

Global Diplomacy – A Post-Institutional Approach

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The discussion of new approaches to diplomatic history was at the center of this conference. MADELEINE HERREN-OESCH (Basel) introduced the post-institutional approach in the field of diplomacy as a rationale enabling historians to write histories beyond well-known actors and institutions. To illustrate her point, she referred to the exchange of ‘enemy aliens’ during the Second World War, highlighting that these were operations that do not coincide with established narratives of the war and that address people who are silenced in conventional narratives.

The first panel addressed different forms of „Networking on Diplomatic and Consular Levels“. In his paper, FRANCOIS DREMEAUX (Hong Kong) investigated the French consulate and its peculiar position in British-dominated Hong Kong, which was placed between multiple tutelages by different French agencies and depending on a multiplicity of French actors from commerce, missions and banking on the spot. In doing so, Dremeaux shed light on the blurry boundaries between institutional diplomacy and other networks. These blurry boundaries were also at the center of NICHOLAS BAKER MILLER’s (Lisbon) paper. By focusing on the organization of labor migration through Hawaiian consular networks, he showed the considerable degree of inter-imperial cooperation necessary to administer the influx of workers to Hawaii. At the same time, he highlighted the tenuous relation that the Hawaiian consuls, who were mostly of American and European descent, had to their employer and how personal profit and professional interests were intertwined. JULIAN WETTENGEL (Basel) showed how, during and after the Pacific War, the representatives of Swiss trading firms took over diplomatic and polit-

ical functions which, until then, British representatives had exercised. He stated that this led to a general shift from a formerly British-dominated to a Swiss-dominated system in East Asia that lasted until the foundation of the People’s Republic. In her commentary, CORNELIA KNAB (Basel) elaborated on how crucial the hybridity of the diplomatic identity was in times of war and colonial settings. At the same time, she warned not to confound the formal side of diplomacy with actual power.

The second panel „Diplomacy, Transnational Law and Global Studies“ addressed the relationship between initiatives of civil society and official designs of foreign policy: TOMOKO AKAMI (Canberra) elaborated on the League of Nations’ 1937 conference on the trafficking of women and children. She made a strong point to focus on inter-colonial spaces and the relations among diverse forms of imperial polities to address the issue of civil society in pre-independence states. At the center of TAKASHI SAIKAWA’s (Takasaki) talk was the intricate relationship between initiatives of civil society and government policy. Retracing the development of the Japanese UNESCO movement, he showed how this initiative, initially coming from the Japanese civil society, became a key element in the Japanese government’s plan to return to the international community even before the signing of the peace treaty due to the specific logics of UNESCO. RETO HOFMANN (Tokyo) offered insights into ‘the International Origins of Japanese Conservatism’. Using the example of the Moral Re-Armament Movement (MRA), he outlined how Japanese prime minister Kishi Nobosuke’s regionalism and his longing to establish Japan as an alternative power between communist China and the USA were linked to the ideas of MRA and its stressing of morality. This, in turn, allowed Kishi to strive for a reconciliation with the past, which shows the internationalist dimension of Japan’s post-war conservatives. SAFA CHOI’s (Tokyo) presentation focused on the delicate position of the Zainichi Korean schools in 1950s Tokyo. The schools, she stressed, can be considered as sites of contestation between the Zainichi Koreans, the North Korean government and Japan in the

context of the Cold War. By bringing together these different threads, she provided a stimulating example of how to write a more micro-historically oriented global history of post-war Japan. As all papers dealt in one way or the other with civil society, the ensuing discussion stressed the necessity to include those topics into the studies of the history of diplomacy that are not at the center of conventional narratives of diplomatic history. In his concluding remarks, MARTIN DUSINBERRE (Zurich) emphasized the importance of thinking about new actors and sites of diplomatic history such as civil society, schools, UNESCO or religious groups. In this approach, the participants stated, there is also the need to extend the actual source basis by including pictures, objects, performances and practices as forms of diplomatic languages.

The first day of the conference concluded with a panel on „Digital Tools for the Post-Institutional Approach.“ Two digital-humanities-projects that were introduced in this section of the conference are about individuals: DOMINIK MATTER (Basel) launched the database „Swiss-Diplo“, providing biographical information on people involved in Swiss diplomacy between 1848 and 1989. THOMAS DAVID (Lausanne) presented with „OBELIS“ another database depicting Swiss political, economic and academic élites in the 20th and 21st century. COLIN WELLS (Geneva) explained the UN Library’s Project „Total Digital Access to the League of Nations Archives“ which will make accessible 15.5 million digital files and 250 TB of data. And finally, ERIC DECKER (Basel) spoke about the „Asia Directory and Chronicles“ project, which brings together the various volumes of the Asia Directories, a serial source collection published from 1863–1941, that are scattered over eleven libraries around the globe. The discussion afterwards identified the need of merging information stored on different platforms as one crucial element. In her talk, CHRISTIANE SIBILLE (Bern) presented „Metagrid“, a tool for automatically generated connections between different datasets, helping to identify digital entities and to establish stable links between different databases.

In the ensuing roundtable discussion

on digital approaches for future research in global history, BLANDINE BLUKACZ-LOUISFERT (Geneva), Eric Decker, ANDRE MACH (Lausanne) and Christiane Sibille dealt with methodological and institutional problems historians and archivists are facing, such as the increasing amount of source material, the need of transparency for digitization decisions, the financial implications of the respective projects, and the legal concerns for data protection.

The following conference day opened with the third panel „Neutrals and Neutral States as Global Actors“ and PASCAL LOTTAZ’ (Tokyo) paper „Neutrality and Wartime Japan“. The speaker reminded the audience of neutrality being a strategy of so-called small and great powers alike. Instead of generally describing states as ‘neutral’, he underlined the need to differentiate: who acted as a neutral – for example a small or a great power – and in which situations did they do so. The neutral states, he stated, often hoped to profit from favorable trade relations with all belligerents. SARAH KOVNER (New York) investigated the role of the Swiss ICRC delegates who observed the situation of allied POWs and civilian internees in Japan and the Japanese-occupied territories. By bringing the history of the POWs and civilian internees together, she demonstrated how the principle of reciprocity influenced the treatment of the two groups on both sides. ARIANE KNUESEL (Fribourg) outlined that Chinese politicians and diplomats did not take Swiss neutrality at face value. Nevertheless, as neutral Switzerland represented a diplomatic hub in conceptions of Chinese foreign policy, good relations to Switzerland allowed China the opportunity to foster its commercial interests in Europe and to fashion itself as a leading power in the communist bloc. MARC PERRENOUD’s (Bern) paper „Global Diplomacy and the Swiss Banking System“ focused on the sometimes very strained relations between Swiss business, financial circles and political ones. In times of crises, Switzerland became a marketplace for foreign capital but was also continuously targeted internationally because of these very practices. In his commentary, JULIAN ECKL (Hamburg) outlined the interdisciplinary dimension of the

post-institutional approach and called for a look at actual practices of neutrality. The ensuing debate also addressed tensions and differences between a formal understanding of neutrality and its actual manifestations. In this panel, the sometimes very pragmatic understanding and consequences of neutrality came to the fore and the need for a more nuanced understanding of neutrality was raised.

The following roundtable discussion, chaired by RALPH WEBER (Basel), stressed the need to address the economic implications of diplomacy. By focusing on economy and capitalism, new types of actors become visible, and established chronologies structured around dichotomic ideas such as 'war' and 'peace' can be transcended, PATRICIA CLAVIN (Oxford) argued. CHRISTOF DEJUNG (Bern) addressed the nexus between global capitalism and state power and elaborated on the different models of interdependence between the two. MATTHIEU LEIMGRUBER (Zurich) problematized the notion of multifunctionality, an idea that appeared in several papers, and called for a more thorough engagement with economic history. In the following discussion, it became clear that the post-institutional approach does not only imply going beyond the institution of diplomacy but also beyond established compartmentalizations of historiography such as diplomatic and economic history.

The last panel of the conference, chaired by ATSUSHI SHIBASAKI (Tokyo), was dedicated to „Entitlements, Practices and Governance on a Global Level.“ Using the example of the brothers Otto and Albert Meyer, internationally connected Swiss tradesmen as well as conservative politicians, QUENTIN TONNERE (Lausanne) showed how they acted as civil diplomats outside of the traditional realm of diplomacy in the committees of sporting organizations based in Switzerland, namely the International Olympic Committee. Far from simply being instruments of their state, he noted that their main motivation was to protect their own commercial interests. The importance of information to secure the post-war world order was at the center of the following paper presented by GILES SCOTT-SMITH (Leiden). Using the example of the United Nations Information Office

(UNIO), he retraced the struggles between the competing British and American internationalisms in the field of information during World War II. Although the Allies demonstrated unity to the outside, the example of the UNIO illustrates the tensions that accompanied the shift of power from Britain to the United States. In her concluding presentation, KAREN GRAM-SKJÖLDAGER and TORSTEN KAHLERT (Aarhus) introduced the topic of „Scandinavians and the League of Nations Secretariat, 1919–1946.“ The relative preponderance of Scandinavians in the specialized sections of the League, the speakers argued, was the result of specific strategies to foster foreign policy designs (Norwegian case), and it was also a result of the Swedish ability to recruit personnel through academic and economic networks. Denmark, at the same time, used its experiences in humanitarian aid and statistical knowledge by placing these experts in the corresponding League sections.

The final roundtable discussed the further implications of a post-institutional approach. Madeleine Herren-Oesch linked the notion of the post-institutional approach to a paradigm shift to transcend institutional limits by introducing time as an institution. She spoke in favor of using the analytical lens of diplomacy to identify the tensions between the institutional understanding of foreign relations and the obvious impact of informal activities, which, in turn, shape politics and the public sphere crucially. With these new forms of diplomatic history, she wants to establish a global history from below, which turns those who are otherwise silenced into subjects of history. TOSHIKI MOGAMI (Tokyo) elaborated on the connectivity of international law to these trends, as it also introduces the notion of time as a mindset to think about legal relations on a global scale. SACHA ZALA (Bern) addressed the practical implications for empirical research by emphasizing the importance of guaranteeing the quality and longevity of data.

The two-day conference provided a multitude of new and innovative approaches to reconceptualize diplomatic history beyond its classical institutional framework. By including new actors and new sites in the larger pic-

ture of diplomatic history, it showed the potential to critically re-assess and enlarge existing narratives of a narrowly confined diplomatic history as well as the necessity to engage in an interdisciplinary dialogue on new forms of diplomatic history.

Conference Overview:

Madeleine Herren-Oesch (Basel): Welcome and Conference Introduction

Panel I: Networking on Diplomatic and Consular Levels

Chair / Comments: Cornelia Knab (Basel)

François Drémeaux (Hong Kong): The French Consulate in Hong Kong during Interwar: Distorted Hierarchies and Civil Diplomacy

Nicholas Baker Miller (Lisbon): Trading Sovereignty and Labour: The Consular Network of Nineteenth-Century Hawai'i

Julian Wettengel (Basel): Intermediaries in Times of Crisis: Swiss and British Trading Companies as Global Diplomatic Actors during the Pacific War

Panel II: Diplomacy, Transnational Law and Global Studies

Chair / Comments: Martin Dusing (Zurich)

Tomoko Akami (Canberra): Re-thinking the 'Civil Society' in an Inter-Colonial Space: League of Nations' Conference of Central Authorities in Eastern Countries on Traffic in Women and Children, Bandung 1937

Takashi Saikawa (Takasaki): The Formation and Development of the Non-Governmental UNESCO Movement in Japan during the Occupation Period

Reto Hofmann (Tokyo): Moral Re-Armament and the International Origins of Japanese Conservatism

Safa Choi (Tokyo): Looking at Zainichi Korean History through Global History

Digital Tools for the Post-Institutional Approach

Chair: Thomas David (Lausanne)

Dominik Matter (Basel): Presentation and Launch of the Database Swiss-Diplo

Colin Wells (Geneva): Total Digital Access to the League of Nations Archives Project

Thomas David (Lausanne): Observatoire des élites suisses OBELIS

Eric Decker (Basel): Global Information at a Glance

Christiane Sibille (Bern): Metagrid

Roundtable Discussion: Future Approaches Towards Researching Global Diplomacy

Chair: Thomas David (Lausanne)

Participants: Blandine Bluckacz-Louisfert (Geneva) / Eric Decker (Basel) / André Mach (Lausanne) / Christiane Sibille (Bern)

Panel III: Neutrals and Neutral States as Global Actors

Chair / Comments: Julian Eckl (Hamburg)

Pascal Lottaz (Tokyo): Neutrality and Wartime Japan

Sarah Kovner (New York): Allied Captivity and Swiss Neutrality in the Pacific

Ariane Knüsel (Fribourg): Swiss Neutrality and Sino-Swiss Relations in the Cold War

Marc Perrenoud (Bern): Global Diplomacy and the Swiss Banking System

Roundtable I: Global Diplomacy and Economic Interests – New Research Perspectives
Moderator: Ralph Weber (Basel)

Participants: Patricia Clavin (Oxford) / Christof Dejung (Bern) / Matthieu Leimgruber (Zurich)

Panel IV: Entitlements, Practices and Governance on a Global Level

Chair / Comments: Atsushi Shibasaki (Tokyo)

Quentin Tonnere (Lausanne): A Neutral Sport Organization in a Neutral Country. The International Olympic Committee and its Ambassadors in Switzerland (1896–1968)

Giles Scott-Smith (Leiden): Competing Internationalisms: The United States, Britain, and the Formation of the United Nations Information Organization during WWII

Karen Gram-Skjöldager / Torsten Kahler (both Aarhus): Scandinavians and the League

of Nations Secretariat, 1919–1946

Roundtable II: Global Diplomacy – A Post-Institutional Approach

Moderator: Martin Lengwiler (Basel)

Participants: Madeleine Herren-Oesch (Basel)
/ Toshiki Mogami (Tokyo) / Sacha Zala (Bern)

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