

“Diplomacy is a Feminine Art”¹

On the Unstable Gendering of Diplomacy and the Diplomat or Diplomacy, Masculinity and Feminine Acts

Paper for presentation at the Department of Political Science, Rutgers University, March 5, 2018

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¹ Stated by Clare Boothe Luce in 1976 (former U.S. ambassador to Italy and Brazil, former member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board under Nixon), (Morin 1994:30).

Introduction

In a recent acclaimed biography, US diplomacy analyst John T. Shaw provides a compelling profile of former Swedish ambassador to the US, Jan Eliasson. Eliasson is hailed as the quintessential – if unusually successful – diplomat, well equipped to handle the multiple, complex challenges of the contemporary world. Using Eliasson as a vehicle, Shaw aims to provide “a unique inside view of...modern diplomacy,” and he has thus opted to portray a man who “looks and acts like an ambassador from central casting.”² Not surprisingly, Shaw’s portrayal not only involves a male diplomat but it also relies on a series of familiar gendered adjectives and metaphors. Eliasson is described as “tall and lean, friendly and forceful.”³ He is furthermore represented as “aggressive,” “intensely driven and very ambitious,” but also as “charming and exuberant and [a man who] laughs easily.”⁴ Describing Eliasson’s keen sense of what each situation requires, Shaw writes that “he can take over a room or fade into the background... With equal skill, he can play Clark Kent or Superman.”⁵

Eliasson undoubtedly fits the masculinized mold of the diplomat, following the diplomat-as-male scripts described in prior research on gender and diplomacy.⁶ And yet Shaw’s portrayal of Eliasson includes a short passage that I argue should give us pause. At the end of the first chapter, Shaw illustrates a point about the versatility of a modern ambassador in the following manner:

On one day he could speak with eloquence and passion in the East Room of the White House about the Nobel Prize and the next day carry the pink purse of Swedish defense minister Leni Björklund, into the Pentagon, several steps behind Donald Rumsfeld and her.⁷

This could be read as another illustration of how very manly Eliasson is, that he can both carry a pink purse and walk in deference behind a woman defense minister, and still remain Clark Kent or Superman. My contention is that this brief passage could also be read as an instance of a more widespread practice in U.S. discourse of feminizing diplomacy, with Eliasson cast as an emasculated male, relegated into the position of a pink purse-carrying subordinate walking in deference behind the woman in charge of the military. Although diplomacy is indeed infused with scripts of

² Shaw (2006) cover and p 2.

³ Ibid p. 2.

⁴ Ibid p. 6.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ E.g. Enloe (1990), Svedberg (2002) and Neumann (2008 and 2012).

⁷ Ibid p. 9.

masculinity, I claim that the masculine standing of diplomacy and the diplomat is unstable and susceptible to feminization, to being represented as a set of feminine traits, skills and practices typical of women or feminine men. Diplomacy may be particularly prone to feminization in periods and contexts of militarism, such as contemporary US, where so many seem so enthralled with military power. Among others, Anna Agathangelou and L.H.M. Ling have connected this militarized stance with masculinities, using the concept of “hypermasculinity” to describe the resurgence of reactionary, militarized self-representations in US discussions of foreign affairs post-9/11.⁸ US depictions – and especially in hawkish circles – may thus be particularly prone to feminizing diplomacy. My sense is nonetheless that the feminization of diplomacy in the US gains much of its force from discourses that are in wider, international circulation, i.e. from a transnational sub-text on diplomacy which is highly gendered. The discursive material that makes possible the identification of diplomacy as female, effeminate or not quite male probably extends beyond US borders, in short.

The main aim of this article is, first, to provide illustrations of important instances when diplomacy and the diplomat have been feminized in US discourse, and, second, to draw attention to discursive material that makes diplomacy susceptible to being rendered feminine. In doing so, the analysis provides an important corrective to the existing academic literature on the gender of diplomacy, a small body of work within IR that has concluded that diplomacy and the diplomat are scripted male. The next section of the article thus begins with a review of the diplomacy literature. After that, the discussion turns to the theoretical premises of the analysis, drawing on feminist scholarship to define and grapple with processes of feminization. To set up the discussion of what makes feminization of diplomacy possible, I will then draw attention to a recent exchange between two US foreign policy analysts – Robert Kagan and Parag Khanna – over the nature of US and European presence in the world. This debate is subsequently used to examine four ways in which diplomacy is susceptible to being rendered feminine or effeminate: (1) as the peaceful alternative to force; (2) as negotiation, talking and gossip; (3) as centered on food and receptions; and (4) as an elite institution engaged in foreign affairs. The analysis relies on a broad reading of US media and public policy sources in the past two decades (though sometimes also digging farther into the past), identifying illustrations of the feminization of diplomacy and analyzing its discursive foundations by coupling media representations with diplomacy scholarship and gender scholarship. The paper ends with a brief

⁸ Agathangelou and Ling (2004). See also Nayak (2006).

discussion of some of the ways in which the feminization of diplomacy entered into the Cold War persecution of homosexuals in the US Department of State.

IR Claims About the Gender of Diplomacy

Diplomacy is emerging as a lively field of study within IR (e.g. Sharp 2009, Adler-Nissen 2011, Neumann 2008 and 2012, Sending et al 2015, Pouliot 2016, Aggestam and Towns 2018). Whereas several studies have focused on gender and/or women within specific ministries of foreign affairs (e.g. McGlen and Sarkees 1993, Jeffreys-Jones 1995, Sjolander 2001, Neumann 2008 and 2012, Aggestam and Towns 2018), fewer – but a growing number of – studies have explored gender dimensions of diplomacy as an international institution. A widely read chapter by Cynthia Enloe (1990/2014) remains the classic academic treatments of this issue. Writing about the late 1980s, she presents diplomatic work as a male world, guided by norms of masculinity and inhabited by men. “Men are seen as having the skills and resources that the government needs if its international status is to be enhanced. They are presumed to be the diplomats,” she argues (Enloe 1990:97-98). Trust and confidence between government officials from diverse countries is central for effective diplomacy, Enloe continues, describing the importance of homosocial ties established among male diplomats in their homes – traditionally the domain of the diplomatic wife. The ability of men from different states to get to know one another “man to man” thus rests on the domestic duties of diplomatic wives, who create an atmosphere where male diplomats can establish closer ties over home cooked meals as well as cigars and cocktails in the comfort of a living room. (Male) diplomacy thus depended “on a certain kind of marriage and on the ideology of wifely duty” (Enloe 1990: 102).

In an analysis of masculinity constructions in Western negotiations with Russia in 1991-1992, Svedberg (2002) affirms Enloe’s claims about diplomacy as masculinized practices believed best to be performed by men. Probing Western views that a negotiator sent to Russia must be a man, she delves into the reasoning as to why men were best equipped to engage in these negotiations. In short, she claims, post-Soviet Russia was considered a “macho society” where female negotiators simply could not be effective. The main problem was not seen as inhering with women per se, but rather with Russian expectations and customs. Western representatives reasoned that since “negotiations often would take place between two teams of men, the activities away from the negotiation table would often involve heavy drinking and situations that could be potentially

dangerous for a woman from the West” (Svedberg 2002:159. See also Mpoumou 2004, Aharoni 2011, and Aggestam and Towns 2018).

Iver Neumann’s wonderful diplomatic ethnographies (2008 and 2012), while focused on the internal workings of the Norwegian MFA, also echo these claims about masculinized diplomacy. He points to three distinctive masculinities within the Norwegian MFA, which he suggests to be operative in Western diplomacy more broadly: a hegemonic bourgeois masculinity (economically privileged, cultivated, intellectually independent), a numerically dominant petit bourgeois masculinity (diligent, straight-laced, rule-following) and the more unconventional trouble-maker (Neumann 2012: 153-159). With the diplomat scripted male, however, “there was an inherent tension between the statuses ‘women’ and ‘diplomat’” (ibid 162). He cites female ambassadors who felt unable to join their male colleagues as they retreated after diplomatic suppers and provides other hair-raising stories about the work conditions of women in diplomacy. The male homosocial ties and practices Enloe and Svedberg identified for the 1980s and early 1990s appear still to be thriving in the 2000s, despite the entry of a much larger cadre of female diplomats.

As a whole, this sparse but interesting body of scholarship on the gender of diplomacy is unequivocal: diplomacy consists of masculinized practices and expectations. The diplomat is scripted male, and female ambassadors and other female diplomatic staff continue to have difficulty negotiating the norms and informal rules of diplomacy. There is little reason to doubt the validity of this general claim about diplomacy. However, I contend that the gender of diplomacy is more complex and its masculine status more insecure than this general claim reveals. For one, femininities and feminization are part and parcel of the construction of masculinities – including diplomatic masculinity – as I will show both theoretically and empirically below. Even the seemingly more stable military masculinities are vulnerable to and rely on feminization. What is more, and in contrast with the military, diplomacy is associated with traits generally also attributed to femininity and to women. In being feminized, diplomacy and the diplomat are thus susceptible to alternately being rendered less male, an effeminate male and at times even a woman. To make these claims, the next section will begin with a conceptual discussion of feminization, setting the stage for the ensuing empirical analysis of US representations of diplomacy and the diplomat.

Understanding Feminization

To make the claims about the unstable masculine status of diplomacy and the diplomat in US discourse, the article draws inspiration from feminist work on the social production of femininities and masculinities (e.g. Connell 1987, 1995, 2000, Schippers 2007). By feminization, I refer to the designation of putatively “feminine” qualities and values to an actor, behavior or object. The starting premise is the standard assumption that femininities and masculinities are social categories that are produced relationally, contextually and historically. These contain scripts, norms and social rules, including prevalent expectations that biological and social traits align in a binary manner as male or female. Acts of transgression often lead to stigma and social sanctions, particularly for those who challenge the male/female binary. Importantly, gender helps sort and designate not just individuals but also collective actors, institutions or practices as distinctive, superior and inferior in terms of masculinity and femininity. Femininity is not simply ascribed to women and masculinity to men – virtually any actor or practice can be feminized and masculinized. Indeed, “masculinity and femininity and their constructed relationship to each other are an available rationale for practice and a referent with which to interpret and judge, not just the gender displays and practices of individuals, but all social relations, policy, rules, and institutional practice and structure” (Schippers 2007:92-93. See also Sjoberg 2011:110). Institutions such as diplomacy and institutional figures such as “the diplomat” can thus be given meaning and assessed through gendered language and symbols.

Gender is not simply about differentiation but also about inequality and hierarchy. Much important work has addressed the subordination of femininity to masculinity. However, in the past two decades, hierarchies among forms of masculinity have received an enormous amount of scholarly attention (e.g. Connell 1987, 1995, 2000 and all the scholarship her work has influenced). In IR, scholarship on masculinities has produced a large and rich body of work focused especially on military masculinities (E.g. Niva 1998, Zalewski and Parpart 1998, Cohn 1999, Enloe 2000, Agathangelou and Ling 2004, Nayak 2006, Hutchins 2008, Parpart and Zalewski 2008, Baaz and Stern 2009, Peterson 2010, Kronsell 2011, Belkin 2012, Jochim and Schneiker 2012, Kirby and Henry 2012, Duncanson 2013 and 2015, Hurley 2016, Stachowitsch 2015, Zalewski 2017, and Henry 2017). In this work, scholars emphasize that certain characteristics and practices are upheld as superior masculinity standards whereby other, inferior masculinities are defined and assessed. In the hierarchical ordering of masculinities, what is coded as “feminine” characteristics – e.g. being designated as physically weak, compliant, unwilling to use violence, emotional or wanting to be the

object of male sexual desire – is often central. Engaging in allegedly “feminine” practices or displaying feminine characteristics signifies a failure to adequately meet hegemonic masculinity expectations. The result is devaluation and stigmatization as less masculine, less of a man.

The masculinities scholarship has furthermore underscored the intersection of gender with other hierarchies, such as those of sexuality, race and class. Indeed, Connell (e.g. 1987) contends that heterosexuality has become central in the constitution of hegemonic masculinity, with homoerotic desire pivotal to distinguishing and denigrating “the homosexual” as an inferior masculinity. Being or wanting to be the object of male desire is pivotal, but other acts, traits or dispositions deemed as feminine can also be used to designate men as “gay,” including being denigrated as “effeminate,” a “sissy” or a “fag” (e.g. Anderson, 2002; Connell, 1987; Dowsett, 1993; Fejes, 2000; Garlick, 2003, Pascoe 2005, Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). Importantly, other allegedly masculine traits can at times trump the absence of heterosexual desire, providing a “masculinity insurance” against feminized stigmatization. For instance, superior athletic abilities can sometimes shield openly gay athletes from stigma (Anderson 2002:865). In other words, when found lacking in one respect, actors may be able to muster other signifiers necessary for almost full manhood status (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009:279). In the US and Europe, racialization is likewise often central in producing hegemonic masculinity as white masculinity. In US discourse, common representations of black and Middle Eastern men as pathologically hyper-masculine couple with representations of Asian men as effeminate to position white masculinity as appropriately restrained manliness (e.g. Stecopoulos and Uebel 1997, Eng 2001 and Parreñaz Shimizu 2012). **Finally, class.**

The ordering of masculinities is not simple, entailing intersectional processes that are contextual, sometimes contradictory and generally in motion. Crucially, as the discussion above should make clear, feminization is central for the identification and ordering of masculinities. In other words, masculinities and femininities are not well conceived simply as the construction and reproduction of a dichotomy that neatly separates “feminine” from “masculine” identities. Instead, feminization is involved in the very constitution of masculinities. Feminization in this sense could be a way to designate an institution such as diplomacy as less manly, with “the diplomat” metaphorically conceived as some sort of inadequate or less manly form of man.

But feminization should not solely be seen as implicated in the designation of masculinities or manhood. Feminization is obviously also central in the constitution of femininities and in the metaphorical construction of institutions, collective actors or figures as “women.” All forms of

feminization should not automatically be interpreted as ultimately and primarily being about masculinity and/or men. In the literature on hegemonic masculinity, a number of authors have expressed concern with the potential overlap and conflation between subordinate masculinities and femininities. As Mimi Schippers (2007:88) laments in a response to Connell's influential work, "we are left with no conceptual apparatus with which to distinguish femininity from subordinate masculinities unless we reduce femininity to the practices of women and masculinity to the practices of men." Before her, Patricia Yancey Martin (1998:473) similarly stated that "I can accept that man and woman are places in a system of gender relations and that masculinity is practice. But I have trouble understanding how masculinity is a place or an effect. When a man dresses 'like a woman,' is he in a masculine or feminine place? How can we know?" In my view, there are no given answers or paths out of this dilemma. Gender is not a closely integrated and neatly defined system, but rather consists of ambiguities and contradictions that render masculinities and femininities a set of complex practices in motion (e.g. Carrigan et al 1985:598). Engaging in what is understood as a feminized practice could ambiguously (metaphorically) position an institution or actor alternately as a feminized man, some sort of woman, or a more ambivalent, non-binary subject. Indeed, as we will see below, discursive struggles may erupt over how best to interpret actions in gender terms.

In sum, then, feminization – the signifying and designating of femininity – is intimately involved in the constitution of a hierarchy of masculinities as well as femininities. The ways of signifying femininity (or masculinity) intersects with other hierarchies, such as those of class, race and sexuality, and they can vary significantly contextually and over time. In any one context, there is a repertoire of signifying practices that feminize (or masculinize) actors, institutions like diplomacy or other social phenomena. Feminization often entails disjunctures and paradoxes, with gender designations shifting and incomplete.

Ultimately, what actual practices, characteristics or actors are rendered feminine or masculine in a particular context, and how feminization is implicated, are empirical questions. The next section of this article turns to an exchange between Robert Kagan and Parag Khanna in *Policy Review* and *Foreign Policy* over the nature of US and European presence in the world, in order to show that feminization is used to present diplomacy and those who engage in it alternately as a woman or a modern and effeminate man. The exchange serves as a spring board for the more extensive exploration of what it is about diplomacy that makes this institution and those who engage in it susceptible to feminization.

The Diplomat: Man, Woman or Effeminate Man?

In 2002, Robert Kagan published the essay “Power and Weakness,” which sparked a great deal of debate on both sides of the Atlantic. Kagan’s main contention was that it was time “to stop pretending that Europeans and Americans shared a common view of the world.” The essay set out to contrast the post-Cold War strategic cultures of the US and Europe and to claim that their distinctive strategic dispositions derive from their relative power positions: Europe is weak, whereas the US is strong. Kagan contends that a weakening Europe is “moving beyond power into a self-contained world of laws and rules and transnational negotiation and cooperation,” a stance which is directly related to Europe’s decreasing ability to rule by force.⁹ The US, in contrast, is more willing to go to war and embraces the view that “true security and the defense and promotion of a liberal order still depend on the possession and use of military might.”¹⁰

Kagan drew on familiar gender metaphors to make his point, equating Europe with a woman and the US with a man, locked into a marriage in which neither really understood the other’s worldview. In an infamous passage, he claimed that “on major strategic and international questions today, Americans are from Mars and Europeans from Venus.”¹¹ What is less frequently noted are the ways in which diplomacy and negotiation were drawn into the depictions of European femininity:

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

In this passage, the reliance of diplomacy is upheld as indicative of the femininity of Europe. By favoring negotiation, persuasion and diplomacy, Kagan suggested that Europe should metaphorically be conceived of as woman.

Kagan’s essay and subsequent book on the same title were far from unchallenged. In the rivers of ink that flowed on the transatlantic rift, a response essay by Parag Khanna is of particular interest for our purposes. Khanna, a US fellow of the New America Foundation, an LSE PhD and a prolific policy analyst, objected strongly to the portrayal diplomatic Europe as a woman. Khanna suggests another metaphor for Europe in his 2004 *Foreign Policy* article, entitled “The Metrosexual

⁹ Kagan (2002):3.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

Superpower.” Drawing on Michael Flocker’s 2003 bestseller, *The Metrosexual Guide to Style: A Handbook for the Modern Man*, Khanna contends that Europe’s way of being in the world better represents modern manhood than does the old-fashioned US reliance on force. In fact, although Europe engages in feminine behaviors and displays feminine characteristics, this does not warrant equating Europe with a woman.

The trendsetting male icons of the 21st century must combine the coercive strengths of Mars and the seductive wiles of Venus. Put simply, metrosexual men are muscular but suave, confident yet image-conscious, assertive yet clearly in touch with their feminine sides... by cleverly deploying both its hard power and its sensitive side, the European Union (EU) has become more effective – and more attractive – than the United States on the catwalk of diplomatic clout. Meet the real new Europe: the world’s first Metrosexual Superpower.¹²

Khanna ends his essay by stating that “Europe has revealed its true 21st century orientation. Just as metrosexuals are redefining masculinity, Europe is redefining old notions of power and influence.”¹³ His point is clear: Europe is better conceived as a metrosexual male than as a woman.

What are we to make of the gender metaphors in these essays? Khanna’s response is clearly tongue-in-cheek, although its basic message on the importance of “soft power” is made in earnest. Kagan’s reliance on the essentialist gender stereotypes put forth in John Gray’s 1992 bestseller *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus* could be attributed to his conservative ideological leanings. Although Khanna rejects Kagan’s representation of Europe as a woman, he nonetheless accepts the depiction of diplomacy as a feminine practice, a behavior that indicates being in touch with one’s “feminine side.” Both essays thus draw on a shared notion of diplomacy and negotiation as “soft” and “feminine” forms of exercising influence. Such feminizations of diplomacy indeed have more profound discursive foundations, foundations that make it possible to interpret actors who engage in diplomatic practice as feminine or effeminate to start with. Male diplomats, in extension, are susceptible to being coded as metrosexual, effete or gay. I will spend the next section discussing four discursive elements that may render diplomacy feminine.

1. Nonviolent Interactions: Diplomacy as “Soft” Power

The most apparent manner in which diplomacy is susceptible to feminization is through its being contrasted with violence and military force. Diplomacy is, in Satow’s classic and still ubiquitous formulations “the conduct of business between states by peaceful means” (Satow 1979[1917]:1).

¹² Khanna (2004):66.

¹³ Ibid: 68.

Relying on nonviolent interactions, diplomacy is generally juxtaposed to military responses and war, as the communicative and negotiating alternative to force. War and peace, military and diplomacy, hard power and soft power, these are all familiar binaries at work in discussions of international affairs. Indeed, representations of diplomacy as the “soft” alternative to “hard power” abounds in US media and among US policy-makers and academics.

Through familiar webs of social meaning, gender dualisms are easily made to align with the diplomacy/military distinction. Masculinity and violence are closely intertwined, as “a controlled use of force, or the threat of force, has been widely accepted as part of men’s repertoire” (Connell 2002: 94). The US military, like other militaries, is intimately involved in the construction and reproduction of masculinity, and the use of force inside and outside the military is widely represented in masculinized language. Prior scholarship on military masculinities shows the centrality of policing and purging “feminine” elements from the military, metaphorically and in practice. This involves the encouragement and celebration of presumably masculine traits such as “physical and emotional courage, the ability to endure hardship, and importantly, not to break down emotionally in the face of horror. It means being fearless... a willingness to take risks, having the strength to stare death in the face and not flinch, and really being able to kill” (Cohn 1999:461). This is coupled with coding of dispositions and behaviors such as whining, quitting, fear, physical weakness and an inability or unwillingness to use force as feminine, with the effect of those displaying such behaviors being feminized and taunted. In short, “hard power” is depicted as masculine, which resonates with Connell’s broader claims about the centrality of violence in the construction and maintenance of hegemonic masculinity in the US and the West more generally.

Conversely, femininity and nonviolence are pervasively linked, and they are readily connected with the “soft power” of diplomacy. Women are routinely and widely represented as the more peaceful and relational sex, as lacking the physical and mental aptitude for violence and combat. Indeed, women who use violence transgress gender expectations and are regularly represented as “monsters” or “whores” in US news media (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007). Represented as the nonviolent “soft” alternative to (masculinized) military force, diplomacy in turn shares attributes that are also generally understood as feminine.

Although diplomacy is predominantly construed in masculinized terms (e.g. Neumann 2008 and 2012), engagement in diplomatic interactions can also easily be represented as a feminine alternative to the masculine pursuit of force. It is well known that the Trump Administration’s increased

reliance on military options and dramatic sidelining of the State Department have been described as a return to “hard power” and a “muscular” foreign policy (e.g. Nakamura and Eilpenn 2016, Bloomberg 2018, Kheel 2018). The Trump Administration itself referred to its March 2017 budget proposal, with major cuts proposed to the funding of diplomacy, as a “hard power” budget, (e.g. Berman 2017). Trump furthermore regularly relies on masculinized depictions of force, such as in a recent and widely circulated tweet that made phallic references to the use of nuclear weapons, comparing the size and performance of Trump’s nuclear button with that of the North Korean leader:

North Korean Leader Kim Jong Un just stated that the ‘Nuclear Button is on his desk at all times.’ Will someone from his depleted and food starved regime please inform him that I too have a Nuclear Button, but it is a much bigger & more powerful one than his, and my Button works! (as reproduced in the *New York Times* by Baker and Tackett, 2018).

In many such representations of force and the threat of violence as “hard,” “muscular” and masculine, the implications for how diplomacy should be understood – as the feeble and feminine alternative – are implied but not spelled out. One does not need to engage in mental acrobatics to make that connection, however, and a number of representations do indeed manifestly depict diplomacy as effeminate, as illustrated in the exchange between Kagan and Khanna discussed above. Supporters of Trump’s “hard power” policy stance have also expressly feminized diplomacy. For instance, editor-in-chief emeritus Wesley Pruden of *the Washington Times* praises the administration’s rejection of “the lace-panty language beloved by diplomats” in favor of military threats (Pruden 2018). He elaborates:

When a Russian official offered the usual quibble and cavil, questioning whether the North Korean missile fired Tuesday was actually an intercontinental missile, or merely an intermediate range missile, the tough-talking lady late of South Carolina [UN Ambassador Niki Haley] replied firmly: “If you see this as a threat, if you see this for what it is, which is North Korea showing its muscle, then you need to stand strong. If you choose not to, we will go our own path.”

This is exactly the honest dialogue the rest of the world needs to hear, and which it rarely has in the precincts of the fearful and accommodating over these past few decades with both Democrats and Republicans in charge. The lace-panty diplomacy of the Obama years echoed again this week in the advice of Danny Russel, a senior expert on Asia at Mr. Obama’s National Security Council. “What the [Trump] administration needs to do,” he says, “is get China and Russia around an approach, even if it is not as testosterone-rich and muscular as the United States would like.”

Indeed, testosterone and manly muscles frighten the timid and the irresolute.

In the elaboration, as opposed to the initial claim about lace-panty diplomacy, the gendered status of diplomacy is ambiguous. The diplomacy of the past few decades is feminized and disparaged as the choice of the fearful, the timid and the irresolute. It is the choice of those afraid of testosterone and manly muscles. In describing the language and practice of diplomacy as “lace-panty,” the author furthermore conjures up images of sheer and delicate under-garments worn by effeminate women (unlike the “tough-talking” ambassador Haley) or perhaps men in drag. Regardless, the manhood of such diplomacy is clearly found wanting. However, whether the preferred alternative is a testosterone-rich, muscular and threatening *diplomacy* or whether such alternative would be to abandon diplomacy for manlier engagements is less clear.

Such crude celebrations of martial masculinity and the adjacent disparaging feminization of diplomacy have not escaped critics of the Trump administration. In “Trump’s Budget Makes Perfect Sense,” a satirical defense of the 2017 “hard power” budget proposal, Alexandra Petri of *the Washington Post* jests

This budget will make America a lean, mean fighting machine with bulging, rippling muscles and not an ounce of fat. America has been weak and soft for too long. BUT HOW WILL I SURVIVE ON THIS BUDGET? you may be wondering. I AM A HUMAN CHILD, NOT A COSTLY FIGHTER JET. *You* may not survive, but that is because you are SOFT and WEAK, something this budget is designed to eliminate.

What are we cutting?

The State Department, by 29 percent: Right now, all the State Department’s many qualified employees do is sit around being sad that they are never consulted about anything. This is, frankly, depressing, and it is best to put them out of their misery. Besides, they are only trained in Soft Diplomacy, like a woman would do, and NOBODY wants that. Only HARD POWER now that we have a man in charge who thought the name Rex Tillerson was not manly enough and rechristened himself Wayne Tracker. With the money we will save on these sad public servants, we will be able to buy lots of GUNS and F-35s and other cool things that go BOOM and POW and PEW PEW PEW (Petri 2017).

In sum, whether earnestly or in jest, implicit and overt connections are made between diplomacy and femininity in US policy discussions. By those favoring military and “hard power” options, diplomacy – as non-use of force – is associated with timidity, fear and a lack of courage. Those who advocate for diplomacy may thus be feminized and stigmatized as soft and weak pantywaists. While the contrasting of diplomacy with force may provide the most obvious fodder for the feminization of diplomacy, there are additional ways in which this is done. I will now turn to an additional three

ways in which diplomacy may be associated with femininity/women and thus liable to be feminized. Because of space limitations, the discussion of these will necessarily be more truncated.

2. Negotiating, Talking, Gossiping

Communication, negotiation and using relations for information gathering are central in diplomacy. More formal diplomatic negotiations and interactions are complemented by equally important informal information-gathering, a task which is highly dependent on social networks, friendly social relations, and conversation skills (e.g. Wood 2014:140, Neumann 2012). “Gossip,” according to Neumann (2012:150) is “very important in the world of diplomacy.” Not surprisingly, being conversant and social, able to pick up on important gossip and the latest news, are thus signature traits of a successful diplomat.

In the US, as in many other places, conversation and the use of language are widely understood and represented in gendered terms. Representations connecting talking and interactive conversations with femininity and women have been pervasive in the Anglo world for centuries (e.g. Cohen 1996; Cameron 2003; Talbot 2003). Prevalent contemporary representations contrast women’s use of language against men’s as more relational, with women listening more attentively to try to understand the other’s point of view (Holmes and Marra 2004), less competitive and more empathetic (Talbot 2003:474) and generally more sophisticated (Cameron 2003). The US bestseller *You Just Don’t Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, by Georgetown sociolinguistics professor Deborah Tannen, is a good illustration of such binary representations of gender and language. One of the book’s main claims is that “For most women, the language of conversation is primarily a language of rapport: a way of establishing connections and negotiating relationships ... For most men, talk is primarily a means to preserve independence and negotiate and maintain status in a hierarchical social order” (Tannen 1990:77).

“Women’s language” is not only frequently represented as more relational, empathetic and interactive – loquaciousness is often also construed as feminine and there are prevalent stereotypes of women as the “talkative sex” (Crawford 1995, Helgeson 2015). Such representations sometimes take the form of women who cannot or will not shut up, who cannot keep a secret since they feel compelled to pass information on. Gossip is furthermore widely represented as a feminine practice and a “female pursuit” (Code 1995:144), so much so that “gossip and women have assumed an almost inviolable link in popular consciousness” (Bastin 2011: 17). Not surprisingly, there are also

prevailing representations in the US of talkative men as effeminate and gay (Madon 1997). However, whereas the allegedly taciturn nature of masculinity used to be heralded, women are now often upheld as verbally superior to men. Since the 1990s in particular, Cameron (2003:453) contends, mainstream Anglo discourse has come to contain prevalent anxieties about “the problem of the inarticulate, linguistically unskilled man” (Cameron 2003:454).

Such gendered representations of language have found their way into diplomacy but can also be detected in external representations of diplomacy. In the first half of the twentieth century in particular, but continuing into the present, US diplomats relied on their wives to be their eyes and ears at social functions and involved them in information-gathering (e.g. Wood 2014). While such (unpaid) involvement was encouraged and expected by the Department of State, there were simultaneously anxieties about the discretion of these wives. A 1909 Foreign Service manual issued a warning about women’s “well known inability to keep secrets” (as reproduced in Wood 2014:148). Such gendered notions of language use likely helped keep women out of the Foreign Service in the past century. However, male diplomats were themselves also repeatedly feminized as “weak,” gossipy and unable to hold their tongue (ibid).

Contemporary renderings of diplomacy can also be read in terms of gendered representations of language. On the one hand, there are those who draw connections between the nature of diplomatic work and the allegedly superior conversation skills of women. US women diplomats have claimed for decades that the communication skills that come with their gender is an advantage, making them better suited for diplomacy than men. Clare Boothe Luce, the first US woman appointed to a major ambassador post (Italy, in 1953), claimed in 1976 that “women have been skilled in diplomacy for thousands of years... [They] have been taught to use gentle words... diplomacy is a feminine art” (as quoted in Morin 1994: 29). US women ambassadors interviewed by Morin in the early 1990s expressed similar sentiments, stating that their gender was an advantage as women “have the ability to notice details and to listen carefully to another person” (ibid). In my own interviews with women ambassadors in D.C. in late 2017 and early 2018, the allegedly superior communication skills of women diplomats regularly also came up. Former US ambassador Barbara Bodine probably expressed such ideas most clearly in elaborating why being a successful diplomat entails drawing on female qualities:

One, diplomacy is the art of building relationships to deal with issues that you don't even know you're going to have. There's a lot of time spent talking with people, not necessarily on what the issue

is. It's not always transactional. Women, I think, we are more comfortable with nonlinear conversations, we're more comfortable in trying to get to know the person that we're dealing with, "Tell me about your wife, your kids, the dog," kind of conversation. We tend to deal more holistically with the people that we work with and are more comfortable with that. And to a certain extent, we're more empathetic, or we're more comfortable being empathetic. And so, a lot of these skills that we have translate almost perfectly into diplomacy. And then, you add to that that we are as smart, if not smarter, than our male colleagues, so my point, my view [laughter] always was, "I have every advantage that you have. I'm just as smart as you are. I'm just as educated as you are. I can write just as well as you can. I can come up with policy, so I've got all the intellectual skills that you've got. Plus, I have personal skills, that you really don't, or you don't have them as naturally as I do." (Author's interview, Nov 16, 2017).

Such representations of women, with their female communication skills, being better suited for diplomacy than men also circulate in US media (e.g. Guittard 2012, Rahman-Figueroa 2012, Hackel 2018) In these articles, women are attributed core (feminine) communication competencies central for diplomacy. In a 2012 *Huffington Post* article entitled "Diplomacy XX: When Women Lead, the World Improves," Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is represented as a particularly effective "for being an empathetic listener and a fully engaged diplomat" (Guittard 2012). Madeleine Albright's similar statements over the years that "women are particularly good at diplomacy" have also been widely circulated (e.g. Hackel 2018). Indeed, in these renderings, women appear more apt for the kind of conversations central to diplomacy.

On the other hand, there are also recurring feminizing representations that present diplomacy as teetering on the brink of the superficial and undignified (women's) business of gossip. The flurry of writing following the mass of diplomatic cables leaked by Wikileaks in 2010 is a case in point. A number of critics expressed frustration about the communication style and content of the State Department cables. In an article in *the New Republic*, entitled "Wikileaks and the Art of Shutting Up," the author expresses his dismay about "our gossipy diplomats" who "can't control themselves" and who communicate "banally" about trivia such as a "Dagestan wedding" (Posner 2010). He continues: "One would think that the antidote would be a measure of discretion on the part of our diplomats. Diplomats are supposed to be diplomatic, not to be gossips" (ibid). In a defensive response to the barrage of outrage, Christopher Meyer, former British Ambassador to the US, states that critics are "giving an impression that American diplomats and the State Department itself are more interested in gossip and personalities than geo-politics and international relations" (Meyer

2010). He also contends that “as the leaks of U.S. diplomatic cables reveal, a big chunk of diplomacy invariably includes tittle-tattle about people in high places. It always has done.” Like it or not, gossip is essential to diplomacy, he concludes. To be sure, these passages make no explicit connections between gossipy diplomats and women or femininity. However, in light of the prevalent gendering of gossip and the inability to keep quiet as female, it is not a stretch to read these as instances of feminization. Gossip, weddings and personalities is hardly made to be the stuff of “manly” international politics.

3. Food and Diplomatic Representations

[Integrate “the Role of Food in Diplomacy” by Lusa & Jakecevic. Saved PDF in diplomacy readings].

“A sizable amount of diplomatic work revolves around representation, which takes place in a class-specific format, particularly receptions and dinner parties” (Neumann 2012:136). Perhaps particularly for ambassadors, much of the diplomatic work week consists of an endless stream of lunches, teas, receptions, dinners and galas. These are occasions for networking and information-gathering, and most diplomats are skilled at turning these food-oriented social events into occasions to pick up important gossip. Hillary Clinton once aptly stated that “food is the oldest diplomatic tool” (Spinner 2014).

Cooking food and planning receptions are not exclusively but prevalently considered female work. Inside the diplomatic world, the masculinity of the diplomat has been maintained in part by having the diplomat’s wife shouldering this labor (e.g. Enloe 1990, Neumann 2012, Wood 2014:142-3). From without, however, this dimension of diplomatic work has led to dismissive representations of diplomats as “cookie-pushers” engaged in trivial women’s work. Allegedly coined in 1924 by a US diplomat, the term now has its own Wikipedia entry, which defines cookie-pushers as “diplomats in general and members of the US Foreign Service specifically” (Wikipedia 2018). The phrase makes regular appearances in the US media (Diplopundit 2010). A 1988 *Washington Post* article in defense of diplomats as “Heroes in Striped Pants” begins by asserting that “To Washington’s cognoscenti, they are cookie pushers. To the public, they are effete and striped-pants bureaucrats” (Moore 1998). The term is still used frequently enough to elicit irritated responses from the US Foreign Policy community. For instance, in 2004, Secretary of State Colin Powell stated that

I get annoyed when someone says, "Oh, they're pin-striped cookie pushers." You tell that to Ambassador Khalilzad in Kabul, who spent all of last week and all of last Saturday criss-crossing the country, personal risk to himself, in order to encourage the Afghan people to vote. You tell that to Ambassador Negroponte tonight in Baghdad, who is facing a challenging situation" (Powell 2004).

4. Fancy, French and Foreign

A fourth way in which diplomacy is feminized – as elite, French and foreign – ought to be dissected as analytically distinct but intersecting discourses. Due to space limitations, and since they are so tightly interwoven in the US, I will discuss these representations jointly. Diplomacy has its origins in the royal courts of Europe, and diplomats used to derive from the aristocracy. While this has obviously changed, diplomacy still relies on upper class conventions (e.g. Neumann 2012). What is more, the US depends heavily on private wealth in ambassador appointments, much more so than other Western states. For instance, in 2012, 30% of US ambassadorships were held by wealthy donors to president Obama's campaign (Green 2012, Klein 2012). These ambassadors bring their private wealth to an underfunded State Department, each using up to USD 1 million annually on dinners, galas and other forms of representation (ibid). Career diplomats of the State Department do not stem from this demographic, but its diplomats are overwhelmingly white men from elite universities – they are largely “white, male and Yale” in the words of former senator Bob Graham (Kralev 2016, Rogin 2017). Not surprisingly, diplomacy is prevalently represented as an elite institution in US media.

Contemporary diplomacy also has a French foundation (Freeman and Marks 2018). The French term *diplomate* came to refer to individuals authorized to represent the interests of a state in the eighteenth century (Ibid). Diplomatic terminology is full of French terms, such as *Chargé d’Affaires*, *agrément*, *attaché*, and *demarché*. In the US, the French language itself is frequently represented in gendered terms, with French depicted as a “female” language associated with empty chatter (Cohen 2002). In remarks about the profession of diplomacy to the *American Foreign Service Association* (AFSA) in 1995, US ambassador Chas Freeman tried to dispel some common misconceptions about diplomacy, such as the notion that “diplomacy is to speak French, to say nothing, and to speak falsehoods” (Freeman 1995). There are furthermore recurring narratives that connect France, French and Frenchness to “snobbery, elitist arrogance, and military impotence” (Fahey 2007: 133) with French men characterized as “intellectual and effete” (ibid: 137). The French elements of

diplomacy thus easily reinforce the notion that diplomats belong to an elite and effeminate club of talkers, detached from the general public and from the manly tasks of war.

Indeed, the figure of the effeminate and Frenchified (or at least foreign) aristocrat can easily be made to embody diplomacy in US representations. This has not passed US diplomats by, and there are regular attempts to defend the institution of diplomacy against such charges. For instance, turning again to Freeman's 1995 talk to the AFSA, his remarks reproduced a quote from noted British diplomat and author Harold Nicolson from 1959. According to Freeman, Nicolson had lamented that

there are those who regard the Foreign Service as a kind of bird sanctuary for elegant young men with the milk of Groton still wet upon their lips, arrayed in striped pants, and spending most of their time handing sugar cookies to ladies of high society in Europe and Latin America" (As quoted in Freeman 1995).

Like Nicolson, Freedman expressed dismay and concern about such alleged misconceptions of what diplomacy entails. Three decades before Freeman, in 1961, George Kennan, US ambassador and president of the *American Foreign Service Association* (1950-1951), had expressed similar concerns about the perception of diplomacy as elite and effete in his remarks on diplomacy as a profession. Diplomacy, Kennan explained,

long continued to be the province of what we could call high society; and I think it suffered from this fact. It led a life remote from that of the masses and the people. It attracted the sneers and jealousies that are bound to attach themselves to any social elite. It still had, of course, its somewhat spurious social glamour; but it tended to be associated in the public mind with luxury, with personal ingratiating, with deception and intrigue, with cunning and insincerity. It failed to command wide respect as a calling which had its own integrity and could absorb the best there was in people. And even for those who practiced it, the rather unreal social climate in which it all proceeded tended to obscure rather than to reveal its true distinction and its true possibilities.

Elaborating on US popular views of diplomacy, Kennan continued

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

He then spells it out quite clearly:

These people find such an occupation unmanly. (Kennan 1961, emphasis added)

Representing diplomacy as foreign, elite and unmanly clearly has a relatively long tradition in the US. And this variant of feminizing diplomats, as consisting of an effete and Frenchified social elite with foreign ties, continues to appear in US discourse. Turning back to the exchange between Kagan and

Khanna discussed in the beginning of the analysis, both depict diplomacy as a feminine and European preference, largely foreign to the manly and martial disposition of the US. To emphasize Khanna's point about Europe as the metrosexual superpower, *Foreign Policy* used the following illustration:

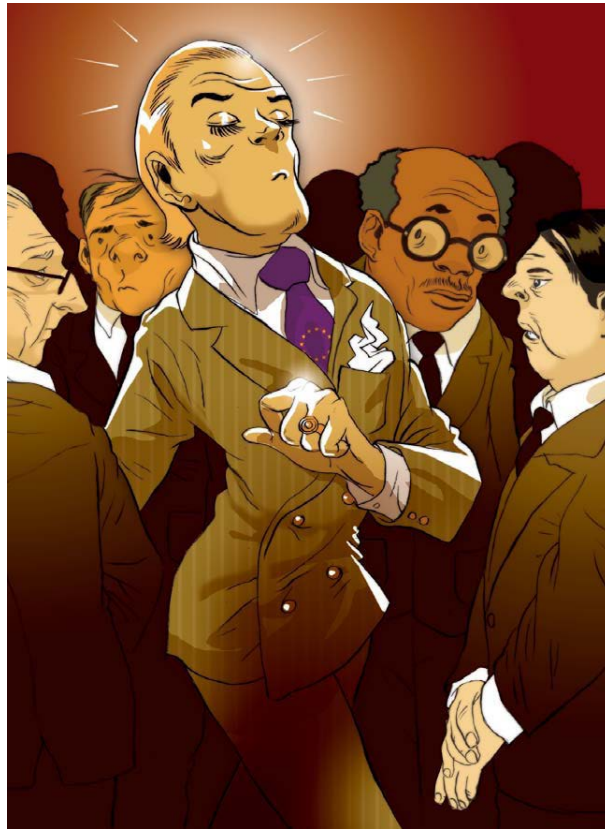


Image from Khanna's article "The Metrosexual Superpower" which appeared in *Foreign Policy* in 2004.

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

A Gay State Department?

As Connell (references) and many others have pointed out, heterosexuality has been central to the construction of hegemonic masculinity for many decades, including hostility to and disciplining of

homosexuality as an effeminate form of inferior manhood. It is thus perhaps not surprising that feminizations of diplomacy also at times entail rendering diplomats as “gay.” For instance, rumors emerged in right-wing circles that US ambassador Christopher Stevens, who was killed in Libya during the attack by militants on the U.S. Special Mission in Benghazi, was gay (see Rayfield 2012). The attack on the US apparently produced anxieties about the strength and virility of the US, resulting in the feminization of the ambassador in place as a gay, defenseless, and victimized man.

However, the US has a rather sordid history of depicting diplomats as male homosexuals. A so-called “Lavender Scare” paralleled and exceeded the “Red Scare” during the Cold War in terms of the numbers of people fired from the federal government. The Cold War persecution of gays and lesbians took aim specifically at the Department of State – rather than the federal government in general – resulting in the dismissal of approximately 1,000 individuals from State for alleged homosexuality over the course of the 1950s and 1960s (Johnson 2004:76). One study in the 1960s on homosexual subculture suggested that “the State Department has become identified with homosexuality to such a remarkable extent that the two are regarded by many persons as being virtually synonymous” (as quoted in Johnson 2004:76).

Reading two excellent histories of the Lavender Scare – Robert Dean’s *Imperial Brotherhood. Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (2001) and David Johnson’s *The Lavender Scare. The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*. – it is clear that diplomats were feminized in ways similar to those discussed above.

Apologies, but section below is not completely finished. Roughly, I want to say this:

- 1) State seen as a place for peaceful interactions in contrast with force, as discussed above. According to Dean (2001:4), US foreign policy decision makers during the Cold War “incarnated an imperial masculinity” with a “reflexive preference for policy ‘toughness.’” During this era, the idea was widespread that “it takes a virile man...to be able to meet Russian diplomacy. It requires the kind of toughness that an effeminate man simply would not have” (ibid p 83). This Cold War masculinity involved a particularly stark suspicion of “feminine” traits and capabilities and “softer” policy options, options which diplomacy and the diplomat represented. “With a natural inclination toward negotiation and appeasement rather than action and war, diplomats were seen as ineffectual and unmanly” (Johnson

2004:70). As such, they were represented as “‘pink pansies,’ who ‘shriek, scream, cry and break down into hysterical states of psychoses when they are called upon to carry arms to defend our shores from the enemy’” (Johnson 2004:37). “In American statecraft, where you often need desperately a man of iron, you often get a nance” (Johnson 2004:70).

- 2) Talking and gossip: in the purges, “government security officers routinely characterized homosexuals as so gregarious that they were unable to keep secrets. Their great desire to talk, officials asserted, meant they were quick to confess and name names. It was said that information passed through homosexual networks with astounding speed. Though persons who threatened security with their ‘loose lips’ were not all homosexual, the two categories were thought to overlap” (Johnson 2004:8-9).
- 3) Cookie-pushers. “Because entertaining foreign dignitaries was one of their principal duties, foreign service officers were dismissed as ‘cookie pushers in striped pants,’” i.e. gay (Johnson 2004:70).
- 4) “Foreign,” European or Frenchified aristocrats: Diplomats were represented as “‘sissies’ and ‘fake Englishmen’...” “Critics feared that after years of living abroad, such diplomats had come to identify with foreign powers more than grassroots America. Some said they formed a ‘freemasonry of European professionals.’ One journalist labeled them adherents of an ‘Internationale des Salonnards’ or an ‘Internationale of the People-you-meet-at parties’ (Johnson 2004:70). “...effete members of the East Coast establishment” (ibid 71).

When deputy assistant secretary for security John Reilly was asked in 1963 by members of a House appropriations subcommittee why work in the State Department appealed to homosexuals, Reilly speculated that ““They seem to be drawn to the attractiveness of overseas life...Perhaps they feel life is a little freer there” (as quoted in Johnson 2004:76).

Conclusions

Sorry, nothing yet.

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