New Diplomatic History Network 7th Conference

Call for Papers

Old and New Diplomacies of Peace and War

Bizkaia Aretoa, Bilbao (Basque Country, Spain) 27–29 May 2027

Organized by University of the Basque Country / Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (EHU) in collaboration with the New Diplomatic History Network

We are living in times of war. Armed conflicts, geopolitical rivalries and competing projects of international order have brought renewed attention to diplomacy and its capacities—and limitations—as a means of preventing, managing and ending conflict. Yet the relationship between diplomacy, peace and war is neither simple nor new. Diplomats have been celebrated as peacemakers and condemned as warmongers; diplomacy has served reconciliation and compromise, but also coercion, domination and the preparation or prolongation of war.

The 7th Conference of the New Diplomatic History Network (NDH) invites scholars to revisit these tensions by placing the diplomacies of peace and war in a broad historical and interdisciplinary perspective. Since its creation, NDH has sought both to broaden and deepen the study of diplomacy. It has encouraged historians and scholars from many other disciplines to move beyond an exclusive concern with foreign ministries, interstate negotiations and major settlements in order to engage with diplomatic practices, institutions, legal forms, techniques, discourses, emotions, memories, aesthetics, senses and materialities. For this conference, we would like to take this dialogue one step further. We invite participants to think transversally across time and space. What happens when the study of ancient, medieval, early-modern, modern and contemporary diplomacies worldwide are brought into conversation on the challenges diplomacy faces today? What can historically grounded research contribute to contemporary understandings of diplomacy? What can historians learn from the concepts and methods of the social sciences, humanities and legal studies?

Potential topics:

We particularly welcome papers and panels that establish conversations across historical periods, distant geographies and disciplines. Possible themes include, but are by no means limited to:

- **Treaties, settlements and the making of peace**: the negotiation, legal construction, performance, success, failure and contested legacies of diplomatic agreements across different historical contexts.
- **The legal forms and institutions of diplomacy:** the historical construction and transformation of diplomatic privileges, immunities and inviolability, diplomatic protection, safe-conducts, credentials, embassies and diplomatic premises, correspondence and the diplomatic bag, and the ways in which their legal status, observance, contestation or violation are reshaped in times of peace, crisis and war.
- **Cities of peace–and cities of war**: cities as spaces of negotiation, refuge, reconciliation, siege, destruction and occupation, and as symbolic and mnemonic landscapes of peace and conflict.
- **Hidden and exposed diplomatic negotiations** backchannels, confidential negotiations, intelligence networks and informal intermediaries, public opinion, and the changing relationships between diplomatic secrecy, legitimacy and accountability.
- **Peacemakers, warmongers and other diplomatic personalities:** the influence of formal and informal actors, personal leadership, reputation, charisma, emotions, rivalries and networks on decisions for peace and war.
- **Sex, gender, and the diplomacies of peace and war**: women's diplomatic agency within and beyond formal institutions, and the gendered construction of authority, negotiation, violence and reconciliation.
- **Diplomatic dissent in times of war:** resignation, criticism, resistance, leaks and conscientious objection, and the changing boundaries between professional loyalty, ethical responsibility and diplomatic disobedience.
- **Religions, inter-convictional dialogue and reconciliation:** religious and faith-based actors as diplomatic intermediaries and the capacity of religious, ethical and moral authority to enable–or obstruct–peace and dialogue.
- **Diplomatic incidents, crises and failures**: misunderstanding, insult, mistranslation, miscalculation and failed negotiations as windows onto the formal and informal norms governing diplomacy.
- **The materiality and sensoriality of diplomacy–objects, spaces and bodies:** gifts, documents, dress, food, buildings, palaces or residences, libraries of diplomats, negotiating spaces, gestures and embodied practices as producers of diplomatic authority, hierarchy, recognition and exclusion. Diplomat's concern on senses and their impact on negotiations: taste, touch, sight, hearing and smell.
- **Visual and aural aesthetics and representations of peace and war:** painting, photography, monuments, architecture, music, literature, theatre, film and other cultural forms as representations and instruments of diplomacy, conflict and reconciliation.

- **Translation and the languages of peace and languages of war:** words, concepts, gestures, rituals, symbols and silences through which diplomacy constructs peace, security, honor, neutrality, justice, victory, surrender and reconciliation. Diplomatic discours and ambiguity.
- **Memory and afterlives of peace and war diplomacies:** the remembrance and reinterpretation of diplomatic successes, failures and settlements through commemorations, monuments, museums, archives, education and collective memory.
- **Beyond and behind chanceries:** revolutionary, postcolonial, constituent and social and political emancipatory diplomacies, governments into exile, but also corporate diplomacies and secret societies.
- **Diplomacy and the emotions of peace and war:** the ways diplomatic practices and decisions produce individual and collective experiences of hope, fear, trust, humiliation, recognition, resentment, abandonment and belonging.
- **Diplomacy as an operator of order–and disorder:** diplomacy as a practice that can sustain, negotiate and legitimize international orders, but also challenge, disrupt or dismantle them through coercion, exclusion, anti-diplomacy and counter-diplomacy…

Through these topics we seek to encourage mutual learning and interdisciplinary exchange. We particularly welcome transversal panels bringing different periods, geographies and disciplines into conversation on diplomatic theory and practice. Such comparisons need not presume continuity: they may instead reveal ruptures, transformations and historically different understandings of authority, sovereignty, violence and peace.

Methodological and source plurality is equally welcome, drawing on approaches across the humanities and social sciences. The aim is to examine diplomacy simultaneously through its political, legal, social, material, cultural, emotional and mnemonic dimensions, expanding its sources beyond conventional archives to include objects, spaces, images, literature, music, ceremonies, oral testimony and other forms of evidence.

Underlying these conversations is a broader question: ***what distinguishes "old" from "new" diplomacies of peace and war?*** Have transformations in political authority, law, technology, media and global society fundamentally changed diplomatic practice, or do they reproduce older logics? At a time when diplomacy is often questioned or contested, are we witnessing new diplomacies, new forms of anti-diplomacy–or even the possibility of a post-diplomatic world?

Papers and Panel proposals:

The New Diplomatic History Network welcomes proposals from historians and scholars of International Relations, political science, sociology, anthropology, law, art history, literary and cultural studies, musicology and related fields, and also from practitioners of diplomacy with an interest in diplomatic history, social sciences and humanties.

We welcome both individual paper proposals and complete panel proposals. We especially encourage panels embodying the transversal ambitions of the conference by bringing together different historical periods, geographical areas, methodological approaches or disciplinary perspectives.

Young Scholars Workshop:

For NDH7, NDH will inaugurate a new participation format for young scholars, in the form of Young Scholars Methods Workshop.

- PhD researchers, post-doc researchers or other younger scholars can send a 3-5 pages document describing a methodological or theoretical problem linked to their research. The documents will be discussed during specific Methods Workshop organised thematically. A number of 15 proposals will be selected aiming to address a wide range of methodological challenges representative of the diversity of approaches to new diplomatic history.
- Younger scholars can also participate in a poster session as part of the programme. The posters will also be displayed throughout the event.
- Documents and posters meant for the Methods Workshop should be marked separately with "Methods Workshop" in the title.
- A young scholar sending a document or poster to the Methods Workshops may also send a normal proposal to the conference.

Submitting a Proposal:

- Individual paper proposals should contain an abstract of approximately 200/300 words and a short narrative biographical note.
- Panel proposals should briefly explain their general rationale and must include the paper abstracts for the individual contributions, and short biographical notes.
- Deadline for proposals: 30th November 2026
- Submission address: Proposals for single contributions of papers and/or poster, or panels should be sent to the following address: NDH2027Bilbao@gmail.com
- The organisers would be grateful if you could also advertise the conference via your own networks. When advertising on social media, please use the conference's tag #NDH7Bilbao2027. NDH is on BlueSky: @ndh-network.bsky.social

Further information concerning keynote speakers, registration and practical arrangements will be announced in due course.

Practical information:

NDH7 Conference venue:

https://www.ehu.eus/en/web/bizkaia-aretoa/eraikina

Bilbao:

https://www.bilbaoturismo.net/BilbaoTurismo/en/tourists

https://tourism.euskadi.eus/en/top10/towns/bilbao/webtur00-recursostop/en/

Euskadi/Basque Country:

https://turismo.euskadi.eus/es/