

All That's Lost: The Hollowing of Summit Diplomacy in a Socially Distanced World

Tristen Naylor

London School of Economics, London, United Kingdom

t.naylor@lse.ac.uk

Summary

This essay considers the implications of virtual summits replacing in-person multilateral gatherings of political leaders. Focusing on the loss of physicality, it argues that two critical dimensions of summitry are eliminated in this shift: sublime governance and inter-moments. Drawing on illustrative examples from the Group of 20, it demonstrates that while moving online maintains the formal, procedural interactions around which summits are built, doing so loses these critical elements of summitry which render it a valuable and unique practice in within the overall institution of diplomacy. It also undercuts the effects of these elements, in the immediate context of a particular summit and more broadly on the international system itself. The elimination of summitry's performative and interpersonal dimensions fundamentally renders online meetings unable to achieve what in-person summits can. This has acute consequences in the immediate wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and also more generally as diplomacy moves online.

Keywords

sublime governance – inter-moments – summits – performativity – practices – face-to-face interaction – diplomacy – psychology

1 Introduction

On 26 March 2020, the Group of 20 (G20) held an online 'virtual' summit to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic and the global economic crisis it ushered in. Instead of world leaders standing shoulder to shoulder for the group's annual family photo, the closest leaders got to one another was pixelated images in tiny boxes on a screen — a far cry from the usual splendour and spectacle of a summit. Current measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 will not last forever. However, at a minimum, such online meetings will be the new normal in the near term, and will likely be standard practice in subsequent waves of this virus as well as those of any new pandemic threats lurking in the future. While it is too conjectural to declare the death of traditional summitry, recent months have nonetheless demonstrated how this diplomatic practice changes when social distancing is required, with the European Union, Group of 7 (G7), G20, Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, UN Security Council and World Health Assembly, among others, holding summits online in the wake of virus's outbreak.

What follows considers the implications of moving leaders' summits online, even if only temporarily. The aim is not so much to analyse the characteristics and challenges

specific to online meetings — these elements are documented elsewhere and are relatively intuitive, as anyone who has endured the frustrations of low bandwidth on a Skype, Zoom or FaceTime call knows.¹ Furthermore, while recent experience offers clues for what ‘new normal’ summitry might be, the current context is too new and too dynamic to draw even provisional conclusions about the character and form of future online summits beyond vague generalities or obvious suppositions. Rather, the focus here is on what is *lost* in the abandonment of traditional, in-person summits.

The shift to online meetings eliminates the all-important physicality of summitry. While the vast majority of scholarly work on summits focuses on policy dimensions, the material, physical aspects of summitry are fundamental to understanding their added value as a diplomatic practice in the management of international affairs and the governance of the globe.² Indeed, it is the physical meeting of leaders in a specific time and place that renders a summit more than just any another meeting.³ In contrast, diplomacy scholarship more generally has a long tradition of noting the importance of physicality and face-to-face meetings between political leaders, often drawing contrasts with mediated interactions owing to technological innovations, whether telegraphs or tweets.⁴ This essay argues that online interaction between leaders removes two critical elements of summitry necessarily premised on physicality. First, summits function as instances of *sublime governance*, wherein the rituals and ceremonial practices of summitry constitute the meeting as an extraordinary break from normal politics.⁵ This in turn produces real, emergent effects on the international system, assembled leaders and government bureaucrats.⁶ Second, moving online eliminates the opportunities for *inter-moments*, unstructured happenings in which diplomacy can be practiced in between more formal, procedural events. Inter-moments are the domain of *brush-bys*, *pull-asides* and *walk-and-talks* — moments in which leaders can advance towards their foreign policy objectives in ways that would otherwise not be possible by other means or other channels.

2 Sublime Governance

The ritualistic pageantry of leaders’ summits, marked by welcoming ceremonies, formal dinners and gala performances, is routinely treated as secondary to the ‘real’ business of a summit wherein leaders discuss and negotiate policy.⁷ Such a rationalist, typically liberal approach implies that there would be little consequence to the loss of the performative elements of summitry in a move to online meetings. These dimensions of summitry are epiphenomenal and whether discussions are held in person or online does not rationally alter the dynamics of a negotiation. This view, however, misses the

¹ Heath 2020

² Adler and Pouliot 2011; Death 2011; Roche 2000.

³ Neumann 2013.

⁴ For earlier accounts, see Nicolson [1939] 1963; Satow [1917] 2006. For more recent accounts, see Berridge 2015, 111–112; Murray 2015.

⁵ The author recalls Neumann’s 2006 characterisation of the three epistemes of ‘sublime diplomacy’ — stimulating, if not overwhelming the senses, keeping ‘immanent terror away’ and its apparently infinite tasks. Summitry is sublime in all three ways.

⁶ Death 2011; Geertz 1980.

⁷ Bayne and Putnam 2000; Chasek 2001; Dunn 1996a; Haas 2002; Kaufmann 1989; Kirton 2013; Park 1996; Putnam 1988; Putnam and Bayne 1984; Schechter 2005. Exceptions include: Constantinou 1998; Death 2010, 2011.

significant, constitutive effects of performative dimensions of summitry. They are not irrelevant niceties or vestiges of a bygone era of diplomacy but are critical practices in the production of summits as sublime phenomena.⁸ The theatrical, performative assemblage of summitry, in other words, is more than ‘mere aesthetics’.⁹ As Costas Constantinou, Iver Neumann and Fiona McConnell, among others, argue, pomp and spectacle play essential roles in the production of a summit as a break from normal politics, elevating the event to the figurative heights of international diplomacy, and in so doing transforming its participants from mere political actors to the exalted status of ‘statesperson’.¹⁰ These elements, after all, are not substantively irrelevant to summitry such that there is no consequence to their absence. Rather, they play fundamental roles in ‘making’ the summit in the first place and imbuing it with meaning, thereby instilling authority and power within it and structuring incentives around it. As such, being without these elements online has substantive implications with respect to 1) the role and power of summits in international affairs, 2) the conduct of its participating leaders and 3) the incentives for rank-and-file diplomats and bureaucrats. Most generally, stripped of ritualistic, performative elements, a summit’s aura is undermined, losing its extraordinary status in being reduced to just another meeting among others.¹¹

Performative rituals constitute a summit as not just special, but exalted within the broader international system, bestowing an authority — if not also a legitimacy — to govern.¹² The extraordinary status of a summit and its participants emerges from an assemblage of the practices and materials of summitry — from handshakes to photo ops, from flags to motorcades.¹³ Summits are breaks from regular order, wherein more powerful actors convene to make authoritative decisions, momentarily freed of the pretence of sovereign equality within the international system. What is decided, declared and directed from the commanding heights of a summit, in turn, has effects on the international system and actors beyond the meeting.¹⁴ It is, in part, the dramaturgy of summitry that makes this possible in the first place.¹⁵ More than this, though, as Carl Death argues — building on the likes of Judith Butler, Michel Foucault and Clifford Geertz — the theatrical, performative dimensions of summitry are not solely means to political/policy ends; they themselves are instantiations of power, reifying ‘subjectivities, relationships, and world-views’.¹⁶ Indeed, for Jeffrey Alexander, ritualistic performances are especially critical in the context of global governance because of the level of abstraction and degree of complexity involved in managing international society. For Alexander, the more complex and abstracted a society is, the more important ritual is for cultivating authority, power and status.¹⁷ Ritualistic performances confer standing on summits and their participants, which is especially important for informal multilateral institutions such as the G7 and G20, which lack legal

⁸ Armstrong 1996; Constantinou 1996, 1998; Cohen 1987; Craggs 2014.

⁹ Neumann 2013, 152.

¹⁰ Cohen 1987; Constantinou 1998, 24, 2016, 2018; McConnell 2018; Neumann 2013, 5; Sidaway 2001; Shimazu 2014, 232.

¹¹ Neumann 2013, 151–154. Neumann makes a similar argument with respect to the institution of diplomacy as a whole.

¹² Constantinou 1996, 1998; Death 2010, 2011; Shimazu 2014.

¹³ Adler and Pouliot 2011.

¹⁴ Death 2010, 2011; Rose 1999.

¹⁵ Cohen 1987, 28–32.

¹⁶ Death 2011, pg. 6. See also Barthes 1972; Butler 1990; Constantinou 1996; Foucault 1980; Geertz 1980; Hajer 2016.

¹⁷ Alexander 2011.

constitution. Without a charter or treaty to rely on, their legitimacy derives in part from the practices which garner prestige and cultivate deference from those excluded but nonetheless affected by the summit. Without such practices, it is harder for the summit and its participants to claim and wield such authority.¹⁸ Moreover, performative practices help bridge the divide between distinct cultures and societies. Their loss likely renders cross-cultural diplomacy more difficult.

The production of a summit as an extraordinary break from quotidian affairs not only affects a summit's position and role in the overall global governance architecture but also yields effects at the individual level on summit participants themselves. Marcus Holmes has studied the neurological effects of face-to-face diplomacy, and Marcus Holmes and Nicholas J. Wheeler have built on this work to offer a sociologically rooted account of how in-person interactions between leaders can produce positive diplomatic outcomes.¹⁹ In both approaches 'bodily co-presence' is fundamental to achieving these outcomes and, thus, is obviously critical in successful summitry.²⁰ Indeed, for this reason it is perhaps no surprise that Holmes and Wheeler rely overwhelmingly on summitry cases to build their theories. Adding to this, summits prime participants to behave in line with behavioural scripts defined for such unique sites and settings beyond the bounds of the ordinary. Indeed, psychological literature is ripe with studies that document how situational cues elicit the salience of particular norms, ideas and values that 'can nonconsciously guide subsequent responses and behaviours'.²¹ As such, summitry's sublime frame conditions the experience of interactions for participants, most significantly by discursively producing summits as exalted and participants as belonging to an exclusive in-group with special responsibilities in the stewardship of the international system. This, by way of what Jennifer Mitzen calls 'forum effects', promotes the adoption of a *raison de système* logic guiding decision-making.²² From the evocation of the first-person plural in authoritative documents like summit communiqués to annual family photos of participants, such practices push back against *raison d'état* logics dominating deliberations. Physically assembling leaders together encourages participants to embody the very idea of 'the international' and to act accordingly.

While it is debatable and beyond the bounds provided here to investigate the extent of summitry's neurological, sociological or psychological framing and priming effects on individual actors, it is worth at least noting the import of efforts to support a *raison de système* logic, particularly in the current context wherein particularist, nationalist foreign policies are favoured by key actors. For example, the extent to which individual state interests dominated the G20 communiqué following its emergency online meeting is notable.²³ Most illustratively, no new funding announcements were made to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic; rather, funding commitments listed by the club were merely an aggregation of previously announced, uncoordinated spending by national governments.²⁴ The group also made no specific commitments to support international financial institutions, failed to acknowledge — let alone support — the burden carried

¹⁸ See also Cohen 1987, 32–35.

¹⁹ Holmes 2013, 2018; Holmes and Wheeler 2020.

²⁰ Holmes and Wheeler 2020.

²¹ Pichon, Boccato and Saroglou 2007, pg. 1034. See also Bargh 2006; Dijksterhuis and Bargh 2001; Ledgerwood and Chaiken 2007.

²² Mitzen 2013, 50–57. See also Bull 1977; Elster 1995.

²³ G20 2020.

²⁴ Chodor 2020.

by transnational medical non-governmental organisations and refused to increase support for the World Health Organization.²⁵ On trade, the G20 failed to reaffirm its traditional commitment to resist protectionism and tariffs and left the door open for states to place restrictions on trade in medical supplies, food and other essential supplies. The trade paragraph also began with the phrase ‘consistent with the needs of our citizens’, obfuscatory diplomatic language which gives states cover to do whatever they want in line with particular national interests.²⁶ It is exactly such particularist, *raison d'état*-driven policies, which overall do more harm than good, that multilateral global governance seeks to overcome — not, as is the case here, uphold.

Producing a summit as an extraordinary phenomenon similarly affects diplomats and bureaucrats (the distinction between the two being minimal when stuck at home).²⁷ As Iver B. Neumann argues, the work of diplomats is fundamentally ‘about preparing the ground for others ... most of what diplomats do is carried out in preparation for some event. ... Creating and maintaining sites therefore is at the very heart of diplomatic work’.²⁸ Summits serve as fixed points towards which energies are directed to negotiate and form policies, particularly more ambitious initiatives for leaders to announce at their conclusion.²⁹ Extraordinary events demand extraordinary results. This is especially so for a summit host, for whom announcing a ‘signature’ initiative serves as part of the host’s legacy, helping to justify the immense costs, increased burdens and added inconveniences of holding a summit.³⁰ The very act of participating in a summit, let alone hosting one, thus induces the pursuit of an ambitious agenda by diplomats and bureaucrats as part of the preparatory process in the months leading up to the event, so that leaders have ‘major deliverables’ to present in justifying the undertaking in the first place. In this way, it is instructive to borrow from the management literature, as Elke Schüssler, Charles-Clemens Rüling and Bettina B.F. Wittneben have done, and think of summits as ‘field-configuring events’ — temporary, periodic social configurations of diverse actors that embody and direct a field of practice.³¹ Understood in this way, summits are like the trade shows of international society — big events that serve as focal points towards which energies are directed to produce hallmark achievements that not only incentivise the development of ambitious policy to be ‘showcased’ at the summit but that, in turn, steer the agenda and structure the field in years to come.³²

As the production of the extraordinary, summits condition political possibilities at both the system and individual levels. The assemblage of practices that constitute a summit as a definitive and exalted break from the quotidian norm of everyday politics requires the physical presence of leaders to perform them. Sublime governance needs its actors on stage. In turn, for leaders, being on stage conditions behaviour. For the officials who support them and write the script, certain outcomes are incentivised. Altogether, conditions are set for multilateral solutions to edge out particularist concerns. This is not to say that this is impossible in online meetings. Rather, it is far less

²⁵ Goodman, Segal and Sobel 2020.

²⁶ Goodman, Segal and Sobel 2020.

²⁷ Neumann 2012.

²⁸ Neumann 2013, 5.

²⁹ Caramerli 2012; Dunn 1996b.

³⁰ Callaghan 2014.

³¹ Schüssler, Rüling and Wittneben 2013. For background, see Lampel and Meyer 2008; Meyer, Gaba and Colwell 2005.

³² A recent example is Canada using its G7 presidency in 2018 to establish the group’s Gender Equality Advisory Council.

likely given the degree to which the ‘sited’ and ‘evented’ practice of summitry is fundamentally premised on physicality.³³

3 Inter-moments

A summit’s added value not derives not only from being a big event but also from being an event with small moments. As discussed above, the policy dimensions of summitry are important and receive the bulk of attention, from participants, media, and scholars. However, what is unique about physically assembling political leaders, rather than or as opposed to online interaction, is that conditions are set for crucial informal, often momentary interactions on the margins of formal meetings. These inter-moments are those in which leaders can engage in subtle diplomatic arts between scheduled sessions, and it is these moments that often give rise to the most significant breakthroughs in international affairs. As one UN diplomat relayed to Vincent Pouliot, ‘Most people see what happens in the conference rooms but that’s not the UN at all. It’s the corridors that determine what happens at the UN’.³⁴ The benefit of conceptualising summits as field-configuring events is evident in this respect as well, given defining characteristics incorporating ‘unstructured opportunities for face-to-face social interaction’, ‘occasions for information exchange and collective sense-making’ and generating ‘social and reputational resources that can be deployed elsewhere and for other purposes’.³⁵

Inter-moments range from planned to impromptu happenings. Bilateral meetings, wherein leaders get together on the sidelines of a summit to discuss issues specific to their relationship but not necessarily — or even usually — related to the summit, are a quintessential example of a planned inter-moment.³⁶ Evocative recent examples in G-summitry range from Justin Trudeau and Emmanuel Macron’s first meeting on the sidelines of the 2017 G7 Summit in which the pair had an ‘impossibly romantic’ stroll through a Sicilian garden, to Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin’s infamous one-on-one meetings at G20 Summits.³⁷ It is in such ‘bilats’ that, for example and particularly in recent years, trade agreements are discussed. It is also in bilaterals that newly elected leaders meet their opposite numbers for the first time and begin to build personal relationships — summits serve as a sort of debutante ball for the privileged members of international society. Summit dinners and gala events are also held in the interstices of formal meetings, likewise affording time for leaders to informally and interpersonally interact. The importance of summit relationship building, particularly informally, holds true for career diplomats supporting political leaders as well, with much time and money devoted to cultivating personal diplomatic networks. As Pouliot relays, UN ‘delegates usually have a special budget for “wining and dining”, although [t]he most readily available and widely-used venues are corridors, lobbies, stairways, coffee shops and cafeterias of the conference building’.³⁸ Summit inter-moments are thus particular instances of a core diplomatic practice, one fundamentally premised on physical presence.

³³ Neumann 2013.

³⁴ Pouliot 2016, 129.

³⁵ Lampel and Meyer 2008, 1027.

³⁶ Neumann 2013, 5.

³⁷ ‘Trump Jokes to Putin’ 2019; Mack 2017; Wintour 2017.

³⁸ Pouliot 2016, 128. This has been similarly documented at G7 and G20 Summits, Naylor 2019; see also Neumann 2013.

At the other end of the inter-moment spectrum are what present as more impromptu interactions which, although appearing spur of the moment, are routinely gamed out in advance by a leader's team during summit preparations and included as part of pre-summit briefings. These include *brush-bys*, wherein a leader either just before or after a formal meeting will casually bump into another and engage in small talk, much like someone might approach a person they want to talk to at a party without seeming obvious or desperate.³⁹ Similarly unscheduled is the *pull-aside*, wherein leaders will step away from the summit meeting to hold an unscheduled discussion.⁴⁰ A pull-aside is one step up in substance from a brush-by, and one step down in formality from a bilateral. There is also the *walk-and-talk*, wherein leaders interact informally when moving between summit events, be it going to lunch or returning from the family photo. Incidentally, these moments typically attract the most media attention at a summit, facilitating the imposition of dramatic narratives on international politics — who is friends with whom? Who's avoiding one another? While the soap opera-like plot lines read into these moments are not always of great substance or significance, what happens in them is. Inter-moments are thus planned for in advance by diplomats because they are instrumental tactics to advance foreign policy, particularly regarding unrelated agendas.⁴¹ Summits bring decision-makers at the apex of their respective hierarchies together, affording them the opportunity to overcome stumbling blocks in negotiations at lower levels. It is a summit's inter-moments that provide/proffer the chance for leaders to move an issue out of entrenchment. While they might be unscripted, they are nonetheless purposive and consequential interactions.

The same is true of these moments with respect to summit agendas. It is often on the margins that 'bracketed' parts of the communiqué — the lines that cannot be agreed on by diplomats negotiating at lower levels — are resolved by leaders. Particularly with larger summits like the G20, formal meetings do not lend themselves to the type of free-flowing, frank exchange that helps move an issue out of entrenchment. Rather, given the number of people around the table — be it literally (in person) or figuratively (online) — meetings are more conducive to the sharing of pre-prepared statements, making inter-moments crucial for overcoming stumbling blocks. It is at such moments that commonalities can be found, coalitions established and consensus made. It is wherein inter-personal relationships and trust can be forged — backbones of diplomacy that have broader, lasting effects on bilateral relationships which, as Holmes demonstrates, is most efficiently built in person.⁴²

4 Conclusion

While the focus here has been on what is lost in the move online, there likely are upsides in certain cases. For example, having a lower profile with an online meeting might reduce audience costs, giving leaders greater freedom in negotiation, making

³⁹ On body language, which plays a critical role in inter-moments, see Cohen 1987, 89–113.

⁴⁰ Smith 2017. Illustratively, at the 2018 G20 Summit Donald Trump was forced to cancel his formal bilateral with Vladimir Putin in protest over Russia's seizure of Ukrainian ships in the Sea of Azlov. The two nonetheless had a brush-by (Borger 2018; 'Putin, Trump Briefly Met on Sidelines of G20 Summit' 2018).

⁴¹ Cohen 1987, 24–25.

⁴² Holmes 2013. See also Dunn 1996a.

commitments and signalling intentions.⁴³ That said, it is in part owing to potential audience costs that summit plenary meetings are typically held *in camera*, so there might not actually be much of a change from the status quo in this respect. There are likewise practical advantages, ranging from — especially with global summits — participants not having to wrestle with jet lag to hosts not having to shoulder heavy logistical and financial burdens. Staying narrowly — if not pessimistically — focused on the downsides, however, this essay leaves it to others to analyse potential benefits, particularly in terms of differentiating under what conditions summits particularly suffer (or benefit) from the loss of physicality. While what is outlined here affects summits universally, it does not affect them equally. Furthermore, there might be cases in which the loss of some summits altogether might be beneficial. The author of this essay, however, has chosen to remain agnostic as to the value of any particular summit.

Sublime governance and inter-moments, fundamentally premised on physicality, are essential features of summitry. Critically, they render summitry a distinct diplomatic practice and differentiate a summit from a mere meeting. A shift online maintains the formal, procedural interactions around which summits are built; however, it loses the elements of summitry that make the practice valuable and unique in international diplomacy. Such a move in turn undercuts the effects of these dimensions, both in the immediate context of a particular summit and more broadly on the international system itself. Analytically and conceptually, this prompts us to ask whether online interactions between political leaders are rightly understood as summits at all. This essay suggests they are not — the term *virtual summit* is a misnomer.

Practically, this prompts us to think about whether online leaders' meetings are suited for purpose, in the near and longer term. While present social distancing imperatives leave no choice but to suspend traditional summits, the question of whether to return wholesale to the routine practice of summitry — once a post-COVID 'new normal' is established — will almost inevitably be raised. On the one hand, there will be calls for a swift return to the norm. The US President pushed for the G7 leaders to assemble in Washington in June 2020, for example, citing it as a mark of return to normalcy.⁴⁴ While wildly premature, President Trump nonetheless seems to intuitively understand the performative function of summitry, perhaps unsurprisingly for a reality TV star. On the other hand, the shift online has demonstrated the relative ease and inexpensiveness of virtual meetings. If leaders can conduct business online, why bother with such costly, resource intensive summits? What this essay has sketched out argues that, in fact, world leaders cannot achieve what they are meant and — particularly when facing era-defining global crises — needed to achieve by merely interacting online. In diplomacy generally, and summitry in particular, physicality matters.

Bibliography

- Adler, Emanuel and Vincent Pouliot. 'International Practices'. *International Theory* 3 (1) (2011), 1–36. DOI 10.1017/S175297191000031X.
- Alexander, Jeffrey C. *Performance and Power* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity, 2011).

⁴³ Fearon 1994. For critical responses, see Levy 2012; Snyder and Borghard 2011; Trachtenberg 2012.

⁴⁴ Wintour 2020.

- Armstrong, J.D. 'The Group of Seven Summits'. In *Diplomacy at the Highest Level: The Evolution of International Summitry*, ed. David Dunn (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 41–52. DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-24915-2.
- Bargh, John A. 'What Have We Been Priming All These Years? On the Development, Mechanisms, and Ecology of Nonconscious Social Behavior'. *European Journal of Social Psychology* 36 (2) (2006), 147–168. DOI 10.1002/ejsp.336.
- Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies* (London: Vintage, 1972).
- Bayne, Nicholas and Robert D. Putnam. *Hanging in There: The G7 and G8 Summit in Maturity and Renewal* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).
- Berridge, G.R. *Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, 5th ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
- Borger, Julian. 'Trump Cancels Putin Meeting at G20 over Ukraine Standoff'. *The Guardian*, 29 November 2018, sec. World News.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/29/trump-putin-g20-meeting-buenos-aires-kremlin-white-house>.
- Bull, Hedley. *The Anarchical Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
- Callaghan, Mike. 'International Economic Summits: Are They Worth the Effort?' *Caribbean Journal of International Relations and Diplomacy* 2 (3) (2014), 111–23.
- Caramerli, Angela. 'Summitry Diplomacy: Positive and Negative Aspects'. *Acta Universitatis Danubius: Relationes Internationales* 5 (1) (2012).
<http://www.journals.univ-danubius.ro/index.php/internationalis/article/view/1684>.
- Chasek, Pamela S. *Earth Negotiations: Analyzing Thirty Years of Environmental Diplomacy* (New York: United Nations University Press, 2001).
- Chodor, Tom. 'Missing in Action: The G20 in the Covid Crisis'. *The Lowy Interpreter*, 22 April 2020. <https://www.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/missing-action-g20-covid-crisis>.
- Cohen, Raymond. *Theatre of Power: Art of Diplomatic Signalling* (London: Longman, 1987).
- Constantinou, Costas M. *On the Way to Diplomacy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
- Constantinou, Costas M. 'Before the Summit: Representations of Sovereignty on the Himalayas'. *Millennium* 27 (1) (1998), 23–53.
- Constantinou, Costas M. 'Everyday Diplomacy: Mission, Spectacle and the Remaking of Diplomatic Culture'. In *Diplomatic Cultures and International Politics*, eds. Jason Dittmer and Fiona McConnell (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 35–52. DOI 10.4324/9781315728049-8.
- Constantinou, Costas M. 'Visual Diplomacy: Reflections on Diplomatic Spectacle and Cinematic Thinking'. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 13 (4) (2018), 387–409. DOI 10.1163/1871191X-13030014.
- Craggs, Ruth. 'Postcolonial Geographies, Decolonization, and the Performance of Geopolitics at Commonwealth Conferences'. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 35 (2014), 39–55.
- Death, Carl. *Governing Sustainable Development: Partnerships, Protests and Power at the World Summit* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010).
- Death, Carl. 'Summit Theatre: Exemplary Governmentality and Environmental Diplomacy in Johannesburg and Copenhagen'. *Environmental Politics* 20 (1) (2011), 1–19. DOI 10.1080/09644016.2011.538161.

- Dijksterhuis, Ap and John Bargh. 'The Perception-Behavior Expressway: Automatic Effects of Social Perception on Social Behavior'. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 33 (2001), 1–40. DOI 10.1016/S0065-2601(01)80003-4.
- Dunn, David. *Diplomacy at the Highest Level: The Evolution of International Summitry* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996a).
- Dunn, David. 'What Is Summitry?' In *Diplomacy at the Highest Level — The Evolution of International Summitry*, ed. David Dunn (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996b), 3–22. <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9780333649411#>.
- Elster, James. 'Strategic Uses of Argument'. In *Barriers to Conflict Resolution*, eds. Kenneth J. Arrow, Robert H. Mnookin, Lee Ross, Amos Tversky and Robert B. Wilson (New York: Norton, 1995), 236–257.
- Fearon, James D. 'Domestic Political Audiences and the Escalation of International Disputes', *American Political Science Review* 88 (3) (1994), 577–592.
- Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (New York: Pantheon, 1980).
- G20 (Group of 20). 'Extraordinary G20 Leaders' Summit: Statement on COVID-19'. G20 Information Centre, 26 March 2020. <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2020/2020-g20-statement-0326.html>.
- Geertz, Clifford. *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).
- Goodman, Matthew P., Stephanie Segal and Mark Sobel. 'Assessing the G20 Virtual Summit'. Center for Strategic and International Studies, 27 March 2020. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/assessing-g20-virtual-summit>.
- Haas, Peter M. 'UN Conferences and Constructivist Governance of the Environment'. *Global Governance* 8 (1) (2002), 73–91.
- Hajer, Maarten A. 'Setting the Stage: A Dramaturgy of Policy Deliberation'. *Administration and Society*, July 2016. DOI 10.1177/0095399704270586.
- Heath, Ryan. 'For Global Diplomats, Zoom Is Not Like Being in the Room'. Politico, 16 April 2020. <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/04/16/zoom-diplomacy-coronavirus-188811>.
- Holmes, Marcus. 'The Force of Face-to-Face Diplomacy: Mirror Neurons and the Problem of Intentions'. *International Organization* 67 (4) (2013), 829–861. DOI 10.1017/S0020818313000234.
- Holmes, Marcus. *Face-to-Face Diplomacy: Social Neuroscience and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
- Holmes, Marcus and Nicholas J. Wheeler. 'Social Bonding in Diplomacy'. *International Theory* 12 (1) (2020), 133–161. DOI 10.1017/S1752971919000162.
- Kaufmann, Johan. *Effective Negotiation: Case Studies in Conference Diplomacy* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1989).
- Kirton, John J. *G20 Governance for a Globalized World* (London: Ashgate, 2013).
- Lampel, Joseph and Alan D. Meyer. 'Field-Configuring Events as Structuring Mechanisms: How Conferences, Ceremonies, and Trade Shows Constitute New Technologies, Industries, and Markets'. *Journal of Management Studies* 45 (6) (2008), 1025–1035. DOI 10.1111/j.1467-6486.2008.00787.x.
- Ledgerwood, Alison and Shelly Chaiken. 'Priming Us and Them: Automatic Assimilation and Contrast in Group Attitudes'. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 93 (6) (2007), 940–956. DOI 10.1037/0022-3514.93.6.940.
- Levy, Jack. 'Coercive Threats, Audience Costs, and Case Studies'. *Security Studies* 21 (3) (2012), 383–390.

- Mack, David. 'Please Enjoy These Photos of Macron and Trudeau's Impossibly Romantic First Date'. *BuzzFeed News*, 26 May 2017.
<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/davidmack/le-thirst>.
- McConnell, Fiona. 'Performing Diplomatic Decorum: Repertoires of "Appropriate" Behavior in the Margins of International Diplomacy'. *International Political Sociology* 12 (4) (2018), 362–381. DOI 10.1093/ips/oly021.
- Meyer, Alan D., Vibha Gaba and Kenneth A. Colwell. 'Organizing Far from Equilibrium: Nonlinear Change in Organizational Fields'. *Organization Science* 16 (5) (2005), 456–473.
- Mitzen, Jennifer. *Power in Concert: The Nineteenth Century Origins of Global Governance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).
- Murray, Stewart. 'Evolution, Not Revolution: The Digital Divide in American and Australian Contexts'. In *Digital Diplomacy: Theory and Practice*, eds. Corneliu Bjola and Marcus Holmes (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 127–144.
- Naylor, Tristen. *Social Closure and International Society: Status Groups from the Family of Civilised Nations to the G20* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019).
- Neumann, Iver B. 'Sublime Diplomacy: Byzantine, Early Modern, Contemporary'. *Millennium* 34 (3) (2006), 865–888.
- Neumann, Iver B. *At Home with the Diplomats: Inside a European Foreign Ministry*, 1st ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).
- Neumann, Iver B. *Diplomatic Sites: A Critical Enquiry* (London: Hurst, 2013).
<https://www.hurstpublishers.com/book/diplomatic-sites/>.
- Nicolson, Harold. *Diplomacy*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1939] 1963).
- Park, Bill. 'NATO Summits'. In *Diplomacy at the Highest Level: The Evolution of International Summitry*, ed. David Dunn (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1996), 88–105. DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-24915-2_6.
- Pichon, Isabelle, Giulio Boccatto and Vassilis Saroglou. 'Nonconscious Influences of Religion on Prosociality: A Priming Study'. *European Journal of Social Psychology* 37 (5) (2007), 1032–1045. DOI 10.1002/ejsp.416.
- Pouliot, Vincent. *International Pecking Orders: The Politics and Practice of Multilateral Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
- 'Putin, Trump Briefly Met on Sidelines of G20 Summit: Kremlin'. Reuters, 1 December 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-g20-argentina-putin-trump-idUSKCN1003FK>.
- Putnam, Robert D. 'Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games'. *International Organization* 42 (3) (1988), 427–460.
- Putnam, Robert D. and Nicholas Bayne. *Hanging Together: The Seven-Power Summits* (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1984).
- Roche, Maurice. *Mega-Events and Modernity: Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Culture*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2000).
- Rose, Nikolas. *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). DOI 10.1017/CBO9780511488856.
- Satow, Ernest Mason. *Satow's Diplomatic Practice*, ed. Ivor Roberts, 7th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1917] 2006).
- Schechter, Michael G. *United Nations Global Conferences* (London: Routledge, 2005).
- Schüssler, Elke, Charles-Clemens Rüling and Bettina B.F. Wittneben. 'On Melting Summits: The Limitations of Field-Configuring Events as Catalysts of Change in Transnational Climate Policy'. *Academy of Management Journal* 57 (1) (2013), 140–171. DOI 10.5465/amj.2011.0812.

- Shimazu, Naoko. 'Diplomacy as Theatre: Staging the Bandung Conference of 1955'. *Modern Asian Studies* 48 (1) (2014), 225–252. DOI 10.1017/S0026749X13000371.
- Sidaway, James. *Imagined Regional Communities: Integration and Sovereignty in the Global South*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2001).
- Smith, Julianne. 'Ignoring 'Pull Aside' Protocol Spells Danger for Trump'. *Financial Times*, 20 July 2017, sec. Opinion. <https://www.ft.com/content/0bd644c2-6ca8-11e7-b9c7-15af748b60d0>.
- Snyder, Jack and Erica D. Borghard. 'The Cost of Empty Threats: A Penny, Not a Pound'. *American Political Science Review* 105 (3) (2011), 437–456.
- Trachtenberg, Mark. 'Audience Costs: An Historical Analysis'. *Security Studies* 21 (1) (2012), 3–42.
- 'Trump Jokes to Putin: Don't Meddle in Elections'. *BBC News*, 28 June 2019, sec. US & Canada. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-48797485>.
- Wintour, Patrick. "'It's an Honour to Be with You" — Trump and Putin Meet at G20 in Hamburg'. *The Guardian*, 7 July 2017, sec. World News. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/07/donald-trump-and-putin-exchange-handshake-at-g20-summit-in-hamburg>.
- Wintour, Patrick. 'Trump Cancels Summit but Says He Will Invite Putin to Later G7 Event'. *The Guardian*, 31 May 2020, sec. World News. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/31/donald-trump-postpones-g7-summit-and-signals-wider-attendance-list-in-future>.

Tristen Naylor is a Fellow in International Relations at the London School of Economics and Deputy Director of the G20 Research Group. He was previously the Lecturer in Diplomatic Studies at the University of Oxford, where he was named 'Most Acclaimed Lecturer' in the Social Sciences. Prior to his academic career, he worked in foreign policy for the Government of Canada. He is a recipient of the Canadian Public Service Award of Excellence.