Review Essay

The Material Body of Diplomacy and the Power of Interpersonal Communications

Jason Dittmer

Diplomatic Material: Affect, Assemblage, and Foreign Policy, Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2017, ISBN 978-0822368823, 192 pp., \$55.36 (hardcover); ISBN 978-0822369110, \$23.91 (paperback).

Robert F. Trager

Diplomacy: Communication and the Origins of International Order, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, ISBN 978-1107627123, 303 pp., \$63.61 (hardcover); ISBN 978-1107049161, \$14.62 (paperback).

Marcus Holmes

Face-to-Face Diplomacy: Social Neuroscience and International Relations, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, ISBN 978-1108417075, 314 pp., \$73.64 (hardcover).

Nicholas J. Wheeler

Trusting Enemies, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, ISBN 978-0199696475, 384 pp., \$39.95 (hardcover).

Media newsfeeds and front-page articles continuously deliver protocol-led bland diplomatic messages, with imagery of handshakes or phone calls between political leaders or high-ranking diplomats framing such news. These images frequently depict meetings between two or more teams, pictured seated, discussing issues around a large desk. Despite the proliferation of these recognizable visuals, academics and practitioners in the fields of international

relations and diplomacy usually have greater insight into such meetings: detailed views of what happened (or did not happen), what the background was, the substantial work that predetermined the meeting or made it possible in the first place, and the outcomes of such diplomatic negotiations. Academics and practitioners can interpret diplomatic signals, estimate possible consequences of the meetings, and, finally, foresee or predict the possible next steps of these diplomatic relations. In other words, there are complex and multi-dimensional issues at stake in international negotiations, the importance of which is often hidden behind any stock photo-esque imagery or official statements.

If we consider the substantial work involved in the everyday practices of multi-dimensional diplomacy, several questions arise here as to what the key driving forces of international relations might be. First, how do historical circumstances or material resources influence state behaviour? Second, is the role of interpersonal communications a more powerful shaper of world politics, beyond the complexity of historical or material considerations?

While these questions are not new, they attract scholars' attention nonetheless. Moreover, the era of digital diplomacy is challenging how diplomacy has traditionally been viewed, driving somewhat of a renaissance in diplomatic studies. The reimagining, reconsidering and, above all, the increasing theorization of the performative and material body of diplomacy, on the one hand, and face-to-face diplomacy, on the other, have introduced valuable and anticipatory insights for diplomatic studies.

It is always a hard task to explain fully diplomatic change, and to claim what issue or actor played a more important role — that is, whether taking a material perspective or emphasizing interpersonal encounters between state leaders offers a better explanation for such change. However, considerations of history, its narration and the pre-existing structural, social and economic conditions in which states operate and build relations with one another are arguably more important than interpersonal communications. Yet when political leaders negotiate with each other, there is nevertheless an opportunity for each leader to understand the other's intentions in order to deliver desirable outcomes. Different perspectives on political models, cultures and values can influence perceptions of another's intentions, which can remain as obstacles to negotiations if we focus solely on interpersonal communications as markers of diplomatic change. In this case, the material considerations that define inter-state relations can be crucial parts of international negotiations.

The four books reviewed here contribute immensely to diplomatic studies in both theoretical and empirical terms. Based on the contents of the books and the historical periods that they examine, I suggest separating the texts into two groups that purposely reflect the questions raised earlier: (1) Jason Dittmer's

Diplomatic Material: Affect, Assemblage, and Foreign Policy and Robert Trager's *Diplomacy: Communication and the Origins of International Order*; and (2) Marcus Holmes' *Face-to-Face Diplomacy: Social Neuroscience and International Relations* and Nicholas Wheeler's *Trusting Enemies*.

The first group's focus is multi-dimensional diplomacy in its material body, which includes assemblages of material circulations of diplomatic objects, such as signalling, exchanges, documents, databases and other expressions of how information is conveyed and debated among states. The second group discusses how interpersonal encounters between state leaders are fundamental to how international relations are shaped, altered, improved, or worsened. Both groupings of books do not stand in distinction from one another, but rather demonstrate the overlaps in how analyses of diplomatic practices evolve and the continuous scholarly efforts to theorize diplomacy as academic discipline. In doing so, these texts provide a range of theories and empirical studies that allow readers to examine different case studies from alternative angles.

First, I will focus on the theme of the material body in diplomatic exchanges and signalling, to discuss what can be learned from extensive circulations of documents and other assemblages of diplomatic communications. I then turn to the theme of trust in interpersonal communications, examining how face-to-face diplomacy can be viewed as transformational in international negotiations. Finally, I raise key questions and concerns related to engaging with both gender and a non-Western perspective on such studies that struck me while reading these books, to consider how the proposed diplomatic theories and empirical cases of these texts would benefit from further engagement with positions that are often marginalized in diplomacy studies.

The Material Body of Multi-Dimensional Diplomacy and Inter-State Relations

Material arrangements influencing the performances of diplomats, politicians, or policy-makers are an important part of any political possibilities for change, as they are key to shaping the configuration of inter-state relations. Dittmer's *Diplomatic Material* and Trager's *Diplomacy* both illustrate the importance of the material body of diplomatic interactions, including bureaucratic capacity, and signalling communication, which are comprised of physical and non-human assemblages and inferences. Such materials include a range of communication media, databases, letters, reports, telegraph and fibre-optic networks, and even micro-waves. The communication practices related to this material are a complex mechanism through which states maintain their relations.

Using the framework of assemblage theory, Dittmer analyses the material circulations of documents that compose the body of an international community and define its functioning, efficiency and workability. Assemblage theory perceives the state and diplomacy as a system of self-organized practices of production and circulation of material arrangements or assemblages. The material arrangements depend on many factors, including geographical location, availability of evolving technologies that are used to produce assemblages, the specifics of operational procedures and processes of socialization; when, for instance, interoperability — information exchange — and solidarity between states is the main driver of diplomatic relations.

Focusing on British foreign policy-making, Dittmer uses the term ‘transnational circulation’ (Dittmer, pp. 3-4) to underline how the modern diplomatic system functions under conditions influenced by globalization and the development of international community. Dittmer characterizes the international community as a constant from which individual political subjectivities emerge, with face-to-face meetings a form of protocol. The individual subjectivities of political actors, and their interpersonal encounters, are viewed as secondary to the transnational circulation of primary assemblages.

Throughout the case studies, Dittmer conceptualizes the idea that relations within the international community are defined by material flows. It is the world in which everyday politics is an improvisation of state elites. The proposed assemblage theory directs the sites and objects that fit into the transnational body politic as formed by each state’s assemblages. Assemblage theory applied here also suggests that a state’s material resources are central to forming geopolitical assemblages (Dittmer, p. 138). The vulnerability of material resources might shift each a state’s assemblage formation.

The four case studies incorporate: (1) the materialities of the nineteenth-century British Foreign Office; (2) intelligence operations between the United Kingdom and the United States during the Second World War; (3) the mechanisms for maintaining interoperability and standardization within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) during the period after the Second World War; and (4) the European Common Foreign and Security Policy’s processes in policy-making. These case studies add great value to a better understanding of how transnational governmental circulations of information determine the foreground of international relations, which impacts the personal contacts of state leaders, and how assemblages diversify human and non-human actors implicated in any political moment when the change in regimes, technologies, or other circumstances is constant (Dittmer, p. 15).

Investigating Britain as a geopolitical ‘hub’, Dittmer asserts that analysis of the body of assemblage circulations, collective practices and diplomatic

protocols allows us to understand better the range of components that affect foreign policy-making. He concludes that British foreign policy, the heart of geopolitical assemblages, is dependent on the external environment and that this is becoming an increasingly important consideration of British foreign policy-making. This counter-historical preposition contrasts with the traditional perceptions of the role of Britain in the world, of British foreign policy-making itself as having been considerably influential upon world affairs (Dittmer, p. 127). For instance, British intelligence cooperation practices that are shared with other states intersect with British foreign-policy apparatus and diplomacy: the top-secret cooperation with the United States obstructed intelligence cooperation with NATO, while the Anglosphere, or Anglo-Saxon world, hindered intelligence cooperation with the European Union.

Even with an overall focus on Britain, each case study provides a potential theoretical framework for all types of assemblages and considers varying shifts in technologies, institutions, systems, diplomatic protocols, hierarchy and self-organization. Dittmer concludes that assemblage theory helps in approaching international relations through the observation of the physical body of diplomacy, understanding the growing power of bureaucracy, and explaining the role of major powers and the presence of smaller states in geopolitics.

Like the physical body of assemblages, diplomatic correspondence is another important object for examination. Drawn from the *Confidential Print*, the archive of British diplomatic correspondence, Trager's *Diplomacy* deploys a statistical analysis of a great scale of data collated in order to evaluate 'intention understanding' and diplomatic signalling between potential adversaries. Trager uses multiple theories of signalling and communication, and evaluates eight proposed signalling hypotheses. These signalling hypotheses aim to demonstrate how information is conveyed between potential adversaries and how these adversaries convince each other of their particular intentions.

Diplomatic signalling is primarily conducted privately and is the diplomacy of elites, which contrasts with the concept of public diplomacy (Trager, p. 17). Trager demonstrates that private diplomacy needs be seen through the lens of pre-existing material conditions when personal diplomatic interactions have limited potential to alter international engagement between states. Moreover, Trager references Marcus Holmes' approach to face-to-face diplomacy and maintains that psychological signals in interpersonal communications are almost never found in the documentary record (Trager, p. 42). Pre-existing conditions stem from the extensive historical periods of time when diplomats had already been provided with and had become carriers of certain information about their states' geopolitical interests (if any) and plans, and states were usually expected to behave in the future just as they had in the past. Elite

diplomacy conducted behind closed doors is difficult to study with certainty, instead relying on inferences regarding what may have happened.

Among various empirical examples, the main statistical analysis is based on two cases of diplomatic signalling and communications during the Russian and German pre-war diplomatic engagement in 1912, and British and German pre-war diplomacy during 1938-1939. Trager tests the signalling hypothesis and discusses the mechanisms of interpreting diplomatic signals such as coding, special phrases, or intentional leaks of information to help understand an adversary's intentions. Trager concludes that documentary evidence, in both empirical cases, supports the increased likelihood of conflicts and certain expectations of states to create international order in the following years. Trager also examines the model of diplomatic signalling among three states (the addition of Serbia in the first case noted above, and Czechoslovakia in the second), maintaining that diplomatic support is often expected to increase the probability of war. Consideration of all factors, including specific diplomatic signals, could be a solid basis from which to understand an adversary's intentions (Trager, p. 191).

I note here that Trager's *signalling hypotheses* seem to be undermining the role of personal encounters in diplomatic negotiations, in terms of their influence on inter-state relations. Yet private diplomatic communications are viewed as mechanisms for how states disseminate information about others' perceived intentions. Trager analyses diplomatic correspondence statistically and shows how states develop perceptions of each other's intentions, inferring from this the likely future behaviour of other actors. For example, a state's military capability is not always a good source of accurate inferences about a state's behaviour. Military factors are not always evidence of a state's aggressive intentions towards another state. In the meeting in Vienna in 1961 between Soviet Premier Khrushchev and US President Kennedy regarding a German peace treaty and West Berlin, both leaders conducted a more assertive negotiation style than each had performed previously, talking about a potential nuclear war. However, following diplomatic exchanges, the process through which states develop perceptions of each other, clashing interests were eventually shaped into diplomatic conversations and resolutions.

Trager proves empirically that inferences made in private diplomacy differ from inferences derived from security-related considerations. This means that communication signalling military factors are more prevalent in private interactions than in public security-related dealings. In private communications, leaders are much more convincing in signalling threats, while public communication is often conveyed in a far more calm and diplomatic tone.

Face-to-Face Diplomacy and the Exploration of Trust

The importance of the material body of diplomacy and diplomatic communications can hardly be debated. However, as Holmes and Wheeler point out in their texts, evaluation of the role of face-to-face interactions in diplomacy is nonetheless of comparable importance. Analyses of interpersonal relations between state leaders — as an opportunity for building trust or, conversely, as an attempt to deceive a counterpart — are important to re-examine, especially when the consequences of these interactions have wider political impacts.

Holmes's *Face-to-Face Diplomacy* and Wheeler's *Trusting Enemies* touch upon similar subjects and prioritize state leaders' personal encounters over the material body of diplomacy. Here, interpersonal contacts and trust are considered to be two of the most crucial elements in overall human communication. The scholars are friends, are very familiar with each other's works and have co-authored publications together. Both books were written contemporaneously and in conversation with each other, and were discussed during joint workshops. As Wheeler has mentioned in the acknowledgements' section of his book, both scholars have already mapped out a new co-authored book. These reflections might be evidence of how mutual understanding within working academic relationships fundamentally enrich both research projects.

I begin by examining Holmes' book, as the theory of face-to-face diplomacy that he explores provides a first step to understanding Wheeler's theory of bonding trust between counterparts, including between enemies.

Looking at diplomacy as a process of structuring, Holmes asserts that the unit of diplomatic communication and interaction is a relevant source for analysis, and assists in the construction of a theory of face-to-face diplomacy. Leaders and diplomats often insist on meeting face-to-face; personal encounters allow state leaders and diplomats to achieve outcomes that they would not have been able to achieve otherwise. On the other hand, Holmes illustrates how agentic theories in international relations place diplomacy in a position of 'pre-existing distributions', downplaying the role of personal interactions (Holmes, p. 11). This assumes that structural theories of diplomacy are static in general, which means the underlying conditions do not easily give rise to change. It would therefore be surprising for international relations to change — unless there was another explanation, which we can find through focusing on interpersonal communication.

Holmes demonstrates that face-to-face diplomacy has value and that personal meetings might be the cornerstone of world politics in adhering to the goals of diplomacy, as well as creating misperceptions, or engaging in

deception. Empirical cases of face-to-face encounters include four historically notable diplomatic affairs: (1) meetings between US President Reagan and Soviet Premier Gorbachev in the mid-1980s that led to a peaceful ending of the Cold War; (2) Gorbachev's engagement with the United States and European leadership regarding the German reunification of 1989; (3) the Camp David Accords between Israel and Egypt in 1978-1979; and (4) the problem of deception that lay beneath meetings between British Prime Minister Chamberlain and German Führer Hitler in the lead up to the Second World War.

Empirical chapters provide examples of multiple forms of interpersonal communications. Holmes emphasizes that understanding the intentions of the other goes along with the exploration of trust, and notes that the precise understanding of the intentions of a counterpart is not always a guarantee of a peaceful outcome. The matter of 'intention understanding' and the exploration of trust are closely related, which may be expanded furthermore to understanding how intuition and belief intersect with perspectives on intention. The concept of 'intention understanding' also crosses over with Trager's *Diplomacy*, which stresses the impersonal aspects of understanding intentions between adversaries.

Developing a theory of face-to-face diplomacy, Holmes integrates neuroscience, psychology, international relations and diplomacy into this conceptual framework. This integration opens up broader prospects for enhancing international relations and diplomacy theories and how they can be practically implemented to understand world politics. For instance, when using computation modelling, individuals may derive probabilities of trust that may assist those individuals to develop trust interpersonally (Holmes, p. 251); behavioural neuroscience and international relations can investigate face-to-face interactions and observe the casual mechanisms of action within higher-level outcomes (Holmes, p. 257); and conducting experiments on the mirroring system may serve in making predictions about complex social interactions (Holmes, p. 258). To realize how 'intention understanding' operates, Holmes employs neuroscience techniques that enable the detection and reading of brain signals, both on the level where information is gained unconsciously and, on the level where information is consciously analysed by an individual. Using neuroscience could be a helpful tool for understanding the process of bonding trust and reading signals of honesty or deception.

In his book *Trusting Enemies*, Wheeler approaches the concept of trust in international relations by formulating a concept of interpersonal trust. Wheeler initially rejects premises that: 1) trust only exists in close personal relationships and cannot be obtained at the international level; and 2) if interpersonal trust exists at the global level, this would not substantively affect the

behaviour of states. Instead, Wheeler emphasizes the importance of interpersonal trust and develops a theory of bonding trust between leaders who represent states with adversarial relationships, and a theory of signal interpretation that evaluates an accurate interpretation of signals with peaceful intentions. Wheeler argues that if state leaders operate with an adversarial image in mind, their corresponding signals are not likely to be interpreted as sincere and peaceful. Wheeler also asserts that bonding trust might be achieved through the positive identification of interests and the humanization of the enemy (Wheeler, p. 51).

Trusting Enemies explores interpersonal trust through the dimension of state behaviour via a focus on interpersonal dimensions of inter-state relations. Wheeler emphasizes how interpersonal encounters between leaders might affect a state's foreign policy agenda in the context of relations between two adversaries. Wheeler also raises a very important issue on the sustainability and continuity of a state's foreign policy, broaching the question of building trust among successor leaders, and how memories of past wrongs, defeats and humiliations are crucial to solving security dilemmas and contributing to the production and reproduction of adversarial images. Wheeler concludes that bonded trust is never an absolute end point, while successful cases of interpersonal communication might not be replicated by successors (Wheeler, p. 279). Wheeler also states that bad faith, thinking of inherited traits, or negative behaviours might lead to missed opportunities for cooperation. Based on empirical observations, Wheeler argues that bonding trust leads to state leaders' identity transformation inhabiting a mental state of trust.

The two parts of *Trusting Enemies* can be structurally considered and assessed as follows. Part One conceptualizes theories of trust, its building and interpretations, as well as the concept of adversarial images via a consideration of social-psychological and rational-choice approaches, which then raises the question of how trust can be developed between enemies. Part Two is empirical and includes three case studies of adversarial interpersonal interactions: (1) the US–Soviet Union interaction of 1985–1989; (2) India–Pakistan from 1998–1999; and (3) the US–Iran interaction of 2009–2010.

The empirical case of the Reagan–Gorbachev encounters is identical to that of Holmes. Both scholars argue that interpersonal interactions between Reagan and Gorbachev were critical for the bonding process when the two leaders became a new collective 'we' identity, emphasizing the importance of the right chemistry and intuition in building this trust (Wheeler, p. 183). While Holmes explains this scenario by simulating intentions and theorizing about the mirroring system in the brain, Wheeler evaluates theories of trust specifically. Both scholars argue that personal relationships between the US

and Soviet leaders were crucial in promoting and consolidating mutual trust, when adversarial images were transformed on both sides, helping to generate the peaceful end of the Cold War. Both scholars believe that a leader's intuition should be counted on for developing interpersonal communications. Both suggest that trust between Gorbachev and Reagan emerged through interpersonal communication, with the right chemistry and strong intuition of both leaders.

Another crossover theme was explored in the three books by Trager, Holmes and Wheeler. This is the problem of communication between adversaries when they have reasons to deceive each other. Trager asserts that addressing the issue of deception between adversaries is placed in the sphere of the international system of the balances of conflicting motives. Rationale and the existence of functioning diplomatic channels are the mechanisms, Trager argues, that determine the likelihood of conflicts. Moreover, human group allegiances often shift because of states' material interests. In this regard, Trager's statistical analysis of diplomatic inferences shows a relatively low percentage of inferences devoted to the personal characteristics of individual leaders and comprises approximately three per cent of all inferences (Trager, p. 39). Holmes' case study exploring the deception between Chamberlain and Hitler relates to Wheeler's empirical study of interactions between India's Prime Minister Vajpayee and Pakistan's Prime Minister Sharif, as it explores the problem of the intended deception that caused a shift in international ordering. Wheeler, comparatively, argues that it is a state leader's lack of capacity (for example, limited by a national government or elites) that may lead involuntarily to trust defection. In the last two cases, even though interpersonal interaction took place, trust bonding did not develop, and the situations led to future conflicts.

In sum, both *Face-to-Face Diplomacy* and *Trusting Enemies* recognize the causal power of the interpersonal dimension in bonding trust, understanding each other's intentions and altering state leaders' mental states from risk calculation in conflict situations to trust emergence. Both Holmes and Wheeler discuss the mechanism of political leaders mirroring each other, whether allies or adversaries, while exploring trust.

Non-Western Perspectives on Diplomacy?

Patterns of culture and civilizational areas, on one hand, and the commonality of the international society of states created by and for the West, on the other, might be perceived as interdependent yet contrasting entities. Every state has distinct cultural patterns derived from cultural traditions and internal

community standards that influence its behaviour. Non-Western states, too, bring their own cultural values, practices and histories to diplomacy that cannot be put aside or neglected. In this regard, what puzzles me is whether the material body of diplomatic interactions, or face-to-face diplomacy, as a Eurocentric construct can be truly applicable to non-Western diplomatic practices.

If we consider emotions, we might think that people express their emotions in a similar way. Some would argue that the emotions of happiness or grief are universal, and their performance can be recognized accurately by other people. On the other hand, shared facial expressions and, sometimes, body language, are not helpful for 'intention understanding'; situating the mirroring system when reading non-verbal signals and practising social perceptiveness of what others think might depend on different cultural performances of emotion. Additionally, diplomatic culture is a universal institution with shared etiquette and protocols, but the ways in which state leaders or top diplomats across different states interact and communicate with each other are nevertheless influenced by different kinds of social or national customs.

For example, Dittmer refers to a 'civilizational' identity that reflects the Anglosphere, the West and Europe (Dittmer, p. 123). More narrowly, the case studies in *Diplomatic Material* show that British foreign policy-making considers how it affects the world through assemblages of transnational circulations. This Anglocentric dimension clearly only demonstrates a Western perspective. At the same time, Dittmer points out that bottom-up processes put national differences at the core; hence they do not eradicate or exterminate those national differences.

Trager's signalling hypotheses in diplomacy, together with the interpretation of these signals, might also be re-examined in a similar way when considering different nationalities. As suggested by Trager, mathematical formulas and equations might fairly test and evaluate the accuracy of interpreting signals in diplomatic materials of non-Western diplomatic communication when/if the diplomatic material is available and accessible.

The interpersonal encounters of Holmes' *Face-to-Face Diplomacy* emphasize the role of intuition, psyche and the right chemistry that may occur between counterparts. As the study shows, elusive sensations are sometimes crucial in the exploration of trust between leaders, even those with contrasting ideologies, such as the United States and Soviet Union. Yet the deception of Chamberlain by Hitler could arguably have been possible because of compatible culture — Hitler's deception was possible because he could use his behaviour to manipulate Chamberlain into believing his intentions because of shared cultural codes.

Holmes does not touch upon national differences, except for a brief mention about cultural varieties that should be acknowledged, but a case study devoted to the Camp David Accords demonstrates that mistrust between Egypt's President Sadat and Israel's Prime Minister Begin was based on a gap between their two nations. Even though the Camp David agreement was a success, the result was achieved through US President Jimmy Carter's personal mediation and Sadat's position of being a 'rational egoist', whose interactions were calculative and pragmatic, hence resultative and assessable. However, talking about unconditional and successful bonding trust between Israeli, Egyptian and American state leaders is problematic, even though the leaders were able to reach resolutions and ease tensions in the region.

One of Wheeler's empirical examples is entirely non-Western: the case study of Vajpayee and Sharif, who attempted to develop interpersonal trust and then normalize Indo-Pakistani relations. Their efforts in bonding trust and proving each other trustworthy were successful, despite being challenged by circumstances beyond Vajpayee's and Sharif's control. Despite religious differences, the theory of bonding trust is to be applied here: both leaders had shared culture and history and belonged to the same geographical region. The theory is applicable when commonalities prevail.

In contrast, as Wheeler explores in another case study, negotiations on the Iran deal between US President Obama and Iran's Supreme Leader Khamenei and between Obama and Iran's President Ahmadinejad in 2008-2009 failed because of the ideological gulf between the two states, exacerbating mutual suspicion between the Iranians and the Americans (Wheeler, p. 265). If bonding trust is possible between like-minded, culturally and regionally close counterparts, there is a logical proposition that ideological difference, by comparison, might fail to produce productive engagement between counterparts.

In terms of the effectiveness of interpersonal meetings between Vajpayee and Sharif, the Indo-Pakistani case was technically successful, while the contradictory nature of the US-Iranian deal failed, even with the relative success that the Obama administration later achieved in 2013. It might be that, in concert with political and economic reasons, the Trump administration's withdrawal from the Iran deal in 2018 theoretically confirms the continuous growth of mistrust between Iran and the United States that exacerbates the inability or unwillingness of state leaders to communicate with one another without adversarial images.

One slight note of criticism from a reader's perspective is that Dittmer's and Trager's texts sometimes appear rough and uneven in representing historical narratives, switching the topics and historical examples spontaneously and randomly. On the other hand, the logical and consistent narrative is a strong

point of Holmes' and Wheeler's books. Also, in Holmes' and Wheeler's texts, there are a number of similarities and even repetitions, while the key themes often coincide. However, these minor criticisms are not by any means meant to diminish the importance of the proposed theories and hypotheses and empirical observations for studies of international relations and diplomacy.

Face-to-Face Diplomacy emphasizes the crucial role of interpersonal contacts and is advantageous to other interactions for building or improving inter-state relations when needed. How exactly these interactions can proceed might depend on national and regional components. Raising questions about non-Western perspectives on diplomacy is a reflection of the growing power of non-Western states, which might produce historical transformations in universal diplomatic culture, protocol and practices, and the possible emergence or revival of non-Western diplomatic traditions that should be taken into account in diplomacy and diplomatic studies.

Additionally, a key absence in all four texts is the role of gender in diplomacy. Questions arise regarding how theories of face-to-face diplomacy and bonding trust between Western and non-Western counterparts might be influenced by gendered power structures that problematize the bridge between social neuroscience and psychology in 'intention understanding'. The limitations of diplomatic interactions caused by gendered constructs are best demonstrated in the restricted or limited opportunities that female diplomats experience during high-level negotiations. Such obstacles may further exacerbate misunderstandings and misinterpretations between diplomats.

The absence of visible non-Western perspectives and lack of consideration of gender provide opportunities for new directions to be undertaken and elaborated upon in further research in the field of diplomatic studies. Holmes is within his rights to say that there are more questions raised than sufficient answers provided (Holmes, p. 260). Illuminating whether cultural, gendered or ideological differences exist, and how they impact diplomatic practices in the multi-polar world, is an important area of exploration for international relations and diplomacy scholars. Western views on international relations and diplomacy theories undoubtedly dominate academic literature. The need for non-Western theories of diplomacy would act not just as an alternative, but as a valuable addition to existing work in the field.

In light of recent events with the easing of tensions on the Korean peninsula, a number of meetings linking leaders and top diplomats of the United States, both Koreas, China, Japan and Russia might be looked at through the lens of face-to-face diplomacy and the exploration of trust that ultimately leads to shifts in politics in North-East Asia. While the real outcomes brought about by summits and meetings are yet to be fully evaluated, these models

of diplomatic engagement can be framed by the aforementioned theories in diplomacy. North Korea's Kim Jong Un exercises a security-dilemma sensibility before a process of bonding trust with regional and major powers. Unlike multilateral four- or six-party talks, bilateral interactions are fast moving and structurally advantageous. However, the process of bonding trust that includes positive identifications of interest and humanization needs to be evaluated. This theoretical assumption applies precisely to Kim Jong Un's ongoing face-to-face diplomacy and bonding trust with regional and/or international partners, and would be an interesting case for evaluation.

This review essay does not attempt to set conventions of Western and non-Western diplomacy against each other. Contemporary history suggests various examples of successfully building alliances, based on improved global communication, and maintaining healthy relationships between the West and non-West when shared values and acceptance of a rules-based order form the core of such interactions. Given the growth in power of non-Western states, however, neglecting to consider the social, ideological and cultural components that influence bottom-up perspectives on diplomacy overlooks their crucial role in compiling assemblages or developing inferences of an ally's or adversary's intentions.

Conclusion

The imagery discussed at the start of this review essay shows that state leaders or top diplomats, who are purposely captured by camera lenses, are there to send an explicit message to domestic and foreign audiences, yet they are merely the follow-up to the intensive diplomacy that preceded it. Borrowed from Dittmer's *Diplomatic Material*, the concept of *puissance* (the power to affect or to be affected) and *pouvoir* (visible interaction) (Dittmer, p. 14), exactly incorporate implicit and explicit means in diplomacy. The question remains the same: what are the flows and forces that impact international relations and diplomacy in terms of *puissance* and *pouvoir*? As this brief analysis of the four books shows, there is an interdependency between: (1) states' material purposes and historical preconditions in shaping international relations when diplomatic assemblages and inferences make up the material body of diplomacy; and (2) personal encounters between state leaders that are able to shift predetermined conditions of inter-state relations through face-to-face diplomacy and bonding interpersonal trust. Considering any given circumstances, there are always constants of an existing material body of diplomacy and a possibility of a turning point followed by face-to-face communications.

Diplomatic Material and *Diplomacy* are immense additions to the understanding of how inter-state relations and diplomacy proceed, what makes up a state's bureaucracy and what it means for the international system. Examining the material body of diplomatic communications is also a source of understanding for states' relations and the mechanisms of their functioning. The proposed assemblage theory and signalling hypotheses shed light on how diplomacy conveys information in many dimensions.

Face-to-Face Diplomacy and *Trusting Enemies* add substantially to trust theories, suggest policy-relevant implications and give directions for where further research can be done. Holmes's theory of face-to-face diplomacy opens up an important debate within international relations, and Wheeler's theory of bonding trust between enemies based on the positive identification of interests and humanization adds to the exploration of trust in diplomacy through the personification of diplomatic interactions. The books are a great addition to the increasingly sophisticated literature on truth commissions.

The reviewed books are a source of great interest and will be beneficial to students, academics and practitioners of international relations and diplomacy.

Olga Krasnyak

Underwood International College, Yonsei University, Seoul, Republic
of Korea

olga.k@yonsei.ac.kr