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Retrieving how diplomacy writes subjects, space, and time: a methodological contribution

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Abstract

How does diplomacy describe international actors? Diplomatic practices observe, analyse, prioritise and constitute information that is ultimately committed to text. Drawing on Poststructuralist approaches to identity, diplomacy, and textuality, this paper argues for consideration of the unique role of diplomatic text in constituting the state and especially its representation and understanding of Self and Other. It consequently develops a methodology to empirically analyse how the text of diplomatic communication describes people, places, time, politics, and informs policy. The analytical method proposed adjusts and expands Poststructuralist discourse analysis, adapting it to the intertextual study of large collections of diplomatic knowledge production documents. It firstly determines data selection in relation to diplomacy's own theory. Secondly, it develops an approach to retrieve how any diplomatic text constitutes representations of subjects and their contexts. Thirdly, it follows the development of representations across diplomatic knowledge production, identifying when they come to influence other international actors. This approach is demonstrated in analysis of America's 1945-1948 diplomatic road to involvement in Vietnam, showing how diplomacy's representation of actors were vital to US involvement, and identifying hitherto unconsidered events, descriptions and actors. These analytics contribute to and empirically substantiate understanding of how diplomacy constitutes Self and Other, informs policy and shapes world politics.

Keywords: diplomacy, poststructuralism, identity, discourse analysis

Introductory démarche

Concern with wording is as old as diplomacy itself. Florentine Secretary of State Niccolò Machiavelli demanded that his *ambasciatori* produce ‘properly considered and written’ reports with detailed descriptions (1877: 378). Diplomacy is implicated in constituting knowledge of events, what is being said, by whom, who they are, what they want and why. This knowledge is committed to text and submitted for consideration at the Foreign Ministry, which is why concern with written diplomatic descriptions was (Machiavelli, 1877; Callières, 1716; Guicciardini, 2012) and remains (Nicolson, 1998; Satow, 1917) justified. This paper firstly makes the case that diplomacy’s descriptions of the world are a vital aspect of how international actors recognise one another. Secondly, it contributes theoretical and methodological rigour to the empirical analysis of diplomatic knowledge production by developing a methodology that captures how diplomatic descriptions constitute and develop understanding of people, places, time, and politics.

Analysing how diplomacy describes subjects and their contexts requires focus on the paper trail left behind by diplomatic practices. Diplomacy is constituted by representative, descriptive, analytical, tacit, embodied, practice-derived non-representational knowledges, and cultural and material enablers (Dittmer, 2017; Dittmer and McConnell, 2015; Pouliot, 2011). However, its bureaucratic mode of knowledge production invests knowledge into text (digital or analogue), which emerges as its key site of practice and empirical evidence of diplomatic endeavours. Diplomacy’s knowledge production is, furthermore, intimately linked to the theory of the state and its constitution of Self and Other (Constantinou, 1996: 96). Early and second-generation Poststructuralists developed the tools to retrieve the constitution of identity and violence in text, particularly the examination of ‘representations’ –the description and inscription of subjects and their temporal, spatial and normative contexts (Shapiro, 1988), rather than simply ‘identity’ (Ashley, 1989). They did not choose to invest these tools on the textual evidence of diplomacy’s policy-informing knowledge production, focussing instead on small collections of texts representative of policy or public discourses. Conversely, this paper addresses the vast collections of internal reporting, analysis, assessment and policy documents that remain as evidence of diplomatic knowledge production.

Knowledge produced by diplomacy informs key decisions and shapes international politics. Researching it demonstrates the central role of text in ‘the bureaucratic mode of knowledge production’ (Neumann, 2012), and how it is affected by institutional hierarchy and power (Adler, 2008; Adler and Pouliot, 2011). Discourse analysis has not hitherto been applied to large volumes of evidence of internal (as opposed to external-facing, as in Dittmer and Parr, 2011) diplomatic knowledge production. The approach here proposed helps understand how, in practice, identity contributes to categorisation as enemies, allies (Adler, 2008; Williams and Neumann, 2000), partners (Adler-Nissen, 2014a), ‘diplomatic pecking orders’ (Pouliot, 2011), the overlooked agency of postcolonial diplomacy (Laffey and Weldes, 2008), and substantiates accounts of the role of self-representation in constituting diplomatic agency (Fisher, 2013a; Wille, 2017). This is of relevance to politics and practices predicated on identity such as securitisation (Buzan and Hansen, 2009; Wæver, 1996; Williams, 2003) or stigmatisation (Adler-Nissen, 2014a).

Understanding how diplomacy constitutes representations is not only relevant to Poststructuralists interested in the construction of meaning, but to IR more broadly. For representations in a single text like Kennan’s Long Telegram can constitute how entire institutions and even other international actors see world events. These analytical outcomes address an old concern in the study of diplomacy raised in the English School’s unfulfilled query into the diplomatic ‘pristine form of messengers’ (Bull, 2002: 175; Neumann, 2003), Realist focus on the instrumental power of communication (Berridge, 1989, 2002; 2001; Kissinger, 1994), Constructivist readings of

normative influence (Fisher, 2012, 2013a, 2013b), as well as Critical approaches that regard it as constitutive of the international (Sending et al., 2015).

This paper makes the case that the state's understanding of itself and other actors is constituted in diplomatic text and sustained by the continuity of bureaucratic knowledge production, raising the question of how to systematically analyse it. The paper responds by developing a version of Poststructuralist discourse analysis adapted to the conditions of diplomatic knowledge. Such a native approach to textual analysis is necessary because diplomacy produces knowledge across thousands of documents involving many authors, drafts, institutions and practices. This means that, besides dealing with larger collections of texts than poststructuralist typically use, analysis needs to capture how knowledge is produced across an entire *body* of texts, which requires large-scale systematisation of single-texts analysis and mapping of how representations evolve in and across them.

This analytical challenge is addressed in three distinct interlocking methodological steps that form a conceptually-powered analytical technique. The first tightens conceptualisation of what a diplomatic text is, allowing for rigorous data selection. The second applies Poststructuralist analytics to examine a single text's constitution of representations, retrieving how a diplomatic document describes subjects and their spatial, temporal and normative contexts. The third systematises genealogical analysis of representations across processes of diplomatic knowledge production so as to follow their development. This determines how certain representations are constituted, whether and when they cross to the diplomacy of another actor, potentially changing their understanding of international events, subjects and relations.

This method is then applied to US, UK, French and Vietnamese diplomacy 1945-1949. The method discerns which words and representations helped France persuade the US that the First Vietnam war was a Cold War rather than a colonial conflict, retrieves the role of hitherto unexpected actors such as British Foreign Secretary Bevin, while the evidence of struggles over descriptions and their substantiation demonstrates the vast power of diplomatic representations. Contributing to such a crowded field of scholarship shows the potential of this method to empirically capture how diplomatic practices produce specific representations. This analysis in turn demonstrates more clearly than previous approaches, and in stark empirical terms, the importance of text to diplomacy and the constitution of world politics.

Conceptualising text and language in diplomatic practice

This paper anchors conceptualisation of diplomatic practices in relation to the state by drawing on Constantinou's query into the theoretical conditions of diplomacy. Examining what 'differentiates the diplomatic from the non-diplomatic', Constantinou (1996: 17), shows that understanding diplomats as representatives of states is part of a productive cycle where the state constitutes diplomatic agents that in turn constitute the state. By performing its presence, beholding the state's presence is possible because of its embodiment in the diplomat, enabling the state to make representations of Self and Other that are credible due to diplomacy's presence and voicing of the state. Crucially, for Constantinou language relates diplomacy to statecraft and to the performance of the concepts upon which both depend.

The theory of diplomacy is therefore but the delegation –performance, representation, and reification– of the theory of the state itself (1996: 148). Diplomatic practice requires that it be conceptualised, written, and performed by its practitioners in the same theoretical terms that sustain the existence of the state. If Der Derian (1987) saw diplomacy as constitutive of the state,

its Self and Others, Constantinou (1996: 116) demonstrates that diplomacy is a performative reiteration of the theory of the state. It is therefore *both* theory and practice: the practice of the theory of the state. To construct an individual as ‘diplomatic’ is to place her in the rarefied dimension of permanent Otherness and infuse her with the theory of the state itself. This insight ties diplomatic practices to the theory of the state, opening an analytical space where only events (and their evidence) from ‘the diplomatic’ enter the scope of research into the agents, communications, texts, gestures, and sites of diplomacy.

Diplomacy, however, is far more than text. Research drawing on critical perspectives based on anthropology, Bourdieusian sociology, Latourian Actor-Network theory and de Certeau, have highlighted that its practices depend on material assemblages (Dittmer, 2017), technology, (Wille, 2016) bureaucratic structures and norms (Neumann, 2012), personal performances (Wille, 2017), and social capital (Pouliot, 2016). In diplomacy, the capacity to exercise influence (on representatives of other actors as well as one’s own superiors) emerges from the deployment of personal resources, skills and competences generated by particular practices, drawing on diplomatic goods produced by routine, existing competences, knowledge and hierarchies (Adler-Nissen and Pouliot, 2014). There are influence-enabling practices that construct and maintain diplomatic ‘pecking orders’ embedded in specific diplomatic organisations and fora (Pouliot, 2011, 2016), as well as sites such as the dinner table (Neumann, 2013). The competences of individual diplomats, their spouses (Enloe, 2014), private networks, and choices of diplomatic positioning ‘scripts’ (Neumann, 2008b), are deployed at these sites to influence policymakers at home and abroad. Many of these resources and imperatives are the result of inarticulate but effective know-how embedded and self-evident in the practice of diplomacy (Pouliot, 2008). Non-representational diplomatic practice is not, and cannot be, reducible to text.

The practice turn takes us back to the diplomatic text, however, by revealing how key diplomatic practices are consistently invested in writing. Non-representative and non-textual practices, competences, strategies, limitations, and resources from communities of practice are deployed into channels where they are necessarily crystallised into a *démarche*, vote, resolution or declaration. In bilateral and multilateral negotiations for instance (see Adler-Nissen and Pouliot, 2014), diplomats invest their competences and influence into influencing the drafting of a text. Likewise, materialist approaches focussing on the material enablers, (Dittmer, 2017) logistics, (Wille, 2016) mediums, (Crean, 2015) and locations of diplomacy suggest that text is an almost unavoidable medium in diplomatic communication technology. All information is eventually translated and codified into text so it can be transmitted as email; telegraphed, typed, dictated, handwritten, or semaphored in the Napoleonic era. Similarly, a conversation is usually textualized into a memorandum. Such instances of agreement, persuasion or disagreement are committed to a text because states and diplomacy’s representational link to the state thrive and depend on bureaucratic knowledge. These texts in turn delimit, define and constitute the state. For example, the text of a Brexit agreement will define the British state for years and reflect the struggles over its drafting. This means that, while diplomatic practice is not reducible to text, considering the state’s dependence on bureaucratic practices means that text stands as the most highly useful and consistently produced evidence of diplomatic practices.

If diplomatic practices are invested in the production of text, they are also therefore invested on textual representation of subjects and their contexts. In the case of the 2011 UN Security Council resolution 1970 authorising a no-fly zone in Libya, this necessitated an agreed-upon inscription of subjects, Gadhafi’s government, the opposition, and their spatial, temporal and normative contexts. At each moment of writing we are witnessing an instance of ‘the political’: the moment of agency that then defines politics. When writing, the diplomat chooses language from options she believes in, those suggested by an array of agents including diplomats of other states,

institutional knowledge, or ideology. This instance is circumscribed by cultures of practice, hierarchy and most of all by the fate of her dispatch: after submission, it is bound to be rewritten, summarised, analysed, translated, shared with foreign diplomats or ignored. Her descriptions might thrive, however, perhaps launching powerful discursive trends like Kennan's Long Telegram. They might even cross over to the diplomacy of another actor, potentially influencing its knowledge production.

It is therefore vital to empirically analyse how diplomatic text constitutes Self and Other. Early Poststructuralists theorised diplomacy, linking it to violence, conflict, and security, showing that it trades in representations and language is its currency to write and stage the Other (Der Derian, 1992, 1987; Jabri, 1996; Campbell, 1992). Second-generation Poststructuralists drew heavily on empirical textual analysis, particularly public output, but rarely chose to apply discourse analysis to the empirical textual evidence of diplomacy's own knowledge production (Hansen, 2006; Williams, 1998; Neumann, 1996; Epstein, 2011). Nonetheless, Neumann (2007) located the drafting of text as a key part of diplomacy's anthropology and, in turn, constitutive of the state's voice, while Hansen (2006) and Epstein (2011) highlighted the need to rigorously conceptualise how texts are produced by specific state practices to achieve rigorous empirical data selection. These approaches were never applied to the vast collections of text typical of diplomatic knowledge production or how representations evolve across these texts, but effectively theorised its identity-making functions (Der Derian, 1987), conceptual presence (Constantinou, 1996), intertextual drafting practices (Neumann, 2012), establishing a perspective (Sending et al., 2015) that conceptualises diplomacy as ultimately involved in constituting the state and world politics.

The development of a toolkit to empirically determine how diplomatic text constitutes representations thus emerges as an important conceptual and methodological contribution to critical analyses of diplomacy. Practice-based and discursive approaches have produced new insights about diplomacy, but where the former has paid insufficient attention to text, the latter have focussed on singular texts and not on the constitution of representations across larger collections of text. Both raise but do not empirically capture how text constitutes the state, its representation of Self and Other, and the continuity provided by bureaucratic knowledge production. Further, while analysing the history and identity-making of singular texts is possible with small adaptations to archaeological discourse analysis such as Hansen's (2000, 2006), capturing how diplomatic practices constitute representations of identity requires accounting for how an entire *body* of diplomatic texts constitutes representations and governs which inform policy while others do not. This returns us to the above-discussed challenges of adapting Poststructuralist methods to account for not only the far greater scale of the collections of documents typical of diplomatic knowledge production, but also links among texts. Such an intertextual approach accounts for how an entire body of texts constitutes representations and, crucially, how over time some become more dominant and influential than others.

Methodology: analysing how diplomacy constitutes representations

Different methods are needed to capture how texts constitute representations and the state. These should draw on existing Poststructural approaches but need theoretical exploration and methodological adjustment as well as expansion. These developments are vital to successfully account for diplomatic writing as a knowledge-producing ensemble of practices and especially texts. This requires conceptualising how texts are produced so as to design a rigorous data selection rationale, structure analysis of larger collections of texts than Poststructuralists typically use, and account for relations among them.

The following sub-sections resolve these conceptual and methodological challenges in turn. The first determines a data selection rationale; the second systematises analysis of representations in single texts and the third develops an analytical sequence to map how representations develop across the diplomacy of an actor and possibly into another's.

Selecting data in the diplomatic pouch: the diplomatic moment

Who represents a state determines the documentary, institutional and authorial scope of data selection for research. It needs rigorous conceptual definition rather than documentary or institutional convenience. The American Diplomatic History tradition, for example, seldom takes into account non-State Department data, which limits analysis to the letters of ambassadors, for instance, or an institution, illustrating the need to account for functional practice.

The solution is to focus on diplomatic knowledge production as a microcosm of collective authorship practices. A sociological approach would observe the 'field' of diplomatic writing, which would, however, obscure the role of sovereignty in constituting diplomacy's condition, driving investigation into the field of practice rather than the knowledges diplomatic practices trade in. This method, however, pays Bourdieu's (2001: 205; Neumann, 2002) methodological 'price' of addressing 'the exigencies of empirical research' by accounting for practice: a theory *and* praxis model determining when instances of practice are diplomatic. Further, because (like any author) the diplomat loses control over her text after writing (Barthes, 1977), this model needs to account for functional rather than individual or institutional authorship.

The empirical link to text is resolved by building on Constantinou's (1996) 'embassy of theory'. Conceptualising diplomacy as representation of sovereign state theory delimits 'the diplomatic' to *only* instances when the delegation of the state's presence and its theory are performed. This allows the diplomatic text to be rigorously defined in relation to this performance of the state. This is more accurate than solely considering affiliation to the ministry of foreign affairs (MFA), where an employee of a diplomatic institution would carry out duties such as paying laundry bills that, while useful, are conceptually unrelated to the performance of the state's presence. The diplomatic agent is thus conceptualised without methodological dissolution in source selection, considering utterances and text from MFA as well as non-MFA agents such as an Admiral or parliamentarian in diplomatic duties. The latter are diplomatic agents only for short moments, but in those instances are made diplomatic by their performance of representation. This also applies to permanent diplomats: they too are only truly 'diplomatic' when acting in official capacities. This conceptualisation discounts institutionally diplomatic documents, from payroll to laundry bills, produced while not engaged in the delegation of the state's presence. At those instances individuals are only diplomatic in their affiliation, for 'the diplomat exists only as representing the will of the sovereign' (Constantinou, 1996: 116). This is how the evidence of diplomacy is defined for empirical analysis.

Diplomatic communication is often non-textual, it can be verbal, gestural or postural for example, occurring at sites from the embassy to the railway carriage. But this moment of diplomatic practice has to live on: the conversation needs to be reported to the structures of diplomatic knowledge production and executive action *before* it can gain significance. This event is vital: a report has to be written and filed so that the instance of practice gains bureaucratic existence and function within the diplomatic machine. In Stalin and Churchill's first meeting in 1942, disagreements were resolved over drinks in Stalin's rooms (Reynolds, 2004: 325). Before the alliance could emerge, Stalin and Churchill had to be debriefed and issue instructions for their diplomats to implement agreements. Had they been too hungover to remember –and Churchill was terribly unwell the next

day— their agreement might have disappeared. This is why reports begin with statements of praxis such as ‘mission has investigated and found...’ ‘I have carried out demarche and report...’. In other words, if a report is not written and submitted, its contents do not exist institutionally.

I call this event *the diplomatic moment*. Virtually all diplomatic events are eventually reported in writing, a transcription of praxis into text that makes the ephemeral instance of practice permanent by inserting it into diplomatic knowledge. The diplomatic moment is akin to the concept of ‘critical juncture’ in institutional history in that it is ‘causally decisive for the selection of one path of institutional development’ (Bigo, 2009; Capoccia, 2016), while retaining a focus on text. The diplomatic moment determines the texts that are truly diplomatic on the basis of diplomatic practice. It is how this method achieves ‘paying the price of a veritable conversion to empirical research’ in its data selection (Bourdieu, 2001: 184). It provides a theoretically rigorous link between Constantinou’s theory-as-practice and Neumann’s (2012) diplomatic knowledge production, specifically marking the entrance of Constantinou’s performance of the diplomatic into Neumann’s ‘bureaucratic mode of knowledge production’.

The methodological consequence is a rigorous rationale for data selection. It includes the following categories ordered by functional authorship bound by the diplomatic moment.

- Formal communications and reporting by MFA diplomats
- Political figures when they perform diplomatic duties or missions. This accounts for non-MFA diplomatic agents and communications of non-state actors.
- Non-diplomatic institutions such as intelligence agencies or charities entering diplomatic knowledge.
- Private firms tasked with representation of policy or a state.

It is now possible to select empirical data and treat the process of knowledge production as a series of texts, with information passing —or not— from one document to another, from diplomatic reports to the speeches of government ministers and perhaps onto the diplomacy of another actor. The series of documents is then ordered according to the diplomatic reporting pathways of the institution that produced them. Following the trail up to policy-makers is more difficult, as it frequently breaks at the bureaucratic caesura between the MFA and policymakers, necessitating validation of the reporting pathways taken by knowledge produced by diplomacy. While in historical cases declassification revealed policy-informing pathways in the documents themselves, for contemporary cases a small set of interviews ascertained the journey of texts across bureaucratic caesurae. This is how this method ensures that analysis closely follows the paper trail of diplomatic knowledge production.

Linking theory and practice of diplomacy to its empirical paper trail is one of the key contributions of this method. The diplomatic moment defines empirical data selection, making it possible to collect the documents in and through which diplomatic knowledge production takes place, from reports produced in missions, through many iterations as knowledge travels through extracts, summaries, and analysis to the briefs presented to policymakers and the feedback sent back to diplomats.

Reading representation in single texts: commentary and archaeology

Analysis can now move onto how each text represents the international and its subjects, places, time and norms. This sub-section develops tools to retrieve representations in diplomatic text by drawing on Foucauldian discourse analysis, Barthes’ analytics of literary text, and further developing Shapiro’s (1984, 1990, 1992) import of literary theory and methods to IR. This step

systematises analysis and identifies textual markers called *topoi* that facilitate following representations across texts. These developments allow for analysis of any single diplomatic text to have exponential application.

This method draws on an understanding of the social world as constituted in rather than merely described in language. Shapiro (1989, 1984) incorporated this Foucauldian (2002: 237) imperative to bracket truth in discourse analysis by importing Barthes' textuality: treating text as literary production rather than straightforward representation, which allows analysis to retrieve how textual devices create objects, their contexts, and relations among them (Shapiro, 1984: 218). This is helpful because diplomatic communication frequently defers or abridges the relationship between form and the grounding of its content, making representation the beginning and end of a discourse of proof. In other words, the substance behind descriptions is often kept secret, which makes the description itself the only available proof. A good example is Colin Powell's 2003 UN intervention claiming there was evidence of WMDs in Iraq. Powell asserted that proof of WMDs existed but provided none, which effectively defers the grounding of the description to an unavailable set of evidence. In such cases representation in language –the description that is– emerges as the only proof available, as it exists in an epistemological loop that keeps proof protected and secret, yet grounds discourses of action upon it. Crucially, such cases further demonstrate the powerful role of diplomatic descriptions in international relations and the need to account for how they represent subjects and their contexts.

To structure systematic analysis, this method draws on Barthesian literary commentary. The literary commentary is a formal and systematic analysis of a text. In a spectacular example, Barthes (1990) denatures core elements of Balzac's novel *Sarracine* by questioning their links to specific contexts, demonstrating that specific literary products such as characters operate differently depending on their inscription within meaning-producing frames. Commentary organises analysis from the outside in: form (structure), textual context (location within an opus), the stanza (or paragraph), the verse (or articulation), and words (vocabulary and musicality). Form is the "expected" structure: diplomatic documents draw on very old and consistent forms and diplomats have flexibility within them. For example, placing an issue in the summary at the top of a cable makes it one of its chief contents. Conversely, writing recommendations in the main body, as opposed to the "recommendations" section, suggests that the course advocated follows existing policy. Within form, its immediate (literary) context explains relational features and links to other texts. For instance, daily reports are ongoing updates to an existing opus, which is why they appear fragmentary and require familiarity with the entire correspondence. Deeper, paragraphs and stanzas organise content and categorise hierarchy or causality, while literary devices create and locate objects and relations among them. In phrases, grammatical devices construct relations among objects and order hierarchy; subjugate clauses and word order construct action-based verbal relations; orthographical choices can highlight foreignness; and punctuation can frame hierarchy. Finally, word choice is powerful as specific items of diplomatic vocabulary have significant categorisation effects. This distinctly *post*-structuralist commentary analysis demonstrates how textual elements operate within systems of meaning production that privilege some interpretations over others.

Systematising analysis necessitates two further specifications. Firstly, to account for the fecundity of representations found in diplomatic text it is not sufficient to speak of 'identity'. This is why this paper has referred to 'representations of subjects and their spatial, temporal and normative contexts'. Early Poststructuralists used 'identity' to refer to the ideational construction of entire groups of subjects and their contexts. Privileging identity, however, risks obscuring the role of spatial, temporal and normative inscriptions that help make sense of them. Identity-making depends on biographic, normative, racial, temporal, spatial and violent inscriptions, creative

constructions in their own right that sometimes precede the inscription of a subject within them. For example, geopolitical and strategic approaches to policy analysis like the Domino Theory draw on spatial, temporal and normative contexts to determine the interest of states. Secondly, accounting for representations requires interrogating how articulations relate subjects and their contexts to one another. Commentary therefore retrieves 'the discourse of the Self with the Other's 'counter-construction' of Self and Other' (Hansen, 2006: 76), and their encounter in text, accounting for the effectiveness of competing representations. Adopting literary commentary permits one-text studies to be repeated for every document and compared.

To enable an intertextual approach it is necessary to identify textual markers that can be followed across texts. This paper resolves this methodological imperative by importing into IR a literary textual signpost: the topos. Topoi are an innovation in Poststructuralist IR discourse analysis – though not in literature. Aristotle (2005) defined topoi as normative commonplaces (τοποι means "places") used in articulating normative dialectics (Curtius, 1953: 70). For Cicero, (2006) topoi 'serve as so many marks or characters for the discovery of arguments, and from which a discourse might be aptly framed on either side of a question' (Cicero, 1989: §29). What Cicero means by 'either side' is key: as well as referencing and contextualising arguments, a topos betrays the presence and history of a normative position. This is why Kristeva (1992) chose them to signpost not only the presence, but also the history and direction of normative discourses. In Cold War diplomacy, for example, 'fellow-traveller' and other textual articulations of the same topos signposted the idea of communist conspiratorial treachery as well as its history and complex normativity.

As well as signposting the presence of a discourse, topoi are distillations of specific doxa (common beliefs) and norms (Barthes, 2014: 130; Pierrot, 2002: 130). Topoi are therefore more relationally and textually concrete than Hansen's (2006: 57) attempt to evidence 'implicit textual linkages' by linking them to 'quotes' and 'catchphrases' and Neumann's (2008a: 62) broader 'positions'. While topoi and the discourses they signpost are recurrent, their textual labels change –unlike more common signposts and textual markers such as slogans or catchphrases. Topoi, however, can be recognised in analysis by their subjectivity (because their doxa remain stable) and particularly their functionality (which remains unchanged) (Barthes, 1978: 34). Romantic fiction for example, be it *Romeo and Juliet*, *Brokeback Mountain*, or the awful *Twilight*, contains 11th Century topoi of courtly love such as the facilitator, which is present in the above dramas as, respectively, Juliet's nurse, the mountain, and a friendly vampire sister. These are differently-worded articulations of the same norm and role: acceptance and active defence of true love, which refer to the same doxa and normativity through different labels. Topoi thus help analysis follow normative representation intertextually while retaining interpretive depth and specificity. These textual markers allow analysis to follow and map the development of subjective representations across texts.

Any diplomatic text can now be cracked open to reveal its constitution of subjects, territory, time and norms. In executing this stage of the analytical method here proposed all texts should be analysed in this way, but in a book or article clearly only the analysis of a few texts can be written up (de Orellana, 2017). To achieve representativeness, these should include different dates, genres (such as reports or *démarches*) from each of the international actors involved. Understanding how a text constitutes subjects and their contexts allows the following step to follow them through subsequent diplomatic knowledge production.

Mapping diplomacy's constitution of representations: genealogy and history

In this method genealogy uncovers the history of the representations that make sense of the world. It finds, maps, and relates the instances, shifts, interventions, textual and discursive relationships that constitute representation of subjects and their contexts across countless cables, summaries, and policy recommendations. This section adapts intertextual Foucauldian genealogy to researching diplomatic knowledge production by adopting Nietzsche's approach, which involves analysing history backwards from the policy event being investigated. Discussion then moves onto how this method retrieves the knowledge-production dynamics of international actor's diplomacy and whether they influenced those of another.

Researching diplomacy's knowledge production in reverse chronology as Nietzsche (2000) did reflects a commitment to avoid historical and causal determinism that can emerge from arbitrarily selecting chronological limits for research. While the data selection rationale developed earlier defined precisely which texts were strictly 'diplomatic', it cannot determine which documents contain the history of a specific representation –and the extent of potential data is vast. Diplomatic documents meticulously and consistently refer to and cite preceding, ancillary and related documents, which provides a unique empirical opportunity not available in Poststructuralist analyses of official public discourses such as Hansen's (2006), social constructions of identity (Neumann, 1996, 1999), histories of ideas (Bartelson, 1995), including Nietzsche's (Saar, 2008).

This method draws on Bakhtinian (1982) and Kristevan (1980) insights on intertextuality to take advantage of diplomacy's meticulous referencing in two ways. Firstly, it anchors the chronological limits of data analysis on the text itself, which provides the beginning of our chronological frame. For instance, a text identifying "that new communist enemy" launches an investigation into how that "enemy" came to be represented as such. Analysis traces diplomatic knowledge production backwards, independently determining the end limit of data selection when reaching the first enunciations of a representation. Secondly, this method exploits explicit intertextual links by analysing preceding representations of subjects, territory, time and norms, their authors and circumstances across previous documents. This empirical systematisation and sequencing of analysis allows this method to examine vast collections of documents, as the researcher consistently seeks previous iterations of a representation, regardless of the number of documents across which this might occur. Thus the text itself, through its intertextual references, determines where and how far analysis hunts representations through intertextual space.

This approach rejects the study of diplomatic representation 'from power's internal point of view' (Foucault, 1988: 97). Rather than researching what diplomats or policymakers think and how a "perception" shaped their policy choices, this approach maps the world of knowledge they inhabit and its epistemological government. Crucially, the text, read against a chronology of policy events, suggests when its representations emerge at the heart of policy shifts. As representations emerge in, through and among these texts, it is not possible to identify effective causality, not to mention 'real' motives or interest, as identity and policy are not causally related. Rather, representations of identity stand at either side of policy as both its precondition and reproduced in its articulations (Hansen, 2006: 10). For example, "national interest" or "War on Terror" assume and reproduce separation of subjects. Since foreign policy depends on these definitions to choose whom to befriend or kill, it is of great interest to find out how subjects are identified. Even Kennan's Long Telegram was not world-changing on its own: it was its subsequent life in and through myriad texts that propagated its articulations, assumptions and subjectivity.

Seeking the exact precedents of a representation in previous documents ensures that the texts themselves reveal their ancestry. Diplomatic documents are ideal since entries are formally related to other documents. Causal determinism is avoided by starting analysis with a text that empirically links representations to a policy shift. Genealogy then researches the history of that influential

representation backwards from that moment. Detailed analysis of such documents reveals how they constitute these representations, while following topoi markers locates these policy-changing representations and their evolution in other texts. Genealogical analysis begins in files preceding the policy event whose diplomatic representational history is being researched, identifying previous iterations of the representations. This allows diplomatic documents themselves to determine which further texts to analyse in order to determine the genealogy of specific representations. This technique produces a map of the diplomatic pathways taken by the representations studied—not necessarily formal reporting pathways, but those taken by the communications studied. These frequently reveal offices, individuals or lines of communication with more knowledge production influence than official ones. Finally, writing history backwards makes transparent to the reader how the history of a representation itself determines data selection and the chronological extent of analysis.

This development of genealogy is a powerful tool that adds two key capabilities to Poststructuralist study of diplomatic knowledge production. Firstly, this method allows analysis to tackle data on an exponential scale, rare in Poststructuralist research. The greatest number analysed with this method so far have been over 6000 documents for a detailed study of the role of representations in French-Vietnamese-British-American diplomatic relations 1944-1949 summarised in the next section. Secondly, taking full advantage of the explicit intertextuality of diplomatic knowledge production, the genealogical part of this analytical approach produces a detailed map of the textual trail of diplomatic knowledge production. Within this, it charts the exact path and history of specific representations, which is the core contribution of this very specific adaptation of genealogical discourse analysis. Mapping lays bare and empirically substantiates institutional dynamics of power invested in knowledge production, showing how representations gain salience, urgency, lose relevance or disappear altogether. By mapping them in relation to practice—who wrote what, when, why, under which instructions if any—it reveals the very moments, individuals, events, that shape representations and make others impossible or less likely, retrieving in empirical detail the influences governing diplomatic knowledge.

Applying this method to relations among multiple actors can uncover the holy grail of diplomacy: persuasion. That is, when an actor's descriptions cross over to and influence another's production of representations. Diplomats interact constantly and representations carried in an actor's diplomacy can come to be taken up by another's. Analysis must not assume intentionality or instrumentality, though sometimes intentionality is revealed by the diplomatic texts themselves. On other occasions, it is fair to conclude that it is unintentional, accidental or even self-inflicted. Crossovers can lay the seeds for its representations to continue to exist and thrive in another country's diplomatic machinery—sufficiently believed to be absorbed and used natively—determining that they were persuasive. Crossovers do not always occur, and it is worthwhile determining whether they do and observe the conditions that enable them. Examining the map produced by genealogical analysis of representations against that of another actor makes it possible to chart knowledge-production relations among them and identify crossovers. Crossovers can be empirically determined by observation of whether a textual articulation containing the same mechanics of representation has crossed from one country's knowledge production into that of another that did not feature it before. This is how the convincing power of diplomatic communication can be empirically tested.

This section has developed a method to analyse how diplomacy constitutes representations by developing, systematising and sequencing discursive analysis techniques. Its three interlocking steps consist of: a conceptually-driven data selection rationale; systematic analysis of how single texts constitute representations; and a systematic textually-driven analytical sequencing to map how representations develop across the diplomacy of an actor and possibly into another's. In the

following section, the method –and the great role played by representations constituted in diplomatic text– is demonstrated in analysis of the diplomacy of the First Vietnam War.

Retrieving diplomacy's representations: communism and colonialism in the First Vietnam War 1948-1945

As Japanese forces collapsed in August 1945, the League for the Independence of Vietnam (Vietminh) led by Ho Chi Minh declared independence from the French Empire. President Charles de Gaulle immediately dispatched war hero general Leclerc and the Foreign Legion to reconquer the colony, but they were soon driven to a military stalemate by Vietnamese. In late 1948, though initially supportive of Vietnamese claims against French colonial rule, US policy shifted to supporting the French military reconquest of Indochina. As detailed in a 1948 Policy Statement, this shift was explicitly predicated on the assumption that Vietminh had been 'taken over' and become 'Communist' 'to the advantage of the USSR' (NARA: Policy Statement, 27/9/48-711.51G). US diplomacy had hitherto considered Vietminh a socialist but primarily anticolonial actor (NARA: report to State 6/11/1945-851G.00), and remained suspicious of French attempts to obtain US funding for colonial reconquest and the French "solution" of installing Vietnamese Emperor Bao Dai as a puppet (Lawrence, 2005). This section applies the methodological approach developed above to investigate how US policymakers came to believe Vietminh was a Soviet puppet where they had not before, and French colonialism had come to be seen as more enlightened. This reveals the power of the diplomatic text and the representations it carried to achieve this policy shift, which in turn retrieves how diplomatic knowledge- production practices constitute how international actors conceptualise and understand themselves and others.

The historical literature hypothesised that representation of these actors as colonial and communist played a significant role in involving the US in Vietnam in 1948 (Bradley, 2000; Lawrence, 2002). It was effective, as America heavily supported French military efforts against Vietminh until France withdrew in 1954. In testament to the extent to which Vietminh had come to be considered a Soviet puppet, the US continued to fight them until 1975 in the Second, more famous, Vietnam War. French policy mandated diplomats to persuade their American counterparts of Vietminh's Communism and France's modern and kind colonialism (MAE files 1946-48, 91Q0.123). However, interpretive research on how these representations were constituted and evolved remains lacking (Busch, 2007), particularly around the key questions of how these representations were constituted in text, and how between 1947 and 1948 they replaced previous US understanding of Vietminh as anticolonial nationalists.

The core problématique is why did this representation of Vietminh triumph in 1947-8 rather than the hitherto plausible 'Asian Tito' perspective (See "Ho Chi Minh: Asian Tito" in Gravel, 1971). The latter saw the Vietminh as socialists independent from the USSR that, like Tito's Yugoslavia, might prove more tractable. This diplomatic event is an ideal testing ground for this method. Analysing it demonstrates how this method contributes fresh insights to a diplomatic event already explored in detail. The following sub-sections, though necessarily exiguous, demonstrates data selection, textual analysis, the reverse chronology of the representations that informed the 1948 policy shift and the novel insights provided by this method (See de Orellana, 2020).

Data selection

Data selection considered documents submitted into the knowledge production apparatus of the US, France, Vietminh and Britain. Informed by the diplomatic moment, this included

communications between the foreign ministries of these four actors and, interestingly, many military and intelligence officers who represented France, Britain and the US in Vietnam at the end of WWII. Of particular importance, though not an official diplomat, was French intelligence officer Jean Sainteny, the first Free French representative to make contact with Vietminh in 1945. Likewise, the diplomatic moment determined that Indochina's administration, though formally a colonial structure, had significant diplomatic competences, for example managing its own communications with local US and UK diplomats. Taking the 1948 Policy Statement announcing the US policy shift (NARA: 27/9/48-711.51G) as a point of departure, the researcher traced, as detailed above, the presence of the representations of Vietminh and the war upon which the 1948 policy shift was predicated, which took data collection as far back as 1945, the first occurrence of its representations, chronologically framing the research on the basis of the text itself. Likewise, the presence of many British documents widely circulated among American diplomats added an entire actor, the UK, and its knowledge production to this analysis. As these events occurred seventy years ago, all archival data for the US, UK and France is declassified.

Over 6000 documents were collected from archives including the French Foreign Ministry's (MAE), National Archives (AN), Colonial (ANOM, including raided Vietminh documents) and historical collections (AS); the UK (NA) and the US (NARA) National Archives. The research identified diplomatic reporting pathways from diplomats on the ground to leaders and triangulated data. For instance, Vietnamese communications were available in French, British and American archives, ensuring, as per the diplomatic moment, that they were indeed read, filed and therefore of relevance. Further, this research examined the work of colonial authorities and the CIA's (CREST) when they fed into diplomatic knowledge, demonstrating the practical utility of the diplomatic moment.

Analysing representations in individual texts

The first step discerns how individual texts constitute identity. The method requires the researcher to analyse all documents in detail, deploying the commentary-based structured discourse analysis developed earlier. This is the most labour-intensive part of this approach. Though this detailed analysis occurs in note form for most documents, it is vital to write up the detailed examination of a selection from each actor. To be representative, this sample includes examples from the beginning and end of the period studied for each actor, so that representations for either side of the policy shift being investigated helps set up examination of how it occurred. While detailed exposition of documents is not possible here, a summary of how communications constituted representations is essential.

Vietminh's first direct contact with US diplomats, signed by Ho Chi Minh as President of the 'Democratic Republic of Vietnam' requesting UN and US 'intervention', represented Vietminh as a coalition of nationalist parties, a WWII Ally and, through linguistic and vocabulary linkages, attributed Vietminh the rights of non-self-governing peoples proclaimed in the Atlantic and San Francisco Charters. France emerged as an aggressor violating the new norms, a representation that, together with expectation of American anticolonial sympathy, would remain constant until 1948 (NARA: Kunming to State, 24/10/1945-851G.00). Until late 1947 US-Vietminh communications did influence how the State Department's Southeast Asia (SEA) Division saw the conflict, as demonstrated by numerous American enquiries into Vietminh allegations of French atrocities (See for example on French use of Wehrmacht veterans, MAE: Washington to DIPLOFRANCE, 5/5/47-91QO.124).

Conversely, early French descriptions of the conflict, particularly from the colonial government, argued that Vietnam did not exist ‘not geographically, historically or economically’, describing it as a fantasy ‘imbibed by a racist slant’ with arguments ‘used by the Führer’, blaming ‘fascist’ Vietnamese ‘ideological and doctrinal position’ for the conflagration (AN: HAUSSAIRE to COMINDO, 26/4/46-AP127). The language and linkages framed Vietminh as Axis extremists and Indochina as still in need of end-WWII *libération* (AN: Saigon to Paris, 26/4/46-AP 127). Later that year, ‘Moscow’s interest in Indo-China’ would take on a greater role in French diplomacy, (NARA: Paris to State, 22/9/45-851G.O) as part of a concerted drive to ‘sell’ to the Americans that ‘both are in mortal danger’ from Communism (MAE: Claudel report, 26/11/1948-91Q0.123).

This did not persuade US diplomats. Early reports described Vietminh as ‘left-wing’ ‘radical opponents of both France and Japan’ allied to conservatives and royalists, who sought independence and were not ‘full-fledged doctrinaire’ Communists. They were critical of French colonialism and their solutions to the conflict, which entailed a puppet government (the ‘Bao Dai solution’) rather than negotiation. Representations of the Vietnamese were framed by racial mistrust of their ‘oriental’ capacities (NARA: Millet report, 6/11/45 and Memorandum 30/1/1946-851G.00). By 1948, however, a Policy Statement (NARA: 27/9/48-711.51G) represented Vietminh as beholden to Communist infiltration, which meant assisting France to install ‘a truly nationalist government’, while warning that French solutions did not concede enough. The language suggests conspiracy, with vocables like ‘penetration’, ‘expansion’, ‘subversion’ pointing to assumptions of a global monolithic Communist project.

The representations identified in this step of the analysis are contradictory. In 1945 we see Vietminh representing itself as endowed with the universal right to self-government, a normative position signposted by topoi signifying ‘human rights’ and particularly the ‘San Francisco’ and ‘Atlantic’ Charters. US racial understanding of Vietminh is signposted by topoi suggesting ‘Asian race’ and ‘unpreparedness’, the nuanced understanding that Vietminh was not necessarily a Soviet creation by references to ‘left-wing’ and ‘nationalist’ positions; while support for their anticolonial goals by references to the legitimacy of their anti-French struggle. The 1948 representation of Vietminh as Soviet stooges is signposted by conspiratorial topoi like ‘fellow-travellers’, expressions of Soviet control of Vietminh, and the qualification of nationalism as ‘legitimate’ (the Third Force) against ‘foreign-controlled’ Vietminh.

Tracing change across diplomatic knowledge production 1945-48

How did these representations come about? Analysing the representations diplomacy was trading in shows the difference between US understanding of Vietminh and France in 1945 and 1948. The 1948 shift was explicitly predicated on the assumption of Vietminh’s part in global monolithic Communism and conditioned on French policy allowing non-communist nationalist revindication. We now trace the evolution of these two representations backwards across the diplomatic knowledge production of the actors involved.

The first key representation, the Vietminh-Soviet link, was built entirely of rhetorical elements. Between 1945 and 1948, French, US and British agents made vast but unsuccessful efforts to substantiate it. In 1947, on French recommendations, the newly-created CIA persecuted ‘eight Russian advisors’ in China, but only found ‘seven Russian tramps’ (NARA: Nanking to State, 20/9/1947-851G.00). The closest link the CIA could substantiate was a similarity in iconography (CREST: memorandum, 10/11/1947). Proof was never found (Vietminh’s own ‘communistication’ and contact with Mao and the USSR only occurred later, see Vu, 2009) but it was concluded that the opening of a Soviet embassy in Bangkok supported French claims of a

‘regional’ Soviet offensive (NARA: Bangkok to State, 10/2/1948-851G.00). This articulation “proving” American concerns about Vietminh crossed from French to American diplomacy in early 1948 (NARA: French and American Southeast Asian Desk chiefs, memorandum 24/2/1948-851G.00).

This representation of Vietminh’s communism only emerged in late 1947 and depended on two conditions. Firstly, Orientalist inscription of the Vietnamese as a politically indolent race made it possible for French diplomats to argue that Vietminh could never have challenged French forces without Soviet assistance. Secondly, belief that communism was a global monolith meant that vague substantiation sufficed to assume Soviet involvement. Following the topoi indicating these two articulations takes us to a UK Foreign Office report widely circulated in Washington, a response to State Department questions as to ‘whether anything can be done about’ ‘the potential dangers of the situation’ (NA: 14/4/48-FO959/18 and 11/5/1948-FO959/19). Produced for US eyes, it bluntly asserted that Vietminh had been taken over by a Communist committee (NA: ‘Review of the situation in French Indochina’, 11/5/1948-FO959/19). This was atypical of the British Consulate in Saigon: the first time unsubstantiated information on Vietminh communism was unquestioningly forwarded. It absorbed a common mistake in French intelligence reports on Vietminh governance (Tønnesson, 2010: 27), demonstrating that French allegations were relayed without qualification. With it, the French representation of Vietminh-Soviet links entered UK diplomatic knowledge and thence to American diplomacy, carrying with it the implication that negotiating with Vietminh was impossible. Its effect was immediate and US-Vietminh communications slowed to a trickle (NARA: see 6/10/1947-851G.00), demonstrating the direct influence of diplomatic descriptions.

Mapping previous documents reveals that this representation of Vietminh was absorbed from French ones on orders from London. Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin requested a report detailing –not substantiating, as usual in UK diplomacy– ‘growing Communist ascendancy in Indochina’, which he considered analogous to the Malayan insurgency (NA: FO to Saigon, 14/4/48-FO 959/18). This marked a sharp break: between 1945 and 1949, British analysts consistently discarded Vietminh-CCP/USSR links as ‘a K.M.T. fabrication, connived or sponsored by the French’, finding the alleged proof ‘rather woolly and insufficiently specific’ (NA: Chancery of UK Commissioner-General, Singapore to FO, 2/9/1949-FO371/75975), concluding that it ‘would not be sufficient to provide proof of active collaboration’ (NA: F11353, Minutes 8/8/1949-FO371/75975).

The other condition for US support required meeting (some) Vietnamese aspirations (NARA: Paris to State, 19/12/1947-851G.00). By November 1948, US policymakers appeared persuaded of the “new” Bao Dai Solution –a recasting of the French Imperial practice begun in 1887 of using Vietnamese emperors as puppet rulers. The “new” Bao Dai Solution had been revamped by newly-appointed governor Léon Pignon in October 1948, promising autonomy and limited racial equality, mostly addressing American concerns (ANOM: ‘Rapport politique Fevrier-Mars 1949’, CP 93/HCI/INDO). Because it was couched in terms of American ideas of progressive colonialism, Pignon was credited (Varga, 2009) with conceiving it on the basis of America’s 1948 conditions.

The method expounded in this paper reveals that it did far more. It was articulated following Roosevelt’s early 1940s approach to colonialism, suggesting it was not a simple response to the 1948 Policy Statement. As Political Officer of the Indochinese colonial administration 1945-1947, Pignon had authored reports on America’s grant of independence to the Philippines. Hitherto unconsidered in research on America’s road to Vietnam, but retrieved by this approach, Pignon’s 1946 reports focussed on American assistance worth ‘six hundred forty million dollars’ for the

Philippine anti-communist suppression of the Huk rebellion, who are described as ‘analogous’ to Vietminh (ANOM: File 6-1946, INDO/HCI/CD/2-4). Though entirely ignored in Paris, these reports informed Pignon’s later work. These 1946 representations of American ‘enlightened colonialism’, particularly a report fiercely criticising American ‘enlightened colonialism’ in the Philippines and observing vast grants of anti-communist assistance are the missing pieces in understanding the success of Pignon’s 1948 “new” Bao Dai solution (ANOM: 1/1946, 6-1946, INDO/HCI/CD/2-4).

Before 1948, French commitment to progressive policy and anticommunism had appeared unconvincing and instrumental due to the paradox of its relentless colonialism (NARA: Hanoi to State, 19/7/1947-851G.00). US diplomats worried that French intransigence fuelled resentment, ensuring ‘irretrievable orientation intellectuals and people towards communism’ (NARA: Saigon to State, 6/10/1947-851G.00 and 21/5/1948-851G.00; Hanoi to State, 16/2/48-851G.00 and 24/9/1947-851G.00). They were correct: the French Empire retained racial hierarchies, forced labour, collective punishment, and military repression. Until Vietnamese claims were addressed, to American diplomats the conflict only highlighted Vietminh’s anticolonialism rather than communism.

Previous efforts to persuade US diplomats of French progressivism had failed for this reason. A previous September 1947 Bao Dai solution was found to ‘show little inclination [to] go much beyond pre-war status’ (NARA: Paris to State, 16/1/1948-851G.00; 12/9/1947-851G.01; Saigon to State, 24/1/1948-851G.00). Besides showing how US diplomats received previous French efforts, this method reveals a key factor behind French intransigence. Until 1948, Indochina’s colonial establishment, –particularly when led 1945-1947 by fanatical colonialist Admiral D’Argenlieu– deceived the French Parliament and Presidency, misrepresenting policy, intercepting and sabotaging Vietminh communications with Paris (AN: HAUSSAIRE to COMINDO and réponse, 10/2/1947-AP:128; Rapport 28/11/46-AP:457). D’Argenlieu’s replacement in late 1947, Émile Bollaert, was expected to alleviate matters, but the Admiral’s colonial clique, led by Valluy, Pignon and Clarac, remained in control of Indochinese institutions, assuring a continuity of ideas that links the 1946 analysis of Philippines independence to the “new” Bao Dai solution through the diplomatic knowledge production of the Indochinese colonial administration.

Analytical outcomes

Analysis of this case makes distinct theoretical, methodological and historical contributions. Theoretically, it substantiated that diplomacy constitutes how states conceptualise and understand themselves and others, empirically determining how this occurs in text. What this method can retrieve that practice theory could not account for is the power of the diplomatic text. This analysis not only demonstrates that it constituted the core assumptions propelling US involvement in Vietnam, but also how practices (like reporting), competence and knowledge (such as Pignon’s), material assemblages (Indochina’s colonial government) were constantly invested in text (US-French communications) to articulate specific representations of Self and Other (progressive French versus Stalinist stooges).

Within a year America provided generous assistance to France’s military effort, demonstrating the vast and immediate practical influence of this shift in how Vietminh, France and America were represented, and, more broadly, the role of diplomatic text in conceptualising the state in relations to others. This is why it is worthwhile mapping the knowledge production journeys of influential representations. The diagram below (Fig. 1) summarises this method’s mapping of how the conflict, its actors and contexts were represented 1945-48. The horizontal series of texts represent

each actor's knowledge production, staggered to highlight the multiple texts across which this occurred. The representations followed across texts are marked by textured lines and symbols, one for each representation, listed at the top. Drawn larger in the left is the 1948 Policy Statement linking assistance to France to Vietminh being Soviet stooges and to the Bao Dai solution, showing when they entered US diplomatic knowledge in 1948 and how this crossed over from British diplomacy, marked (2), which in turn was imported from French diplomatic reports on orders from Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin (1). It shows the very instance (3) when the "new" Bao Dai solution entered US diplomacy as "progressive" and its origins in Pignon's 1946 reports (4). The representations that made the crossovers into US diplomacy possible, belief in Oriental backwardness and American anticolonialism, are included, as is the later discarded representation of Vietminh as an "Asian Tito", French efforts 1945-46 to describe the reconquest of Indochina as post-WWII libération, and Vietminh attempts to represent their struggle as anticolonial.

[[FIG. 1 HERE]]

Methodologically, this method expands and adapts Poststructural analytics to the study of diplomacy. Like typical Poststructuralist analysis, it retrieves the very words that constitute subjectivity, but adds topoi textual markers, sequencing, and the structure needed to follow representations across larger collections of texts. As Fig. 1 shows, detailed mapping of representations in diplomacy over time allows analysis to retrieve struggles over descriptions, such as Franco-Vietnamese efforts to represent the conflict as colonial or Cold War, the role of individuals such as Bevin, and how their influence was exercised *through* textual representations. Additionally, it accounts for the various conditions governing diplomatic persuasion, in this case how shared Orientalist ideas "proved" Vietminh could not possibly challenge France without Soviet direction.

Historically, this approach lays bare the exact knowledge production journeys of specific representations, such as Pignon's 1946 critique of American colonialism inspiring articulation of his 1948 "new" Bao Dai solution. It substantiates Bradley's (2000) thesis that identities were decisive. Speaking to the Paris-Saigon-Hanoi school of Vietnam War research, (Devillers, 1952; Mus, 1971; Tønnesson, 1991) the method in this paper contributes to understanding why the 1948 concessions –superficial as they were– only became feasible when Pignon became governor. This approach also adds to Lawrence's (2005) argument about the decisive diplomatic role of colonial officers.

Conclusion: accounting for the power of diplomatic text and its representations

This paper makes a theoretical and methodological case for focus on diplomacy's knowledge production. Diplomatic text, the ultimate fruit of many diplomatic practices, plays a vital role in the constitution of the state in the context of other international actors, its self, and its interlocutors. The method advanced substantiates this account and shows its purchase on the empirical evidence of diplomatic practice. Thanks to its capacity to analyse larger collections of texts –and relations among them– than Poststructuralists typically use, its application to the diplomacy of the First Vietnam War showed its suitability to account for the transformation of the conflict from primarily anti-colonial to a Cold War battlefield. The approach empirically demonstrates how writing descriptions is crucial to diplomatic practice and influence. The key theoretical consequence is that the conceptualisation, identification and contextualisation of an actor occurs in practices of diplomatic knowledge production consistently invested in text. This insight opens the way for a research agenda to account for this aspect of diplomacy's power in practice.

This paper examined Poststructuralist theoretical advances in diplomacy and identity, adapting and developing them to enable a method for large-scale analysis of how diplomatic knowledge production constitutes representations of subjects and their contexts. It built on Constantinou's (1996) conceptualisation of 'the diplomatic' to develop an understanding of the link between the performance of the sovereignty of the state and Neumann's (2002, 2012) analysis of diplomatic practice. This concept, the diplomatic moment, contributes a theory-praxis empirical definition of the diplomatic text useful for a range of analyses of diplomacy. This paper then drew on Barthes' literary commentary to provide a systematic approach to analyse how each diplomatic text constitutes representations of subjects and their temporal, spatial and normative contexts. This analysis was then taken into intertextual space thanks to the import from literary theory of topoi textual markers, which in addition to signposting discourses, also indicate their history and normative structure. This permits in-depth genealogical mapping of representations, determining how they develop across time, practices and the many hands and drafts of diplomatic knowledge production as well as the conditions that allow representations to cross from one international actor's diplomacy to another's.

Applying this analytical technique provides a number of insights into diplomacy. It identifies and examines hitherto unconsidered diplomatic events, ideas and individuals in the study of diplomatic communication. Analysis of the representations that in 1948 led US policymakers to believe that Indochina was the last frontier in the struggle against Communism revealed the vital role of racialised Orientalism, assumptions about monolithic Communism and a long-forgotten 1946 French study of American attitudes to colonialism. This insight into hitherto unconsidered data and history was made possible by this method's genealogical search for the background and formation of the key ideas that in 1948 allowed French diplomacy to overcome US suspicions and secure US assistance against the Vietnamese rebels.

This method also produces new insights into the theoretical and practical conditions that enable diplomatic agency. This is because it individuates crossovers, the instances of persuasion, and locates them contextually, revealing what enabled them. In Vietnam 1945-48, it was demonstrated that racial representations of subjects and their spatial (Oriental), temporal (backward) and normative (red conspiracy) contexts have immense power in diplomacy. Application of this method to US diplomacy with Mali and Morocco in the 2000s showed that representation of the Self as a postcolonial subaltern was empowering for these North African states, allowing them to significantly influence US policy (de Orellana, 2015, 2016). This understanding of what enables crossovers paves the way for future conceptualisation and empirical examination of the agency that enables diplomacy to transform how other actors see the world.

Beyond Poststructuralist concerns, this contribution addresses one of the oldest questions of diplomacy and international politics: how international actors see one another. Its analytical yield is widely applicable, as its focus on large volumes of diplomatic correspondence and the empirical significance of crossovers from one author to another allow for analytical claims relevant to scholars of other IR traditions, from Realists like Kissinger that saw diplomacy's power as embedded in its communicative functions, to English School theorists. The latter would, for example, find significant substantiation of its concept of polysemy –conflicts over definition of an institution's norms (Costa-Buranelli, 2015)– in this method's treatment of representations competing for supremacy.

For interpretive analyses of international practices this method lays bare how diplomacy transmits and constructs representations, contributing to and substantiating research on the international role of discourses of violence. The representations delivered in diplomacy enable violence by

constituting and inscribing the Other: for example, who the enemy and ‘fellow travellers’ were in Vietnam. Studying the applications of power that govern representations as they evolve reveals the effects of institutional hierarchy and power relations explored by the Practice Turn (Adler, 2008; Adler and Pouliot, 2011), particularly the effects of ‘the bureaucratic mode of knowledge production’ explored by Neumann (2012). When researching relations among states, analysing self-representation helps understand the constitution of what Pouliot (2011, 2016) calls the ‘pecking orders’ of international diplomacy, additionally revealing the oft-ignored agency and means of postcolonial diplomacy. Further, since text plays a crucial institutional and international role, this method relates the investment of power in practices to representations of political identity.

This analytical technique enlightens, adds detail to and substantiates how identity contributes to identifying enemies, allies or the constitution of security communities (Adler, 2008; Williams and Neumann, 2000) or the EU (Adler-Nissen, 2014a). The representations studied by the method elaborated in this paper can be taken as one of several core inputs into the constitution of images of Self and Other that enable securitisation and subsequent practices of international security (Buzan et al., 1998; Buzan and Hansen, 2009; Hansen, 1997; Wæver, 1996; Williams, 1998, 2003). By tracing how actors see the world, this method contributes to the study of phenomena like stigmatisation (Adler-Nissen, 2014b) that depend on shared representation of a transgressor.

The final insight of this method brings us back to an old concern of diplomatic practice. Writing, words, name-calling and descriptions are of vital importance to diplomacy. Application of this method to study diplomatic intercourse recalls Machiavelli’s obsession with good writing and detailed descriptions because it conceptually reiterates and empirically substantiates the power of diplomatic text. For the contemporary theorist, analyst and student of diplomacy, it brings representation and knowledge production to the forefront of understanding diplomacy. Such is the power of knowing who we and the other are and the role of diplomacy in producing this knowledge.

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MAE: Ministère Affaires Étrangères, Archives Diplomatiques

ANOM: Archives Nationales d'outre-Mer, INDO records
AS: Archive Sainteny, Archive Historique Nationale des Sciences Politiques
NA: UK National Archives, Foreign Office (FO) and Cabinet (CAB) records.

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