Face-to-Face Diplomacy

Face-to-face diplomacy has long been the lynchpin of world politics, yet it is largely dismissed by scholars of International Relations as unimportant. Marcus Holmes argues that dismissing this type of diplomacy is in stark contrast to what leaders and policy makers deem as essential and that this view is rooted in a particular set of assumptions that see an individual's intentions as fundamentally inaccessible. Building on recent evidence from social neuroscience and psychology, Holmes argues that this assumption is problematic. Marcus Holmes studies some of the most important moments of diplomacy in the twentieth century, from "Munich" to the end of the Cold War, and by showing how face-to-face interactions allowed leaders to either reassure each other of benign defensive intentions or pick up on offensive intentions, his book challenges the notion that intentions are fundamentally unknowable in international politics, a central idea in IR theory.

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Social Neuroscience and International Relations

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Dedicated to Lindsay, Maxi, and Lexi

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Acknowledgments

This book began with a simple observation made in graduate school. Leaders, diplomats, and other high-level decision-makers spend considerable time and money, and occasionally put their own safety on the line, in order to personally meet face-to-face with allies, adversaries, and even enemies. And yet, despite this ubiquitous practice of international politics, our theories seemed to discount the activity as relatively unimportant at best, and downright dangerous at worst. Analogies to Yalta or Munich, cases where face-to-face diplomacy went terribly wrong, dominate. This seemed puzzling. If face-to-face diplomacy is so fraught with peril, why has the practice continued and why do many leaders swear by the benefit of personally sitting down to have a conversation?

I was very fortunate that just as I was asking these questions, several pieces were falling into place that allowed me to come to some provisional answers. First, as I entered the dissertation phase of my graduate program there was something of a renaissance occurring in the study of diplomacy. Paul Sharp, Vincent Pouliot, Corneliu Bjola, Costas Constantinou, Iver Neumann, Rebecca Adler-Nissen, Halvard Leira, Brian Rathbun, Markus Kornprobst, Brian Hocking, Christer Jönsson, Noe Cornago, Ole Jacob Sending, Jan Melissen, Jennifer Mitzen, Stuart Murray, Keren Yarhi-Milo, Todd Hall, and many others were all publishing work that revitalized the study of diplomacy, particularly in the American context. These scholars both challenged me to think about how I could make my own contribution, often eventually reading chapters or responding to the argument at conferences, and inspired me to think deeply about what specifically about face-to-face interaction was important to diplomacy.

At the same time, new exciting discoveries in psychology and neuroscience were challenging long-held assumptions about the nature of social interaction and specifically the importance of face-to-face. My father, Gregory L. Holmes, is a research neuroscientist and clinical neurologist, and perhaps because of genes and/or socialization, I have long been interested in how knowledge of the brain informs our

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understanding of social (and political) behaviors. I was also very for-
tunate that at The Ohio State University, where I did my Ph.D. work,
Gary Berntson, one of the leading authorities in social neuroscience,
was not only approachable and helpful in answering my questions, but
allowed me, a nonneuroscientist, to take his year-long graduate sequence
in social neuroscience. Gary turned me on to the work of Jean Decety on
the neuroscience of empathy, Marco Iacoboni on the mirroring system
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Finally, the most important lynchpin during this time was Alex
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forge ahead with a dissertation project that attempted to ask big ques-
tions and tried to break new ground in bringing social neuroscience to
IR. I suspect that many others would have tried to persuade me to take a
more traditional approach. To my mind Alex is the best dissertation advi-
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In fall 2013, I received an email from Nicholas J. Wheeler at the University of Birmingham with an invitation to present my research at the Institute for Conflict, Cooperation and Security at the University of Birmingham, which he directs. Nick had read my dissertation and saw relevance for his own work in trust building at the interpersonal level between enemies. I presented two chapters of the book at the ICCS conference and received extremely valuable feedback from his colleagues, including Naomi Head, Josh Baker, Harmonie Toros, David Dunn, Daniel Hucker, Paul Schulte, Kim Shapiro, Adam Quinn, Jan Ruzicka, and many others. I also benefitted tremendously by gaining access to the Chamberlain papers at the Cadbury Research Library, which Nick Wheeler facilitated. More recently Nick hosted a book workshop for our two books where I was fortunate to have been put through the fire by Ken Booth, Nicholas Wright, Tereza Capelos, and many others. The presentations in Birmingham have been foundational and the book would not be nearly as good without them. Since that initial email Nick and I have developed the type of working relationship any academic would love to have, but is rare. We push and encourage one another to continually refine, sharpen, and expand our arguments. I view this book, and his book on trust written often contemporaneously with this one, *Trusting Enemies*, to be in conversation with each other. These two books, I hope, represent the first steps in a productive research program on the dynamics of interpersonal interactions in international politics.

This book also benefitted tremendously from a book workshop organized and hosted by Mike Tierney through the Institute for the Theory & Practice of International Relations (ITPIR) at The College of William & Mary. Under the leadership of Mike Tierney and Sue Peterson, and with support from the Reves Center for International Studies, ITPIR is facilitating path-breaking research in international aid, security, and the dynamics of the international relationship discipline itself. I

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