding that leads to mutually beneficial outcomes. The quality of such personal contact between negotiators is presumed to be diminished in virtual space – so, too, is their faith in the confidentiality of their conversations. Given these constraints, how can diplomats effectively negotiate in virtual venues? How can they navigate social and political dynamics in the ‘room where it happens’ when that ‘room’ has been flattened onto a screen? The challenges and opportunities presented by virtual venues require further examination.

This study aims to analyze diplomats’ perceptions of negotiation efficacy in virtual venues during the COVID-19 pandemic, as compared to previous experiences of face-to-face negotiations. We define ‘virtual venues’ as computer-simulated places that allow for synchronous negotiation through online portals. Virtual venues are currently facilitated by videoconferencing platforms

3 Examples of diplomatic engagement online during the COVID-19 pandemic abound. For a few, see Shear 2021; Schneidman and Dawson 2020; Stepansky and Gadzo 2021.

such as Zoom, Skype, and Microsoft Teams, but they may be also offered by institution-specific proprietary applications. It is also expected that Virtual Reality (VR) platforms such as Oculus or HTC could soon introduce the next generation of virtual venues, especially if the new medium of the metaverse will manage to achieve mass adoption. Research in this area is thin, as the last pandemic of similar global consequence (the “Spanish flu” of 1918–1920) occurred before diplomats had access to *any* reliable simultaneous communications technology, much less virtual conferencing. Although studies of the use of technology in international negotiations remains sparse, several scholars have started to bridge this gap since the onset of the pandemic, as discussed below. As this is an emerging area of diplomatic practice, iterated research is necessary to validate previous findings, suggest further areas of interest, and keep abreast of new developments. The following study fills such a role. Surveying relevant participants, it examines diplomats’ experiences conducting international negotiations in ‘virtual venues’ and their perceptions of how this procedural constraint has impacted negotiation process dynamics and efficacy.

COVID-19 rules and restrictions will likely continue to shape diplomatic engagement in the near future. While vaccine technology and contact-tracing infrastructure have facilitated the return to ‘business as usual’ or hybrid engagement in some countries, this is by no means universal; further, there is no guarantee that future variants of concern will not necessitate the reinstatement of social distancing measures. As continued climate breakdown ushers in an ‘age of pandemics,’ similar measures may be employed to counter future outbreaks (Wang 2020: 1). Relatedly, calls for governments to reduce their environmental impact will undoubtedly increase the use of virtual venues in international negotiations, as is already evident in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process (Klein et al. 2021; Chasek 2021). Beyond these considerations, virtual venues and hybrid formats are likely to continue being employed for the practical reason that they reduce the time and financial costs of engaging in international negotiation. Virtual venues are here to stay – by defining, analyzing, and articulating the challenges and opportunities presented by negotiation in such venues, this research will inform effective negotiation for the remainder of COVID-19 and articulate new recommendations for negotiation practice beyond this pandemic.

This study contributes to this timely and important area of research in three ways. First, it serves to confirm and add nuance to previous findings regarding diplomats’ experiences of virtual venue negotiation. Second, it identifies adapted negotiation tactics (such as novel forms of ‘stonewalling’) that have emerged in the months since these early studies were conducted.

Finally, it identifies areas where the lack of adequate adaptation with respect to relationship-building in digital space continues to hamper the efficacy of virtual venue negotiation. The study proceeds by reviewing previous scholarship on venue selection and face-to-face interaction in negotiation processes. It continues by reviewing relevant studies of technology use and more recent studies explicitly focused on diplomatic engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is followed by a description of research methodology, including an outline of the survey tool and a discussion of limitations. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of survey responses follows, finding that while virtual venues are generally positively perceived, these venues have effects not only on negotiations' format but also on their substance – with consequences for process dynamics, outcomes, and power. The study concludes by identifying areas for further research to support adaptation to virtual venue negotiation and more hybrid engagement.

### Venue Choices and International Negotiations

Practitioners and scholars of diplomacy have long recognized that venue selection is an important part of the negotiation process. Diplomats consider factors such as expedience, negotiation format, tradition, and prestige in determining the appropriate venue for sensitive international negotiations; these decisions are themselves often the subject of extended 'pre-talks' (Berridge 2015: 36–40). "The reason for this concern," argue negotiation analysts Salacuse and Rubin (1990: 5), "is that disputants almost always assume – and with good reason – that the particular location in which they negotiate will have consequences for the ensuing process and, ultimately, its results." Similarly, Henrikson (2005: 369) writes that in the selection of a diplomatic venue, "the physical location and surrounding environment ... is not entirely free or a matter of arbitrary choice," arguing that this choice is constrained by the structure of power within the international system. Reflecting on the selection of the city of Bandung as the site of the first Asia-Africa conference in 1955, Shimazu (2014) finds that symbolic considerations strongly informed the decision. What was really at stake at Bandung, she argues was the will of the 29 delegations to assert Afro-Asian solidarity at a historic moment, by staging a collective crowning ceremony of post-colonial Asia and Africa. Approaching the issue of venue selection from a more strategic perspective, Coleman (2013) finds that the choice of the negotiation venue is highly consequential for why states may be more or less willing to support the adoption of emerging international norms.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the choices of diplomatic venue have often been circumscribed by travel restrictions; virtual venues have often been selected out of necessity. The instrumental, symbolic, and strategic considerations that commonly inform venue selection in face-to-face negotiations, as mentioned above, are arguably less relevant when applied to the virtual medium, or at least their impact is more difficult to gauge. Therefore, the consequences of the use of virtual venues for the negotiation processes they have enabled to continue (and subsequent results) warrant further examination.

Whereas the effects of remote negotiations are an emerging area of interest, there has been considerable research on the opposite phenomena: face-to-face interaction. Following neuroscience research that suggests information processing is improved by in-person communication, Holmes (2013) has argued that face-to-face negotiations allow participants to have more confidence in their assessments of counterparts' intentions, thereby increasing credibility and cooperation. Holmes and Wheeler (2020) have since expanded this argument, suggesting that variations in 'social bonding' within a negotiation can have important effects on the outcome. Rather than dispositional characteristics of diplomats, they argue that it is the procedural elements of a negotiation – namely, bodily co-presence, barriers to outsiders, mutual focus of attention, and 'shared mood' – that are necessary in generating the personal bonds that are required for negotiators to build mutual trust and understanding. Similarly, Wong (2020) has mapped the expressive function of emotions within negotiation. He argues that nonverbal cues such as tone and body language are important information-sharing mechanisms within a negotiation; these are not replicable in the "impersonal and irregular channels" represented by virtual venues (Wong 2016: 145). The potential implications of this body of research for virtual negotiations are significant, suggesting that shifting negotiations from a physical to a virtual format may have a detrimental effect on the ability of the participants to communicate effectively and to develop the necessary level of trust to continue the negotiations.

While diplomatic scholarship on the use of technology in negotiation remains somewhat limited, research in other disciplines has explored the potential impact of digital platforms and strategies on negotiation and group collaboration. In a simulation experiment testing the efficacy of 'e-negotiation' media in the international business sphere, Galin, et al. (2007: 787), find that "the negotiation media ... barely affects the negotiation outcomes" – a stark contrast to the expectations of the diplomatic literature outlined above. Examining business management practices, Cheng, et al. (2021: 546), find that the efficiency of collaboration between geographically distributed team members is affected

by their pre-existing levels of trust in one another. Similarly, trust assessments are continuously updated in the process of virtual collaboration. Integrating feedback and monitoring mechanisms into the virtual platform were found to increase group members' trust in each other and enhance their collaborative work (Cheng, et al. 2021: 547). Approaching this topic from the field of cognitive science, Marchi, et al. (2020) similarly find that in simulated virtual negotiations, familiarity with negotiation counterparts is associated with greater cooperation, while increased empathy has little impact.

Where studies of technological use in diplomatic negotiations do exist, they offer mixed results. Adler-Nissen and Drieschova (2019), for example, have examined the use of collaborative word processing software and its impacts on international negotiations. While they find that 'track-change diplomacy' can increase shareability, visualization, and immediacy of information, these technologies also reflect and exacerbate existing power dynamics in a negotiation. Disputes over the control of virtual text can lead to confusion and inefficiency. Parties may take advantage of procedural 'disorder' to influence the course of the negotiation; this research demonstrates that negotiating parties quickly leverage the opportunities inherent in new negotiation technologies and adapt their tactics accordingly.

Similarly, Bjola and Manor (2018) have found that Putnam's two-level game theory is highly relevant in understanding the potential impact of virtual engagement technologies on negotiation processes. Digital diplomacy has expanded the 'negotiating table'; in addition to traditional communications and messaging tactics, social media is increasingly employed as a negotiation technology. More specifically, governments can increase their win sets through three digital tactics: by using social media to craft messages and calibrate arguments in such a way that maximizes the appeal of the government's foreign policy; by listening to online conversations and tailoring messages to the target audience's feedback; and by facilitating dialogic engagement for the purpose of building coalitions with supporters and bridges with opponents. The immediacy and simultaneity of public feedback influences negotiators, their tactics, and negotiation outcomes. While negotiators have long communicated with their counterparts during negotiations via electronic messaging and social media groups, the impact of these negotiating technologies remains underexamined.<sup>4</sup>

4 We are grateful to a reviewer for supplying an example of this phenomena in the 2009 UNFCCC (COP 15): negotiators repeatedly texted and messaged members on the dais during the closing plenary, urging them to call a recess in order to ensure the Danish Prime Minister "took note" of the Copenhagen Accord.

More recent scholarship has focused explicitly on the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on diplomacy and international negotiation. Maurer and Wright (2020), writing in the early months of the pandemic, assess the viability of virtual diplomacy in the EU; they predict that continuity of existing negotiations will be more readily supported by virtual technologies than the initiation of new debates and relationships. Naylor (2020) similarly argues that virtual venues can lead to a 'hollowing' of summit diplomacy; the loss of the performative symbolic and interpersonal dimensions of summitry render online meetings ineffective. These mostly speculative pieces have been followed by four empirical studies of virtual venues in negotiation. The first, written by Vadrot et al. (2021), consists of a survey examining the impact of COVID-19 on UN marine biodiversity negotiations. Echoing the predictions of Maurer and Wright, they find that virtual venues succeed when they are built on existing 'normal negotiation practice' and collective 'background knowledge'. While most respondents agreed that virtual venues could not fully replace face-to-face meetings, the use of informal videoconferencing and private messaging alongside formal sessions was seen as valuable for increasing group collaboration.

The second study, conducted by Bramsen and Hagemann (2021), discusses the impact of COVID-19 on Syrian and Yemeni peace processes. Through a series of semi-structured interviews, they examine negotiators' experience of adaptation to virtual venues. They find that while participants perceive benefits to accessibility, frequency, and equity of participation, the disruption to 'social bonding' processes and diminished faith in confidentiality can be detrimental. They conclude that the 'sense of peace' which emerges in face-to-face meetings is lost, with negative impacts for peace processes. Third, a recent study conducted by Bjola and Manor (2022) found that the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a new wave of digital adaptation for ministries of foreign affairs (MFA), the result of which is the rise of hybrid diplomacy as a novel method of diplomatic engagement, in which physical and virtual engagements are expected to integrate, complement, and empower each other. The pace and shape of hybrid diplomacy will depend on how well MFAs will manage the transition from adaptation to adoption, that is, from learning how to integrate physical and virtual presences under pressure (by trial and error and improvisation), to doing so in a more deliberative, strategic, and systematic manner. Finally, a study of 18 UN environmental meeting sessions that took place during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, conducted by Chasek (2022, this issue) through interviews, direct observation, and *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* reviews, examined the development of interpersonal relationships and trust in these multilateral negotiations. As many were conducted virtually, this research offers findings for the development of trust in communication, equity,

technology, transparency, and process (that is, efficacy and legitimacy). Chasek finds that while negotiators were able to adapt and build trust in new technologies and modes of communication, concerns about equity, transparency, and process were pervasive.

This study builds on and adds to this previous scholarship. Confirming some of the phenomena articulated above while adding further nuance, it contributes to the reliability of these findings. Importantly, it provides updated data on the questions raised by both Vadrot et al., and Bramsen and Hagemann regarding perceptions of the legitimacy and confidentiality of negotiations in virtual venues. Further, building on Bjola and Manor's concept of hybrid diplomacy, it examines how specific negotiating tactics have emerged in the intervening months as negotiators adapt their strategies and develop new techniques to function in virtual venues.

## Methods

This study applies a survey methodology to collect data on diplomats' experiences using virtual venues with the objective of contextualizing and calibrating the findings of previous studies of virtual negotiations; keeping abreast of key developments in technology-informed negotiation tactics; and providing an empirical basis for considering the theoretical implications of virtual venues for negotiation and diplomacy studies. The study follows an inductive approach, which is particularly suitable for conducting qualitative research when the novelty of social experiences and processes, such as those prompted by the abrupt transition to the virtual medium during the pandemic, requires researchers to do a close reading of the raw data in order to derive meaningful concepts, themes, or analytical models (Thomas 2006).

The study used a web-based questionnaire hosted on Microsoft Forms. Recruitment occurred between September 2021 and November 2021 through a snowballing method: the questionnaire was shared via email, Twitter, and LinkedIn with diplomats known to the researchers to possess relevant experience. Respondents were encouraged to share the survey with colleagues possessing similar experience. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. 28 respondents self-selected for participation. Respondents were relatively evenly distributed between junior (32%), mid-level (36%), and senior diplomats (32%). Their experience conducting negotiations in virtual venues was self-reported according to two metrics: the number of negotiation sessions attended on virtual platforms and a Likert scale assessment of their own virtual conferencing skills. Most respondents (71.4%) considered themselves skilled



in virtual conferencing (ranking themselves a '4' or '5' out of 5), with a significant portion (29%) having participated in '25–50' virtual negotiation sessions, and an even more sizeable portion (46%) having participated in 'more than 50' such sessions. The nature of the sample presents both a limitation and a strength. Since most respondents in our small sample identified themselves as very experienced in virtual venue negotiation, their skill level may bias perceptions of confidence and efficacy. On the other hand, their depth of experience in virtual venue negotiation means that respondents within the sample are well-suited to offer meaningful insights that might be further explored in large-N studies. The survey was designed around four topics: respondents' personal backgrounds and diplomatic experience; perceptions of negotiation tactics and efficacy within virtual sessions; descriptions of technological platforms used and assessments of their suitability; and perceptions of the long-term efficacy of virtual venue negotiation. In total, the survey consisted of 22 (open and closed) questions.

Subsequent analysis included quantitative and qualitative methods. Each respondent was assigned a unique identifier according to the chronological order in which their response was received. The quantitative data was imported into the analytics software Tableau and visual representations were used to extract analytical insight from the data set. Responses to open-ended questions were inductively coded according to key themes; nodes were subsequently reviewed and adjusted as appropriate. This code frame facilitated comparative analysis across grouped responses.

Several additional limitations to this survey methodology warrant consideration. While respondents were not exclusively representatives of Western states (43% of respondents were diplomats from nations outside Europe and North America), there remained a significant Western bias. Additionally, the respondent pool reflected a gender bias (only 25% of respondents self-identified as women).<sup>5</sup> The lack of data on the perspectives of the populations not adequately represented in this survey sample may impinge on the generalizability of the study's findings. Ethical approval for this study was provided by Oxford University's Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC). This study did not engage external sponsors.

<sup>5</sup> Regarding gender imbalance in our sample, it is worth noting that preliminary research, across sectors, suggests that women have been disproportionately overburdened in the move to virtual work during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is possible that this phenomenon (as well as an unequal increase in caretaking responsibilities for women working from home) may have contributed to the gender imbalance of respondents. As our survey did not include questions on gendered impacts, including domestic and childcare duties, this remains a limitation of our findings.

Virtual Negotiation Arenas

Contextual Features

As the studies discussed above indicate, virtual venues have the power to reshape the context in which negotiations are conducted. Most critically, they impact negotiation efficacy by making it difficult for participants to establish and foster interpersonal relationships. To explore how virtual venues may influence the conduct of diplomatic negotiations, we asked our respondents to describe the reasons that they used virtual venues for negotiation sessions; to clarify whether they have been able to ‘read the room’ during the meetings (for example, ascertain who is paying attention to the discussion, what issues resonate with whom, etc.); and to assess the extent to which the use of virtual venues has proved effective in advancing their negotiation agendas. The results are presented below and they tell an interesting story.

As shown in Figure 1, our respondents have primarily used virtual venues for conducting negotiations and for following up on decisions made in face-to-face meetings. Interestingly, virtual venues have played a less relevant role in preparing and setting the stage for offline meetings, an intriguing finding which could be attributed to the dense schedule of the participants. As one of the respondents pointed out, the proliferation of virtual meetings led to the saturation of delegates’ agendas, and even increased miscommunication between them (survey response, September 27, 2021). The distribution of these preferences remains basically the same even when the results are broken down by the diplomatic rank of the participants, between junior (first or second secretaries), mid-level (counsellors) and senior diplomats (ambassadors and

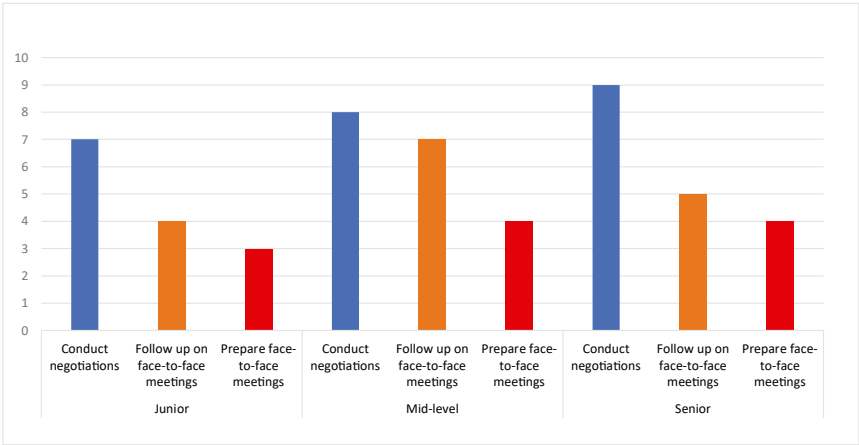


FIGURE 1 Purposes of virtual meetings by diplomatic rank

minister counsellors). The only noticeable differences, albeit hardly surprising, are the slight increase in the use of virtual venues by mid-level diplomats for follow-up meetings, as well as the stronger involvement of senior diplomats in the conduct of online negotiations.

The relative ease with which diplomats have adapted to the virtual medium is also worth noting. As one of the respondents pointed out, virtual venues proved indispensable during the pandemic, especially in multilateral regional fora “during which delegates were able to negotiate and agree on draft texts that were later adopted by heads of delegations at summits or official sessions” (survey response, September 15, 2021). While most of the diplomats have managed to make the technical transition to virtual venues rather smoothly, it nevertheless appears that age and gender do make a difference. As Table 1 illustrates, women have found it slightly more difficult to manage negotiation in virtual platforms and the gender divide has been amplified by age as well (although these responses may be influenced by a gendered tendency to understate skills in a self-evaluation or alternately, male respondents’ tendency to overstate). That being said, very few participants have expressed frustration with the technical features of virtual platforms, which suggests that technical challenges are perceived to be manageable through practice and training. One (woman) responder agreed, for instance, that “technologies have definitely improved over the last two years” and that they “are suitable to facilitating virtual negotiations although there might still be security issues to be solved” (survey response, September 9, 2021).

TABLE 1 Virtual conferencing skills by gender and age

Virtual conferencing skills						
Gender	Age	1	3	4	5	Grand total
Man	above 50		4	1	2	7
	between 35–50		2	4	5	11
	under 35	1		1	1	3
	Total	1	6	6	8	21
Woman	above 50			1		1
	between 35–50		1	3	1	5
	under 35			1		1
	Total		1	5	1	7
Grand total		1	7	11	9	28

On the critical issue of how virtual venues may affect interpersonal relations and by extension the effectiveness of international negotiations, the matter is slightly more disputed. On the one hand, the majority of our respondents found that virtual venues have been helpful in their negotiations (3.39 average satisfaction rate on a scale from 1 – not much, to 5 – very much). Predictably, one key reason invoked by our respondents is practical: virtual venues have facilitated business continuity and enabled regular contact during the pandemic (survey response, September 27, 2021). However, for others, virtual venues have also helped “increase the preparatory time for negotiations, while reducing travel time and also the stress of being in the room” and “made it easier to have meetings with people from all over the world” (survey responses, September 15 & October 14, 2021). On the other hand, diplomats have expressed reservations regarding the range of opportunities that virtual venues can offer for developing close and meaningful conversations during negotiations.

As Table 2 indicates, most diplomats have been only partially able to ‘read the room’ in virtual venues, that is, to follow who is paying attention to the discussion, what issues resonate with whom, how participants engage with each other, etc. Specifically, 39% in our sample complained that they were not able to read the room at all, especially in large meetings or when cameras were turned off.<sup>6</sup> 43% said they were able to do so only partially, especially when the moderator was sufficiently skillful to stimulate participants to engage in the conversation (survey response, September 26, 2021). The remaining 18% felt quite confident about being able to capture the dynamic of the virtual engagement based on the interventions made during the meetings and provided that the internet connection was reliable (survey responses, October 14 & 18, 2021).

Interestingly, the distribution by diplomatic rank among those capable of ‘reading the room’ was relatively even, suggesting that virtual venues might dilute the inherent advantage of senior diplomats in capturing the dynamic of the conversations. Women in a junior position, who presumably are more familiar with digital visual representations because of their age, also seem to perform better than their more senior counterparts in their efforts to read the room. Most importantly, Table 2 shows that perceptions of the effectiveness of the negotiations are informed by diplomats’ ability to read the room. The more they are able to do so, the more positive they feel about the effectiveness of their negotiations. 54% of those having such positive perceptions (3, 4, 5 marks

6 While our survey did not collect data on the size of discrete episodes of negotiation, qualitative responses indicate that the number of participants and whether the venue’s ‘view’ format allowed diplomats to see participants simultaneously were potentially important factors in diplomats’ perceived ability to ‘read the room’.

TABLE 2 Perceptions of the effectiveness of virtual venues by the ability to read the room and diplomatic rank and gender

			Effectiveness					
Read the room	Gender	Diplomatic rank	1	2	3	4	5	Grand Total
No	Man	Junior	1	1		1		3
		Mid-Level		2		1		3
		Senior			1			1
	Woman	Junior			1			1
		Mid-Level			1		1	2
		Senior				1		1
	Total		1	3	3	3	1	11
Partially	Man	Mid-Level	1		1	3		5
		Senior		1	2	2		5
	Woman	Junior					2	2
	Total		1	1	3	5	2	12
Yes	Man	Junior			1		1	2
		Senior			1	1		2
	Woman	Junior					1	1
	Total				2	1	2	5
Grand total			2	4	8	9	5	28

on the scale from the ‘partially’ or ‘yes’ categories) have also insisted they can sense reasonably well the mood of the conversation. By contrast, only 25% found the meetings to be effective despite not being able to read the room.

While these contextual features give us a sense of the opportunities and constraints that virtual venues place in front of international negotiators, they tell us little about how they affect not only the format but also the substance of the negotiations. This aspect will be examined next.

### Negotiation Tactics

Aside from creating a more constraining environment for conducting negotiations, virtual venues also have the potential to influence the way in which negotiations are pursued by recalibrating the structure of incentives and opportunities at the tactical level. In our survey, we asked diplomats to assess the impact of virtual venues on two types of negotiation tactics,

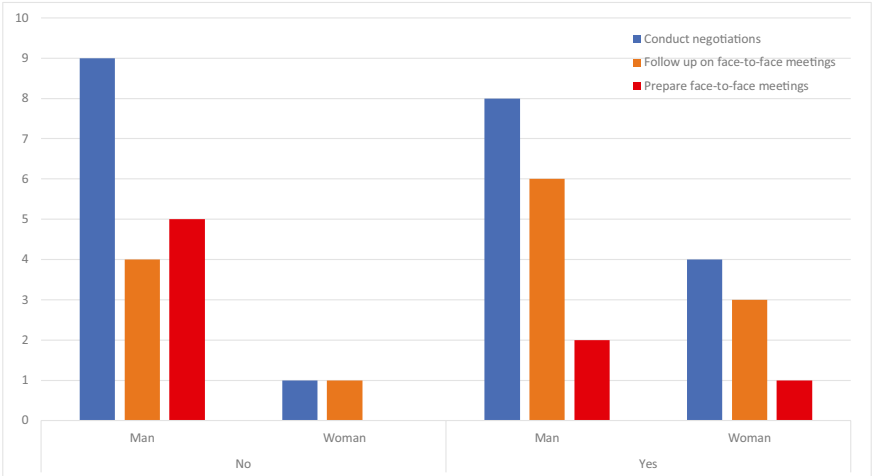


FIGURE 2 Impact of virtual venues on the use of persuasive tactics by gender

*persuasive* and *coercive*. The first category refers to methods by which negotiators seek to build a positive understanding with their interlocutors by facilitating information-sharing, coalition-building, or backchanneling. The second category includes methods by which negotiators seek to extract benefits by weakening interlocutors’ resolve using stonewalling, ultimatums, or threats. The results presented below give us a slightly different picture of diplomat’s perceptions of the influence of virtual venues on these two tactical approaches.

When asked about whether virtual venues have changed the use of persuasive tactics, 46% of our respondents said yes, 39% disagreed, while 14% expressed no opinion. The surprisingly high rate of positive responses suggests that our initial assumption about virtual venues having the potential to alter the conduct of international negotiations is indeed correct. However, there is important nuance in the responses. For some, the change induced by virtual venues is quite positive as they ensure that everyone receives the same information, the meeting is faster (survey response, September 2, 2021), and they make it easier to have pre-meetings or post-meetings with other diplomats engaged in the negotiations (survey response, October 14, 2021). Cloud-based data sharing and private communication via messaging applications, especially WhatsApp, have been highlighted by some participants as particularly useful instruments for facilitating persuasive approaches.

For others, the change is not necessarily beneficial since virtual venues make it more difficult to build coalitions, information-sharing is graphics rather than content-oriented, and there is minimal or non-existent backchannelling as “WhatsApp and private chat messages cannot substitute for in-room approaches to other delegations” (survey responses, September 27 & November 5, 2021).

As Figure 1 shows, the two groups are relatively evenly split with respect to how virtual venues may impact the conduct of the negotiations, but follow-up meetings are perceived to be more affected by the change.

Importantly, there is also an interesting gender dimension associated with the use of persuasive tactics in virtual venues, with women being more inclined than men to perceive virtual venues as having a stronger influence on the conduct of the negotiations, but primarily because of their constraining role. While having direct access to other negotiators (for example, via direct messages), or scheduling one-one-one videocalls to understand the redlines are seen as beneficial (survey response, September 30, 2021), the limitations of virtual venues carry weight as well. As one of the women participants pointed out, “when you have a negotiation through the virtual field it is more difficult to discover what are the strong or weak points of the other party” (survey response, October 18, 2021). The implication is clear. The ability to be persuasive in your virtual engagement with the other negotiators rests on being able to constantly test and monitor how the other reacts to your positions, and this possibility is perceived to be somewhat limited online.

The impact of virtual venues on coercive tactics is perceived to be even stronger than in the case of persuasive tactics. Specifically, 57% of the diplomats in our sample agreed that virtual venues impacted the use of coercive tactics, 28% had reservations about this being the case, and 14% indicated they had no experience using these tactics in virtual venues. That being said, the perceived impact of virtual venues varies significantly among respondents. For some, the “virtual room softened the impressions of personal antagonism” (survey response, September 2, 2021) and therefore the use of coercive tactics was expected to be more subdued online. The short duration of online meetings could also make coercive tactics more difficult to deploy. For others, virtual venues made it easier for delegations to stonewall and stall the discussions by invoking technical difficulties or postponing meetings (survey responses, September 29 & 30, 2021). More creative negotiators would use coercive tactics to shape the agenda for discussion, for instance, by agreeing on subjects offline, presenting them as *fait accomplis* during meetings, and taking advantage of the confusion of other delegates to proceed. They could also change versions of agreements from one call to another, invoke “missing mails” that should have been sent but were not, or use the “silence” or “offline” times to nudge agreements and profit from confusion or miscommunication (survey response, September 27, 2021).

As Figure 3 illustrates, virtual venues are perceived to have a stronger impact on the conduct of negotiations and to a lesser extent on follow-up and preparatory meetings. However, similar to the previous case, the associations that our respondents have made about the use of coercive tactics in virtual venues

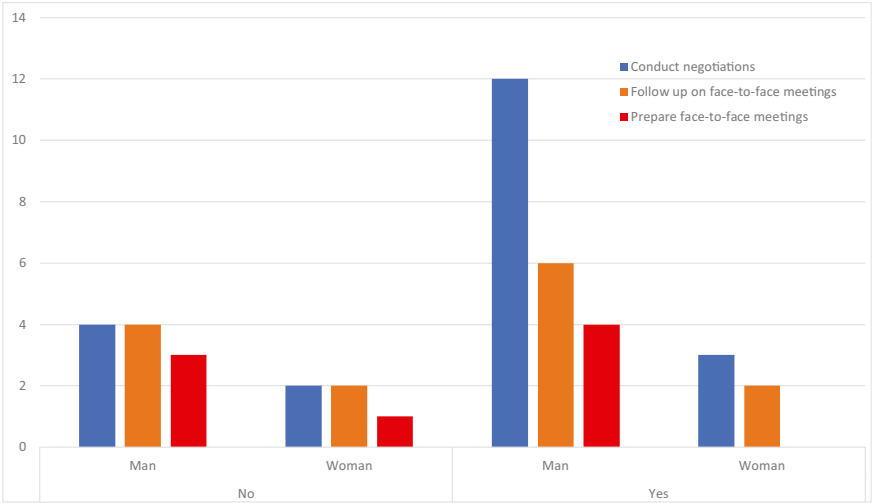


FIGURE 3 Impact of virtual venues on the use of coercive tactics by gender

reveal an interesting gender dimension, with men significantly more inclined than women to deploy these tactics online. The finding that women seem to appreciate more the use of persuasive rather than coercive tactics in virtual venues is particularly interesting, but needs to be qualified by the fact that, as suggested in Table 1 above, women are slightly more reserved than men when using virtual platforms for negotiations. As one woman (junior) participant pointed out, “virtual negotiations are helpful, but if possible, to avoid it would be better because of the lack of personal interaction that is inherent to a good outcome” (survey response, September 27, 2021).

When the issue is discussed from the reverse angle, that is, how the use of coercive and persuasive tactics may affect the effectiveness of virtual negotiations (see Table 3), participants largely agree that their impact could be substantial, especially when coercive tactics are involved. This seems to suggest that while the intrinsic features of virtual venues may constrain the application of persuasive tactics due to the relative inability of participants to connect well with each other, these features may nevertheless allow diplomats to frame the agenda of the discussion in a more coercive manner using, for instance, stonewalling or stalling tactics. This is an interesting finding that highlights a novel method by which virtual venues can influence the conduct of international negotiations, in a manner that is distinct from offline approaches. Specifically, virtual venues make it easier to deploy these tactics than in face-to-face meetings, thus generating a more direct and immediate effect on the structure of incentives and opportunities of the negotiating parties.



TABLE 3      Perceptions of the influence of coercive and persuasive tactics on the effectiveness of virtual negotiations

Effectiveness (1 weak, 5 strong)	Coercive tactics		Persuasive tactics	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1	2			2
2	2	2	1	2
3	5	3	4	4
4	6		5	2
5	1	3	3	1
Total	16	8	13	11

Lastly, it is important also to note that most of the respondents expressed confidence in the quality of the negotiation outcomes concluded in virtual venues. When asked about whether agreements reached online would need to be renegotiated once physical meetings resumed, 39% firmly disagreed, 32% said that might be possible, and about 15% found that to be necessary or did not know. The remaining 14% expressed no view. As one of the respondents indicated, the complexity of the agreement would be the key factor to consider when deciding whether physical negotiations would be required to complement those conducted online: “I believe that an agreement that requires more depth, might need to be renegotiated. I find, however, that even the most important resolution I negotiated virtually during the pandemic would not need to be renegotiated” (survey response, September 27, 2021). The strong level of confidence in the quality of the negotiation outcomes concluded online suggests that virtual venues are no longer seen as exotic places, located outside the realm of diplomatic activity. In fact, they are increasingly perceived as a credible alternatives to face-to-face negotiation arenas.

Discussion

Following the empirical analysis of survey responses, we reviewed and analyzed respondents’ qualitative answers to open-ended questions. This analysis was conducted inductively; key clauses were coded according to thematic nodes, which were subsequently reviewed and adjusted throughout the process. The

thematic code frame organized responses according to their alignment with our empirical findings; qualitative answers both corroborated these findings and suggested further areas of inquiry in this field. Unsurprisingly, every single respondent indicated that the procedural constraints inherent to virtual venues had somehow influenced the negotiation process and their ability to effectively negotiate therein. While they were not unanimous in their analysis of how and why this was the case, key points of agreement are identified and discussed below.

Several responses indicated that while the choice of virtual venue is often a necessity, these venues are not immune to the considerations that have historically influenced in-person venue selection. Not all virtual venues are created alike – features such as breakout rooms, integrated chat streams, and viewing format were all mentioned as crucial built-in aspects of the selected venue (survey responses, September 29, 28 & 27, 2021, respectively). Most commonly, respondents criticized virtual venues without a ‘gallery view’ function; limited layouts hampered their ability to see all other participants simultaneously (with the UN’s virtual venue of choice, Interprefy, drawing particular ire as “a very faulty platform” (survey response, September 27, 2021)). Accordingly, one respondent called for the development of more tailored platforms that can be adapted to “specific needs in any organizations,” such as that body’s procedural rules around points of order and voting (survey response, September 27, 2021). Interestingly, one respondent described the use of Microsoft Teams as “too American” – remarking on the “infantile” and unserious nature of using “emojis” in formal negotiations (survey response, September 29, 2021). These responses suggest that the choice of a specific virtual venue can echo considerations common to face-to-face negotiations; choosing the ‘shape of the table,’ for instance, remains laden with both symbolic and functional consequences.

In accordance with our empirical findings, most respondents agreed that the use of virtual venues for negotiation was ‘net positive’. While the overwhelming rationale offered by respondents was that virtual venues allowed continuity despite lockdown restrictions, some other interesting benefits were identified. One ‘positive’ that was repeatedly mentioned was the increased accessibility and geographic scope of the negotiation table (survey responses, September 15 & 29, October 14 & 19, 2021). While the choice of time zone may still reflect biases and power differentials among negotiators, several respondents agreed that virtual venues were “relatively easy to set up over different time zones” (survey response, September 29, 2021). Similarly, one respondent proposed that a collective benefit of virtual venue negotiation was the empowerment of a centralized mediator with the ability to “mute participants” or “interrupt the

meeting” in order to move the negotiating agenda forward (survey response, September 22, 2021). Aside from group-wide benefits, a contingent of respondents pointed to individual benefits: virtual venues allowed them to be more effective negotiators by reducing fatigue from travel, increasing preparatory time, and allowing more immediate access to online information (survey responses, October 10, September 2 & 22, 2021, respectively).

In contrast, a significant portion of respondents remarked on the deleterious individual and collective effects of ‘Zoom fatigue’ (survey response, Sept 15, 2021). Echoing popular conceptions of the term, diplomats identified screen time, schedule saturation, and lack of adequate rest and refreshment opportunities as key factors inducing fatigue (survey responses, September 30, 27 & 30, 2021, respectively). As a result, several respondents listed ‘attention’, ‘concentration’, and ‘distraction’ as challenges inherent to negotiation in virtual venues (survey responses, September 8, 15, 15, 26 & 26, 2021). One respondent even suggested that “numbers of people still interested by end of the first hour of discussion” is a key metric of success in a virtual venue negotiation (survey response, September 28, 2021). Some respondents noted that the tendency toward ‘Zoom fatigue’ necessitated a change in mediation strategies to draw out and engage “shy” or inattentive negotiators (survey response, September 26, 2021). While participant engagement can pose a similar challenge within face-to-face negotiations, features of virtual venues made it particularly difficult for mediators, chairs, and other negotiating parties to re-connect with disengaged negotiators. Many such negotiators resorted to familiar means to mitigate ‘Zoom fatigue’, including turning off their cameras – sometimes leaving their cameras off “even when taking the floor,” to the chagrin of their counterparts (survey response, September 30, 2021).

Our survey revealed several forms of (mal)adaption to negotiation in virtual venues. The most glaring examples were found in respondents’ descriptions of new and adapted negotiation tactics. In an open-ended question about the use of coercive tactics, several respondents pointed out the novel ways in which negotiating parties ‘stonewalled’ by delaying or postponing negotiating progress. Related to the phenomena discussed above, one respondent noted that it was easier for negotiators to hold up proceedings without inducing social pressure by “hiding behind a turned off camera” (survey response, September 29, 2021). Another tactic included stonewalling by indefinite postponement. Whereas the travel and logistical necessities of in-person negotiation may more effectively commit parties to engagement, meetings in virtual venues are more flexible – one respondent found it “[too] easy to postpone and propose new virtual meetings (ad eternum)” (survey response, September 29, 2021). When meetings did take place, they were often scheduled for short time

periods (such as half-hour sessions). One respondent indicated that these curtailed sessions (and the ease with which negotiators could ‘walk away’ from an overlong session) meant that stonewalling within sessions was more effective and less costly: “Time seems elongated. If someone is being coercive, you can delay the proceedings, retrench and strategize” (survey response, October 19, 2021). While stonewalling is by no means a new negotiation tactic, the ways in which this tactic has been adapted to the unique opportunities of the virtual venue are notable.

Our survey responses also indicated the development of a novel (if not surprising) negotiation tactic: the performance of technical difficulty. One respondent indicated that “some delegations took advantage of the technical weaknesses of the platform and the digital literacy (or lack thereof) of the moderators to disrupt the dynamics of the meeting and thus influence the agenda” (survey response, September 22, 2021). Stalling tactics included feigning connectivity issues or claiming to have difficulty with document and screen sharing. One respondent admitted that in virtual venues “it is easier to interrupt the meeting, to pretend you did not hear well” (survey response, September 22, 2021). While some negotiators may have seen this tactic as an effective way of manipulating negotiation pace, others argue that it is transparent theater. One respondent noted that “stonewalling is actually rude when in an online meeting, and pretexting IT troubles makes one look ridiculous, not unready to negotiate” (survey response, September 28, 2021). The age difference between the two respondents quoted above (with the former falling in the “35–50” category and the latter identifying as “under 35”) may be telling – revealing a generational difference in digital literacy that extends to a more finely attuned sense of which technical problems are believable and which are invented.

As revealed in our empirical analysis, negotiators’ degree of satisfaction with the efficacy of virtual venue negotiation correlated strongly with their confidence in their ability to read the room. Confirming Bramsen and Hagemann’s theorization on the “missing sense of peace” in virtual venues, we similarly found a gendered difference in assessments by men and women – with the latter expressing a more acute sense of limitation in their ability to make accurate and nuanced assessments of their peers and interlocutors in virtual space. One (woman) respondent quipped that it was “virtually (no pun intended) impossible to read the room” (survey response, September 27, 2021). Responses such as this indicate that the procedural constraints inherent to virtual venue selection may have differential effects on different demographic groups.

One reason that it was particularly difficult for negotiators to read the room may be, as Bjola and Manor (2018) note, because the notion of the ‘room’ itself has expanded to include citizens, press representatives, and civil society

organizations that engage with diplomats and negotiators in virtual spaces (including social media). Indeed, several respondents indicated an anxiety around ‘feeling overheard’ (survey responses, September 9, 26 & 30, October 14 & 19, 2021). Faith in the confidentiality and security of virtual venue negotiation was generally low. Interestingly, respondents were less concerned that outside parties may actually gain access to ‘meeting links’ and join the virtual venue independently; they were more concerned that negotiating counterparts with legitimate access to the virtual venue may record or relay information to outside parties without their consent or authorization. One respondent argued that “the fact that you can easily be recorded (without knowing it) and the ease with which colleagues in the virtual room can be communicating with others (even outside the room) makes things more complicated. At times you don’t know if you’re handling questions from people in the virtual room or the outside” (survey response, September 30, 2021). While some negotiators believed that the pressure of this transparency “[made] partners more prudent and more accurate in statements” (survey response, September 26, 2021), some found that this confidentiality concern limited information-sharing capacity. In some instances, for example, “printed material was held in-front of camera just to avoid sending originals over digital platforms” as a result of security concerns (survey response, October 14, 2021).

Despite a noted lack of confidence in the confidentiality and integrity of negotiation processes, our respondents exhibited a remarkable faith in the legitimacy and lasting power of agreements negotiated in virtual venues. A significant ‘null finding’ of our survey was a low level of concern regarding the legitimacy of virtual venue negotiation processes and outcomes. As mentioned in the previous section, several respondents indicated that decisions made and agreements reached in virtual venues were just as legitimate as in-person agreements (survey responses, September 26 & 30, October 14 & 14, 2021). As one respondent summarized, “There is no big difference in this sense between online and on-site negotiations. *Pacta sunt servanda* – agreements must be kept – in any means of achievement” (survey response, September 26, 2021). While some argued that these agreements may need to be “cemented” or “verified” by subsequent face-to-face meetings, these respondents were in the minority (7%).

These findings suggest that effective diplomatic adaptation should focus on developing innovative ways of negotiating that maximize the benefits of virtual spaces as venues rather than treating them as unique manifestations generated by the pandemic, which may become redundant once travel restrictions are fully removed. Echoing Bjola and Manor’s (2022) research on hybrid diplomacy, the use of virtual venues in international negotiations ought not

to be seen as replacements of physical meetings but rather as additional arenas for conducting negotiations. The main task in front of diplomats is not whether or not to use virtual venues, but when to do so and in what combinations with physical meetings. Our findings indicate, for instance, that while diplomats feel confident about the quality of negotiation outcomes concluded online, they nevertheless agree that complex agreements require a combination of meetings in physical and virtual venues. The urgency of the negotiations, scheduling flexibility, and the suitability of coercive and persuasive tactics to the task at hand are critical factors to consider when deciding on the best combination of physical and virtual venues for conducting negotiations.

Finally, our study raises interesting questions about the exercise of power in international negotiations conducted in virtual venues. Compared to traditional face-to-face negotiations, respondents indicated an increase in the use of coercive tactics to manipulate negotiation pace and agenda. As evidence from our survey indicates that virtual venues provide more opportunities for the implementation of coercive tactics, this suggests that virtual venues may serve to exacerbate existing power imbalances between negotiating parties. This represents a critical area for future research. Virtual venues may advantage those parties with less incentive to negotiate in the first place, as the incentive and opportunity structure of a virtual format facilitates stalling and stonewalling. Less powerful negotiating partners may find themselves further disadvantaged, as the tactical mechanisms for persuasion and coalition-building are more difficult to operationalize in the virtual venue format. Virtual venues are *not* neutral or equalizing spaces – future research and the development of hybrid negotiation strategies ought to incorporate this awareness, acknowledging that a combination of both on- and offline engagement could be crucial to rebalancing power dynamics within a negotiation.

## Conclusion

The use of ‘virtual venues’ for international diplomacy has changed the way that states negotiate power – and changed the very power dynamics within these negotiations. Overall, our study has found unanimous support for the conclusion that virtual venues not only affect the format of negotiations, but the substance of the negotiation process (and by extension, their outcomes). Perceptions of how these effects are manifest, however, were variable and at times completely opposed. While one respondent, for example, found that their counterparts were ‘poker faced’ and more ‘remote’ in a virtual venue (survey response, September 30, 2021), another respondent found their colleagues

more personable online, as “masks were more easily off” (survey response, September 28, 2021). We will doubtless be contending with these differential perceptions and effects of virtual venues for decades to come.

Despite this variability, our analysis of survey responses uncovered several crucial findings. First, and unsurprisingly, diplomats’ evaluation of negotiation efficacy in virtual venues was directly related to their perception of their ability to read the room. Diplomats viewed these venues as effective when they were perceived to be an adequate analogue for traditional in-person negotiation; feeling a lack of social cues and connection was related to dissatisfaction with the virtual venue format. Secondly, we uncovered a difference in tactical approaches within virtual venue negotiations. Persuasive tactics were difficult to effectuate in virtual venues, while coercive tactics such as stalling and stonewalling were more easily employed. We also encountered a novel negotiation tactic: feigning technical difficulty with the mechanics of the virtual venue itself in order to stall or delay negotiation.

While diplomats expressed reservations regarding the efficacy of virtual venue negotiation and specifically the confidentiality of these venues, they generally supported the legitimacy of virtual negotiation processes and agreements reached therein. Diplomats agreed that virtual venues are here to stay, and for the most part have adapted accordingly. We argue, however, that there is more adaptation ahead – moving forward, diplomats will need to move beyond conceptualizing virtual venues as stand-ins for face-to-face venues, and instead find new ways of engaging with virtual venues *as* venues in their own right. This will entail further examination of the opportunities and challenges presented by these venues and may require diplomats and negotiators to undertake additional specialized training on effectively operating in these spaces.

This study has generated several areas of inquiry to guide future research and implementation of virtual venue negotiation. One avenue for research concerns participant inclusivity and engagement. How does the number of participants in a virtual negotiation impact diplomats’ ability to read the room and reach agreement? Is there a ‘limit’ to the number of participants that can be meaningfully included, and how is this related to the ‘view’ format of the virtual venue selected? Similarly, how can mediators, meeting chairs, and negotiating parties better engage reluctant or withdrawn parties – and how should mediator/chair selection adapt to include these considerations? How does ‘Zoom fatigue’ differ from the forms of travel and negotiation fatigue common to face-to-face diplomacy? How can ‘Zoom fatigue’ be mitigated to make virtual negotiation more effective? What are the effects of time zone differentials in virtual venue negotiations? In general, what makes one virtual

venue more effective than another – and how can existing venues be adapted (or new ones built) to provide the ‘best’ international negotiation platform?

Among this litany of unanswered questions, one crucial area for future research is the potential for virtual venues to exacerbate power imbalances between negotiating parties. Venue selection is always a careful navigation of benefits and trade-offs, and selecting a virtual venue is no different. Depending on the negotiation context and content, choosing a virtual venue may benefit one party over others; in such cases, continued in-person contact and/or increased hybridity may be necessary to rebalance power dynamics for more fair and effective negotiation outcomes.

## References

- Adler-Nissen, Rebecca and Alena Drieschova (2019). “Track-change diplomacy: Technology, affordances, and the practice of international negotiations.” *International Studies Quarterly* 63, 3: 531–545.
- Berridge, G. R. (2015). *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*. 5th ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bjola, Corneliu and Ilan Manor (2018). “Revisiting Putnam’s two-level game theory in the digital age: domestic digital diplomacy and the Iran nuclear deal.” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 31, 1: 3–32.
- Bjola, Corneliu and Ilan Manor (2022). “The Rise of Hybrid Diplomacy: From Digital Adaptation to Adoption.” *International Affairs* 98, 2, March: 471–491.
- Bramsen, Isabel and Anine Hagemann (2021). “The missing sense of peace: diplomatic approachment and virtualization during the COVID-19 lockdown.” *International Affairs* 97, 2: 539–560.
- Chasek, Pamela (2022). “Is It the End of the COP as We Know It? An Analysis of the First Year of Virtual Meetings in the UN Environment and Sustainable Development Arena.” *International Negotiation* 28, 1.
- Cheng, Xusen, Ying Bao, Xiaodan Yu, and Yuanyanhang Shen (2021). “Trust and Group Efficiency in Multinational Virtual Team Collaboration: A Longitudinal Study.” *Group Decision and Negotiation* 30, 3: 529–551.
- Coleman, Katharina P. (2013). “Locating norm diplomacy: Venue change in international norm negotiations.” *European Journal of International Relations* 19, 1: 163–186.
- Galin, Amira, Miron Gross, and Gavriel Gosalker (2007). “E-negotiation versus face-to-face negotiation what has changed – if anything?” *Computers in Human Behavior* 23, 1: 787–797.
- Henrikson, Alan K. (2005). *The Geography of War and Peace*. Oxford: Elsevier Ltd.



- Holmes, Marcus (2013). "The Force of Face-to-Face Diplomacy: Mirror Neurons and the Problem of Intentions." *International Organization* 67, 4: 829–861.
- Holmes, Marcus and Nicholas J. Wheeler (2020). "Social bonding in diplomacy." *International Theory* 12, 1: 133–161.
- Klein, Richard, Katy Harris, Inés Bakhtaoui, Frida Lager, Andres Lindblom, and Marcus Carson (2021). *Building climate diplomacy back better: imagining the UNFCCC meetings of tomorrow*. Stockholm, Sweden: Stockholm Environment Institute.
- Marchi, Sofia, Niccolò Targi, Paul M. Liston, and Oronzo Parlangeli (2020). "The possible role of empathy and emotions in virtual negotiation." *Ergonomics* 63, 3: 263–273.
- Maurer, Heidi and Nicholas Wright (2020). "A new paradigm for EU diplomacy? EU council negotiations in a time of physical restrictions." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 15, 4: 556–568.
- Naylor, Tristen (2020). "All that's lost: The hollowing of summit diplomacy in a socially distanced world." *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 15, 4: 583–598.
- Salacuse, Jeswald W. and Jeffrey Z. Rubin (1990). "Your Place or Mine?" *Negotiation Journal* 6, 1: 5.
- Schneidman, Witney and Brionne Dawson (2020). *The US and Kenya Launch Negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement. Will They Succeed?* Washington: The Brookings Institution.
- Shear, Michael D. (2021). "Biden and China's Xi Will Hold Virtual Summit on Monday." *The New York Times*, 12 November.
- Shimazu, Naoko (2014). "Diplomacy As Theatre: Staging the Bandung Conference of 1955." *Modern Asian Studies* 48, 1: 225–252.
- Stepansky, Joseph and Mersiha Gadzo (2021). "World Leaders address United Nations General Assembly." *Al-Jazeera*, September 22.
- Thomas, David R. (2006). "A General Inductive Approach for Analyzing Qualitative Evaluation Data." *The American Journal of Evaluation* 27, 2: 237–246.
- Vadrot, Alice B. M., Arne Langlet, Ina Tessnow-Von Wysocki, Petro Tolochko, Emmanuelle Brogat, and Silvia C. Ruiz-Rodríguez (2021). "Marine biodiversity negotiations during COVID-19: A new role for digital diplomacy?" *Global Environmental Politics* 21, 3: 169–186.
- Wang, Emilie (2020). "Anthropocene in an age of pandemics." *Anthropocene* 30: 100247.
- Wong, Seanon S. (2016). "Emotions and the communication of intentions in face-to-face diplomacy." *European Journal of International Relations* 22, 1: 144–167.
- Wong, Seanon S. (2020). "Mapping the Repertoire of Emotions and Their Communicative Functions in Face-to-Face Diplomacy." *International Studies Review* 22, 1: 77–97.